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## Democrat Janice Hahn wins hotly contested California race for US House seat

By Associated Press, Published: July 11 | Updated: Wednesday, July 13, 2:35 AM

LOS ANGELES — Democrat Janice Hahn has defeated Republican Craig Huey in a bitter contest for a

Southern California House seat, preserving her party's hold on the district and surviving an unusually tough race in a longtime stronghold.

With all reporting, Hahn, a Los Angeles city councilwoman, had 41,585 votes, or about 55 percent, to 34,636, or about 45 percent, for Huey, who owns marketing and advertising companies and largely bankrolled his campaign with nearly \$900,000 in personal funds.

Hahn called the victory bittersweet as she mourned the unexpected death of her 86-year-old mother on Monday. Hahn abruptly suspended her schedule on the eve of Election Day to join her grieving family.

"It was devastating to me so it was the strength of the thousands of volunteers who were campaigning for me that carried me across the finish line," Hahn told The Associated Press early Wednesday.

Huey campaign spokeswoman Jennifer Jacobs says her candidate has left a message with Hahn's office to concede the race.

With a light turnout and widespread voter anxiety over the economy, Republicans were hoping for an upset that would send a message heading toward the 2012 national elections, in which President Barack Obama will seek a second term.

But Hahn's victory was far from impressive, given an 18-point Democratic registration edge in the 36th Congressional District, which runs from the famous Venice boardwalk through the beach communities south of Los Angeles International Airport.

The result was obviously disappointing for Huey, but Jacobs said the campaign was pleased that the race was well within the 18-point registration edge because "there's a sizable amount of people who broke with registration to vote for jobs and the economy in America."

In May, Democrats snatched a New York congressional seat in a heavily Republican district after capitalizing on fears over a Republican plan to roll back Medicare and Social Security benefits. That made the GOP eager to turn the tables in California, a reliably Democratic state in national elections.

The seat was previously held by Democratic Rep. Jane Harman, who resigned earlier this year to head a Washington think tank.

The race presented a stark choice.

Huey, 61, is a conservative who wanted to slash spending, taxes and debt and roll back government regulation; Hahn, 59, a Los Angeles city councilwoman, is a fixture in local Democratic politics who wants to see the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the growth of alternative energy.

The midsummer contest received little attention at a time of year when voters are thinking about weekends at the beach, the struggling Los Angeles Dodgers or how to survive the partial closure this weekend of Interstate 405, one of the region's main traffic arteries.

Each campaign had pooled over \$1 million and plowed much of it into sharp-edged advertising: Hahn had sought to link Huey to Sarah Palin and referred to his agenda as "extremist," while Huey derided Hahn as a career politician with ties to a troubled gang-intervention program.

Bill Clinton recorded automated phone messages for Hahn. Organizing for America, the group that

provides Democratic Party's foot-soldiers, asked supporters to make thousands of phone calls.

Hahn said her win indicates that voters want elected officials to "put aside extreme party politics and work together to solve problems for our country."

She said she planned to spend the next few days finalizing plans for her mother Ramona Hahn's funeral service on Saturday. She'll likely head to Washington next Tuesday to be sworn into office.

Hahn hails from a Los Angeles political clan. Her father was Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, a legendary figure in local politics who held office for decades. Her brother James Hahn served as mayor of Los Angeles from 2001 to 2005.

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Associated Press writers Shaya Tayefe Mohajer and Daisy Nguyen contributed to this report.

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