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Cross nodded, looking at the screen. Others were less convinced.

Kevin Nader, a 21-year-old UF economics senior, said the election was a close call because neither candidate was ideal, he said.

"In all honesty, it's kind of the lesser of two evils between these two guys," Nader said. "Rick Scott hasn't proved to be the best choice, but compared to Charlie Crist, it's a pretty easy choice."

Down town, Democratic Party members huddled close at Tall Paul's for an election-night watch party, their foreheads slicked with sweat as Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" buzzed in the background.

Democratic state representative candidate Jon Uman thanked his campaign members as his numbers dropped behind Republican Keith Perry's, ultimately leading to his loss.

"We've been working on this 20 hours a day, seven days a week for months," Uman said in the warm, packed room with American flags and campaign signs lining the walls. "We are fighting for public schools, for the environment and the working family."

As the crowds grew thicker and the tension stronger, Uman spoke of lowering tuition costs and expanding women's rights. "The fight isn't over."

After Democratic congressional representative candidate Marihelen Wheeler of District 3 lost to Republican Ted Yoho, she stood in front of the crowd with her arms crossed over her red sweater.

"This has been a great year," she said as camera lights flashed.

"We sing with the choir," Wheeler said. "I'm singing with you. I'm not preaching to you."

Supporters like Jackie Betz applauded. The 67-year-old spent eight hours on the side of the road waving signs for Ken Cornell, who won the District 4 County Com-

missioner seat with 57 percent of the vote.

As a Democratic Party volunteer, Betz said she has driven people to voting precincts, worked fundraisers and went door-to-door for the past few weeks.

"My legs are rubbery," she said.

Betz, who owns a farm in Alachua County, said she's seen burrowing owls get run over by trucks and gopher tortoises' holes covered up from deforestation near her home. Her main concern in this election was conserving Alachua County's land and forests.

"This is where I came to retire," she said. "I love this county and want to do everything I can to preserve it."

As Betz stared at the screen displaying the results of a few Democratic candidates, disappointment plagued her face. She said more people needed to vote.

"People aren't dumb," she said. "People know who they want to support."

Cornell's victory over John Martin named him the replacement for Republican commissioner Susan Baird, who decided not to run for re-election.

"This is not our campaign," Cornell said to the crowd. "This is the people's campaign."

The UF alumnus aims to preserve natural resources and explore sustainable energy options.

"This has been wonderful because it has been driven by the people of our county," he said as his numbers crept close to Republican John Martin's at about 8:30 p.m. Once his victory was declared shortly after 9 p.m., Cornell gave a heartfelt speech.

"Tonight we celebrate, but tomorrow we get back to work," he said.

When asked what his first goal as County Commissioner is, he said he wants to take his wife "out of Alachua County and give her a break for a few days."

Just after Cornell left the stage, the crowd quickly thinned out. Others waited at the bar, sipping craft beers and red wine while waiting for the governor results to roll in.

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With nearly 50 percent of Alachua County voters turning out for the polls, Supervisor of Elections Pam Carpenter said Tuesday went smoothly.

"What we're hearing is that everyone was steady and busy all day," she said at about 9 p.m.

Though turnout was high, Carpenter said it was still on target for local election numbers, which typically range anywhere from 45 to 50 percent.

And though Amendment 2 received 66.1 percent of Alachua County votes, the measure that would have made medical marijuana legal was defeated statewide as it fell about 2 percentage points short of the 60 percent needed to pass.

Amendment 1 passed, which will increase conservation funding without increasing taxes, while Amendment 3 did not, preventing outgoing governors from appointing state Supreme Court justices.

Back at the Swamp, president of Alachua County Young Republicans Katy Melchiorre said they always knew it was going to be close.

The second-year UF law student said the group had been busy making phone calls and encouraging eligible voters to cast their ballots throughout the day.

At about 9:10 p.m., Melchiorre read out the difference in votes for Scott in Alachua County between 2010 and this year.

"2010 Scott lost Alachua County by 15,804 votes," she said while reading from her iPhone to a table of fellow party members. "2014 lost Alachua by only 12,846 — that is a hell of an improvement!"

The crowd cheered back.

The celebration will continue today, when president of UF College Republicans Kailyn Allen said members will be riding on a party bus to commemorate the victory.

"We are really glad that our hard work has paid off," Melchiorre, 23, said. "Especially in such a liberal area."

Alligator staff writers Chabeli Herrera, Melissa Mihm, Patrick Pinak and Hunter Williamson contributed to this report.

TURNED OUT FOR WHAT



Scott
48%
✓

Governor



Crist
47%



Bondi
55%
✓

Attorney General



Sheldon
42%



Atwater
59%
✓

Chief Financial Officer



Rankin
41%



Putnam
58%
✓

Commissioner of Agriculture



Hamilton
41%



Yoho
65%
✓

Congressional Rep. District 3



Wheeler
32%



Smith
34%

Congressional Rep. District 5



Brown
65%
✓



Perry
58%
✓

State Rep. District 21



Uman
42%



Martin
43%

County Commissioner District 4



Cornell
57%
✓

Judges - All retained ✓



Makar



Benton



Lewis



Osterhaus



Roberts

YES
75%
✓

Amendment 1
Water and Land Conservation — Dedicates funds to acquire and restore Florida conservation and recreation lands

NO
25%

YES
58%

Amendment 2
Use of marijuana for certain medical conditions

NO
42%
✓

YES
48%

Amendment 3
Prospective appointment of certain judicial vacancies

NO
52%
✓