

The Alabama Legislature has 37 new House and Senate members, a turnover of about 26%, going into the next quadrennium.

But Tuesday's general election, and the May and June primaries and runoffs, didn't change the political make-up of the heavily Republican chambers. The parties swapped two seats Tuesday, according to unofficial results from the Secretary of State's office.

Democrat Phillip Ensler defeated incumbent Republican Charlotte Meadows in House District 74 in Montgomery County. The district, which had been held by a Democrat until 2014, was made more Democrat leaning in last year's redistricting process.

Ensler becomes the only Jewish legislator in the state and one of three white Democrats. Ensler thanked voters on Twitter late Tuesday.

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you to everyone who supported us and believes in a better, more equitable Alabama for all," he said.

In the Wiregrass' House District 85, Republican challenger Rick Rehm defeated Democrat incumbent Dexter Grimsley. Rehm's campaign talking points included ending the sales tax on groceries and stopping the "indoctrination of our school children."

And while Libertarians fielded candidates in multiple legislative races, the Legislature remains a two-party operation.

The number of women in the House — 20 — isn't changing and the Senate is losing a female lawmaker.

After a slew of legislative retirements, bids for higher office and a few deaths, 22 of the 105 House seats were open this election cycle. In the 35-seat Senate, five were open.

Meanwhile, eight House incumbents lost to primary challengers earlier this year. One Senator did as well.

Voter turnout Tuesday was about 38.5%, according to unofficial returns from the Secretary of State's office. Secretary of State John Merrill had predicted turnout of 45% to 50%.

Turnout was higher in the Tennessee Valley, Merrill said, in part because of the Congressional race to replace Mo Brooks and some State House races the people thought would be more competitive.

Those included State Senate District 2, where incumbent Sen. Tom Butler, R-Madison, spent nearly \$890,000, according to the latest campaign finance filings, to hold off Republican and Democrat challengers this year.

And House District 10, open this year because of the retirement of Rep. Mike Ball, R-Madison, now belongs to Republican David Cole.

In other parts of the state, Democrats narrowly hung onto their seats. Incumbent Rep. Thomas Jackson, D-Thomasville, squeaked by with 51% of the vote. And in Senate District 23, previously held by Sen. Hank Sanders and then his daughter Malika Sanders-Fortier, Democrat Robert Stewart won with 53.4%