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'Nice Young Man' Finishes Strong in School Board Race

Fairfax County School Board candidate Ryan McElveen secured one of three available at-large seats on Tuesday, capping a seven month process that saw McElveen succeed against improbable odds.

For his first attempt at elected office, McElveen faced what was easily the most contentious set of circumstances in one of the most competitive School Board races in decades. After being unsuccessful in his first attempt at securing the Democratic endorsement, a candidate dropping out led to a second round that saw him win by only two votes.

“I’ve wanted to serve our public schools in some capacity since I was still in the system as a student,” said McElveen, who at 25 may be the youngest person ever elected to countywide office. “When I decided this was the time to go for it, I knew it would be difficult, to say the least.”

After McElveen emerged from the endorsement process, he had the least amount of campaign funding available of any of the six other candidates throughout the race. He had been bypassed for endorsements from the teacher unions, several advocacy groups and The Washington Post.

“Last night, as the results came in, I was proud not for myself but for the few who stood by me the beginning, those who joined along the way, and those who decided at the voting booth that a young graduate of our schools would have a perspective we could use on the board to help move our school system forward.”

“It may seem strange,” he added, “but I want to thank those at all stages of this election who didn’t believe I was a viable candidate. They made me work that much harder, and I look forward to bringing that energy to the board.”

In addition to thanking those who volunteered in all the capacities necessary for a county-wide campaign, McElveen especially wanted to thank his family.

“I want to thank my fiancée, Xuan, for putting up with all this,” McElveen added. “My parents have obviously been tireless in their support, and one of the great joys during this campaign was running into so many who know both of them as valuable members of our community.”

McElveen said his plan for the first days on the board are not all that different from the past few months.

“I’m going to learn as much as I can as quickly as I can,” McElveen said. “But most importantly, I want to listen. I hope parents, teachers, school employees of all stripes, and especially students, will get in touch and share their concerns and ideas. I’m excited for the road ahead, and I’ll be depending on all Fairfax County residents to work with us to ensure our schools are fulfilling their potential.”

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