

Gay candidate loses Dallas mayoral election

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DALLAS (Reuters) - An openly gay candidate lost his bid on Saturday to become mayor of Dallas in a race that attracted wide attention because of his sexual orientation.

Councilman Ed Oakley lost to businessman Tom Leppert, who took 58 percent of the vote to Oakley's 42 percent, according to official returns. Oakley had the endorsement of the Democratic Party, while Leppert ran a nonpartisan campaign.

A victory by Oakley would have made him the first openly gay mayor of a major U.S. city, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a Washington-based gay rights group.

Neither candidate made an issue of Oakley's sexual orientation, although some outside One conservative group mounted a phone campaign against Oakley, mostly on the grounds of his sexual orientation, while gay rights groups cheered his candidacy.

His candidacy in the runoff election helped dispel the image of Dallas as an archconservative oil city in the heart of the U.S. Bible belt. The ninth-most populous U.S. city has about 1.2 million residents.

"That image of Dallas is pretty dated. I would call it a moderate city now, certainly not liberal, but it is not the conservative icon of 30 years ago," said Cal Jillson, a political scientist at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

He noted the city's more cosmopolitan character, citing a growing Hispanic population and migration from other parts of the United States.