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2018 Midterm Elections: A “Blue Wave” Election!



Did a “blue wave” occur in California on election day, November 9, 2018? After looking at election results, it sure looks like it!

Congress

Seven of 14 GOP-held Congressional seats are now Democratic seats. The average Democratic gain was 9 percentage points since 2014. Orange County, historically a conservative county and a GOP stronghold, turned “Blue”!

2018: Year of the Democratic Woman

The mid-term election was good for women. Approximately 54 women were elected at the state and federal levels across California this year. This includes 29 members of the Legislature and 19 members of Congress, as well as 3 California statewide constitutional officers—Lt. Governor-elect Eleni Kounalakis, Treasurer-elect Fiona Ma and State Controller-elect Betty Yee. It’s a record high rate; one in three winning candidates this year were women! Four of the female candidates who won elected office this year were Republicans. Many more of our residents will be represented by women! **2018 is definitely the year of the “Democratic Woman.”**

Propositions

Regarding the many propositions that were on the ballot, California voters:

- a) supported more borrowing for affordable housing by voting “no” on Proposition 10, which proposed to repeal statewide restrictions on rent control,
- b) voted against the gas tax repeal and cutting transportation funding by approximately \$5 billion per year (Proposition 6),
- c) supported bigger cages for chickens (Proposition 12), and
- d) said “yes” on Proposition 7—the first step to allowing California to consider making Daylight Standard Time year-round!

Constitutional Offices

Democrats were elected for every constitutional office in California! Not a single Republican, current or former, holds a statewide office in California. Elected Democrats include Governor-elect Gavin Newsome, Lt. Governor-elect Eleni Kounalakis, State Attorney General-elect Xavier Becerra, Treasurer-elect Fiona Ma, State Controller-elect Betty Yee, State Superintendent of Public Instruction-elect Tony Thurmond, State Insurance Commissioner-elect Senator Ricardo Lara (also the first gay statewide office holder) and State Secretary of State-elect Alex Padilla.

California Legislature

Regarding the California Legislature, Democrats hold supermajorities in both houses. This means tensions or conflicts between Republicans and Democrats will be minimal, but expect tensions or conflicts between the various “shades of blue” or factions among the Democratic members. Some political pundits say it could produce a legislature that skews toward business. Others say the biggest shift could occur in the Senate with two business-backed Democrats who won LA-area seats previously held by labor-friendly Democrats

(Senators-elect Susan Rubio and Bob Archuleta). Two rural Democrats (Senators-elect Melissa Hurtado and Anna Caballero) in the Central Valley may also bring a different perspective to the Senate Caucus, which has been dominated by representatives from big cities and progressive coastal enclaves. The issues of the Central Valley and other rural areas of California will be receiving more attention in the Senate Caucus. With supermajorities in both houses, Democrats could, in theory, pass taxes and place constitutional amendments on the ballot without any Republican support. However, in reality it will be difficult to get all the Democratic legislators to agree on controversial proposals. Political pundits also state that a “pro-worker” Democratic-controlled Legislature will be good for organized labor, in spite of conservative business interests. As stated previously, with the many Democrats in various shades of blue, factions and disagreements that may not fall along traditional roles or lines will probably exist.

Latino Voter Turnout for 2018

More than 29 million Latinos were eligible to vote nationally in 2018, making up 12.8% of all eligible voters—both new highs, according to the Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data.

The Pew Research Center states the pool of eligible Hispanic voters has steadily grown in recent years. Between 2014 and 2018, an additional 4 million Hispanics became eligible voters (US citizens ages 18 and older). Much of this growth has been driven by young US-born Hispanics coming of age. Since 2014, around 3 million have turned 18. Other sources of growth include Hispanic immigration naturalizations. Among Mexicans alone, 423,000 became US citizens from 2014 to 2017, and many residents of Puerto Rico moved to one of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, especially Florida.

Compared to the previous midterm election, Latinos increased their participation at the Congressional level by 174% in 2018. Pacific Islanders increased their numbers by 218% and African Americans by 157% (The Guardian, *Latino turnout up to 174% in 2018 midterm elections, Democrats say*. Nov. 14, 2018, Lauren Gambino). Per Ben Ray Lujan, Chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, “Latino voters played a pivotal role in taking back the House”. He credits the investment of \$30 million in engaging Latino and other minority voters as a reason for this success. The engagement effort included an investment of approximately \$21 million in Latino candidates and in 17 Spanish-language district-specific ads. Additionally, the first multi-state Spanish-language TV ad was launched in the last week before the election with the aim of getting out the vote. The Hispanic community will have a record level of representation on Capitol Hill with at least 34 Democrats and 8 Republicans in both chambers!

It’s imperative that the Democratic party continue to invest in Latinos regarding their engagement and to maintain the infrastructure built to reach Latino voters and to continue to consult with Latino communities in order to keep this momentum going in the 2020 presidential election. **That’s the challenge ahead of us!**

