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In an Illinois Primary Race, Victory Is Self-Declared

By [SUSAN SAULNY](#)

CHICAGO — At a downtown train station where he had been thanking voters for their support, Gov. [Patrick J. Quinn](#) accepted a congratulatory call from [President Obama](#) and declared victory, even though his challenger in Tuesday's Democratic primary for governor had not conceded defeat and the race was deemed too close to call.

Among Republicans hoping for a chance to run in the general election this fall, there were, similarly, no concessions on Wednesday among the top candidates, only alternating promises of victory as the last precinct counts trickled in. At some point in the afternoon, two state senators, Bill Brady and Kirk Dillard, thought that the race was over. Each man thought he had won.

And so it went. From Chicago to the rural downstate counties, a long night of gubernatorial election uncertainty stretched into day with no losers, only self-declared winners in contests that proved uncomfortably tight.

"I never thought about conceding," Mr. Dillard said, expressing satisfaction that the race seemed to be going his way.

But in an interview shortly thereafter, Mr. Brady told a reporter, "I think I won."

By Wednesday evening, with 99 percent of precincts reporting, Mr. Brady held a lead of only 406 votes out of 765,000 cast.

Among the Democrats, Mr. Quinn was ahead of State Comptroller Dan Hynes by 8,090 votes.

The elusive finale only threatened to delay the much-needed mending of fences in both parties that usually accompanies conclusive primary results. The delay could prove costly for the Democrats, who waged a particularly negative campaign. Some analysts cited the negativity as a reason for Tuesday's near-record low turnout, and suggested there might be some pressure from both parties for the trailing candidate to concede.

Still, the possibility of expensive, time-consuming recounts hovered over both parties.

"Whatever you say about Illinois politics, unfortunately it's never dull," said Kent Redfield, a professor of political science at the [University of Illinois](#) at Springfield. "Quinn tried to make the best of it, but clearly half the Democratic voters in the primary have questions about whether he is up to the job."

As for the Republicans, Mr. Redfield said: "No one took control of the race. It really shows a lot of

uncertainty, confusion and dissatisfaction.”

Recounts are not automatic by law, and in Illinois political history, they are rare.

A candidate who is trailing but has received at least 95 percent of the total number of votes captured by the leading vote-getter has the right to call for a discovery recount in which a sample of ballots are re-examined.

But the process can begin only after preliminary vote totals are certified and made official, which can take up to three weeks. Beyond that, a discovery recount could take several more weeks. If a candidate then wants to contest the results, he must file a lawsuit in State Circuit Court.

“If you want to do a recount, you are approaching a very fragmented task,” said Lawrence T. Miller, a lawyer who specializes in election law, among other areas. “You’ve got 102 counties in Illinois. It is a Herculean task.”

So far, no candidate has called for a recount. But political experts said Wednesday that they thought a Republican recount request was likely.

“It’s out of our hands,” said the Illinois [Republican Party](#) chairman, Pat Brady, who is no relation to Bill Brady. “There’s a law that lays all this out.”

Mr. Brady and Mr. Dillard showed polite deference to each other throughout the day.

“Senator Brady and I are colleagues and friends,” Mr. Dillard said. “There will be no problems between Brady or myself.”

For his part, Mr. Brady said, “I can bring this party together.” As for a recount, he said, “that’s Senator Dillard’s decision.”

As for the Democrats, Mr. Hynes kept a low profile, but late Wednesday scheduled an “important announcement” about the race for Thursday.

A campaign spokesman for Mr. Hynes, Matt McGrath, said: “What the campaign is doing is trying to get a sense of what’s still outstanding, and just look at the math. Our sense is that there are still votes uncounted.”

His rival, Mr. Quinn, the former lieutenant governor who ascended to the top spot a year ago after the impeachment of Gov. [Rod R. Blagojevich](#), had similar feelings, but they applied to his campaign.

“The battle is over,” he said. “It was a 15-round heavyweight bout, and I took a lot of punches, but I’m still on my feet.”

“We know the precincts out are strong for us,” he added. “We’ll probably only lengthen the lead.”

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