

Mid-term elections end in Senate majority for Republican Party: reprinted from <http://bit.ly/1HajuHI>

November 20, 2014 - Construction Design & Engineering

After the votes were tallied on Nov. 4, the results revealed massive victories for Republicans at all levels and in every region of the country. With a handful of races still up for grabs, the GOP has wrested control of the U.S. Senate while boosting its House majority to the highest level seen since the Great Depression. At the state level, Republican governors eclipsed their 2010 high-water mark of 30 and helped to flip at least seven state legislative chambers putting them en route to full control of state governments in nearly half the country. While the GOP's mandate is unclear, voters delivered a stinging rebuke of the president and his party, effectively rendering him a lame duck for the remaining two years of his administration.

The election night's most obvious prize lay in the Senate, where Republicans finally succeeded in winning the majority after seeing their hopes dashed in each of the past two cycles. The GOP enjoyed a distinct structural advantage in the upper chamber, as Democrats were forced to defend seats in seven states won by Mitt Romney, six of which voted against President Obama in each of his elections by double digits. Republicans also had history on their side, as the out-party typically makes significant gains in the president's second midterm. But while the GOP saw a clear path to the six seats it needed, late polls suggested that the Senate remained too close to call.

While Republicans successfully expanded the map into purple states thanks to the retirement of longtime Democrat incumbents in Iowa and Colorado, they faced uncomfortably close contests in red states like Kansas and Kentucky. Meanwhile Democrats plowed \$60 million into their vaunted ground game, using early voting and aggressive turnout in a bid to salvage their majority. And even if Republicans won the races where they were favored, two potential run-offs threatened to send the battle into overtime.

After two consecutive cycles of promise, setbacks, and unfulfilled expectations, the prevailing narrative suggested that Republicans might again find a way to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. But when the early returns began to trickle in, an immediate call for Republican Leader Mitch McConnell in Kentucky presaged a long night for Democrats.

An otherwise sleepy race in Virginia drew murmurs when exit polls showed popular incumbent Mark Warner (D-Va.) locked in a surprisingly tight race—an ominous sign for those considered truly vulnerable. After a widely expected victory early in the night for Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D) in New Hampshire, the size and scope of the GOP wave slowly began to reveal itself. In Arkansas, a clean sweep saw Republicans take every statewide office, including a 17-point win for Rep. Tom Cotton (R) over Sen. Mark Pryor (D). In Iowa, state Sen. Joni Ernst (R) easily defeated Rep. Bruce Braley (D) in a race that polls suggested would be much tighter. In Colorado, where an all-mail ballot system was thought to be Democrats fail-safe, Rep. Cory Gardner (R) handily defeated incumbent Sen. Mark Udall (D). These three seats, together with open seat lay-ups in South Dakota, Montana

and West Virginia, put Republicans' tally at six and the threshold of the majority.

A surprisingly strong showing by GOP poll laggards in Kansas and Georgia made it official, as Sen. Pat Roberts (R) fended off a challenge from wealthy Independent Greg Orman, and David Perdue (R) earned an outright win over Democrat Michelle Nunn. The icing on the cake was provided by North Carolina, where incumbent Sen. Kay Hagan (R) had maintained a stubborn lead in the polls, when Thom Tillis (R) surged to victory in the biggest Senate surprise of the night. Republicans awoke to a 53rd seat in Alaska, where Dan Sullivan (R) defeated Sen. Mark Begich (D) overnight.

While all eyes were on the Senate, it was the Governor's races that provided the biggest shock and propelled many of the down-ticket gains. Republicans not only prevailed in swing states like Florida, Wisconsin and Michigan, but also notched impressive wins on deep blue turf. Improbable victories in Maine, Massachusetts and Illinois were overshadowed by the upset of the night in Maryland, where Larry Hogan (R) defeated Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown (D) by nine points.

With 53 Senate seats (and a likely 54th, pending a Dec. 6 Louisiana run-off), Republicans will have full control over the legislative branch, allowing them to vote on many House-passed bills that have stalled on the desk of current Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.).

While President Obama will maintain veto power, expect Republicans to send him consensus legislation, such as the Keystone XL pipeline and other items popular with the broader public. Perhaps most importantly, the GOP will control the confirmation process, preventing President Obama from appointing activist judges or hostile regulators. Meanwhile the expanded House majority will mean a dozen or more new votes in favor of open competition and the myriad state legislative gains present further opportunities to stop government-mandated project labor agreements. While the fallout from Tuesday's results is not entirely clear, the political tremors will be felt in Washington, D.C., and throughout the country for years to come.

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