

# Kennedy Gets 500,000-Vote Plurality

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By BILL KOVACH

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BOSTON, Nov. 4—Post-election talk today is about Senator Edward M. Kennedy, who proved to be the strongest candidate in the statewide elections here.

He piled up a margin of nearly 500,000 votes—or 63 per cent of the total—against his Republican challenger, Josiah A. Spaulding. The incumbent Republican Governor, Francis W. Sargent, won re-election over Boston's Democratic Mayor, Kevin H. White, by about half that margin.

Few political observers doubt that the vote widened the Sen-

ator's options in 1972, although the Senator ruled out again any thought of seeking the Presidential nomination and denied he would accept a draft.

Before the election, the Senator's staff discussed privately the fear that a plurality based on less than 60 per cent of the vote would damage the Senator's national image and indicate a reservoir of antagonism because of the accident at Chappaquiddick Island 16 months ago.

The Senator, who was the odds-on favorite at that time as the next Democratic Presidential nominee, suffered political scars when a young secretary, Mary Jo Kopechne, was

killed when the car Mr. Kennedy was driving plunged into a tidal pool.

The Senator accepted yesterday's vote as an expression of a "sense of confidence" in him and said that he would return to the Senate as a "voice for peace."

In that effort, he was given further support by voters in the Third Congressional District, who elected the Rev. Robert F. Drinan, a staunch antiwar candidate, to replace the Democratic incumbent, Philip J. Philbin.

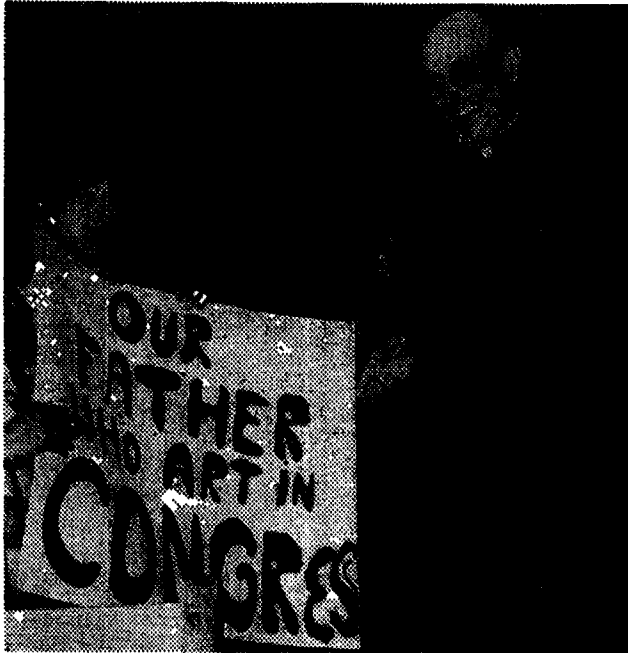
Father Drinan is the first Roman Catholic priest to be popularly elected to represent a state in Congress. One other Catholic priest, the Rev. Gabriel Richard, served in that body but was elected in 1842 as a delegate to Congress from the territory of Michigan.

Senator Kennedy's vote total of 63 per cent will be read in a number of ways. It represents an erosion from the 71 per cent of the vote he received in 1966.

But that vote was cast by voters who remembered President Kennedy's assassination a year before and the Senator's own brush with death in a plane crash shortly before the election. Then, too, the Democrats were sweeping the country against Barry Goldwater that year.

Some political analyst will compare Mr. Kennedy's showing yesterday with that of Senator Edmund S. Muskie, the front runner for the 1972 Presidential nomination. That comparison will show that the two men ran essentially even.

Although no one in the Kennedy camp will discuss such a comparison, there is little doubt that the push for a large vote against a weak opponent was, in part, an effort to keep the Senator from being eclipsed as a national party leader by his colleague from Maine.



Associated Press

**THE REVEREND REPRESENTATIVE:** The Rev. Robert J. Drinan, a Roman Catholic priest and Democratic candidate for Congress in the Third District of Massachusetts, being greeted by supporters in Newton on election night. He won a close race with John J. McGlennon a Republican.