

November 2014

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Did Northwest Experience Republican Wave?

The Atlantic Journal says the GOP overshot its targets in this year's midterm elections

Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you!
~ Pericles (430 B.C.)

By all accounts, Election Day 2014 was a very good day for Republicans. The GOP captured control of the U.S. Senate and increased their dominion in the U.S. House by a margin not experienced in more than 60 years. At the state level, the GOP took control of a majority of governorships and state houses. The GOP now controls 68-of-98 partisan state legislative chambers—the highest number in the history of the party—and 31 governorships. All in all, the elephants and their handlers fared well.

Election Day for Democrats, on the other hand, was, well, abysmal. The “Ds” now only hold the governorship and both houses of the legislature in seven states while Republicans have gained the upper hand in 23 states. Even in the one-time blue dog Democrat South, Republicans now own every state chamber save for the Kentucky House of Delegates.

Political analysts have concluded who did and who didn't take time to fill out a ballot this go-around. A number of Election Day exit polls showed that conservative Christians made up almost one-out-of every three voters in the 2014 electorate, playing a decisive role in the Republican wave. According to Ralph Reed, chairman of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, “their share of the electorate exceeded that of the African-American vote, Hispanic vote, and union vote combined.”¹

Various polls, including one conducted by Public Opinion Strategies (POS), suggested that self-identified conservative Christians “...voted 86 percent Republican and only 12 percent Democrat. These voters contributed roughly 52.4 percent of all the votes received by Republican candidates.” POS spokesman Glen Bolger, says that “Voters of faith—Protestant and Catholic—are the foundation of the GOP. Without their overwhelming support, there is no GOP majority.”^{ibid}

On the flip side, Mark Silk reporting for *Religion News* (Nov. 5, 2014), says that “No Religion” voters (atheists and agnostics), voted Democratic 69% to 29%. Although the No Religions are now 20% of the adult U.S. population, they accounted for only 12% of the 2014 voters.^{ibid}

Other Religions

The one group that appears to have shifted significantly compared to the last midterm, says Silk, were members of “other religions”—Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc. While these voters increased from 8% of all voters in 2010 to 11% in 2014, fewer of them voted Democratic this time. Polls show 66% of these voters prefer Democrats as opposed to 75% in 2010.

Ironically, Jewish voters in the “other religions” block, remain stubbornly Democrat, despite Obama's treatment of Israel, says Silk.

Voter sentiment in Washington State

Not only did an “open seat” in Washington’s 4th congressional district remain in GOP hands, no incumbent congressman among the other nine lost their job. Local voters preferred to keep the same 6-to-4 Democrat led team in charge of their interests in the District of Columbia.

But even if the Republican “wave” that swept from Maryland to Montana didn’t exactly make it to our shores, Republicans thought state legislative races were nevertheless encouraging. They were, after all, able to wrest a net five state legislative seats from Democrat control, picking up four new seats in the House and one in the Senate.² Again, not exactly a wave, but still, a noteworthy outcome in the estimation of “values-driven voters.” Especially so, in one of the least-churched states in America.

New faces in Olympia

Altogether, the Legislature welcomes 14 new members (10 Rs/4 Ds) to the House, and four new members (2 Rs/2 Ds) to the Senate. Insiders anticipated the larger number of freshman in the House because six were a change of guard in safe Republican or Republican-leaning districts. But four other new Republican House members were clearly a gift from voters in swing or somewhat Democrat-leaning districts. They are:

Lynda Wilson, (R-Vancouver). Lynda is co-owner of DeWils Industries, a local cabinet manufacturing company with 130 employees. DeWils distributes throughout the United States, Canada, and Japan.

Melanie Stambaugh (R-Puyallup). Melanie, a "confidence coach," defeated five-term Democrat Rep. Dawn Morrell. Stambaugh turned 24 in September and is the youngest woman elected to the state's House since 1936.

Michelle Caldier (R-Port Orchard). Michelle received a Bachelor of Science degree in Cell and Molecular Biology from the University of Washington and graduated from the U.W. School of Dentistry in 2001. She is an affiliate professor at the University of Washington Dental School and owner of Golden Age Dentistry that provides dental services to the elderly in nursing homes around Puget Sound.

Dan Griffey (R-Allyn). Dan, a Mason County fireman, weathered two previous electoral losses before winning the gold. The victory came following a very tight 35th legislative district race—and his third try against Rep. Kathy Haigh (D-Shelton).

One further election “winner” that we are particularly enthused about is Representative-elect Luanne Van Werven from Lynden. Luanne, a longtime personal friend of this ministry, has previously chaired the Whatcom County Republican Party, and, more recently, was vice-chair of the State Republican Party. However, in our eyes, her bona fides come from years of active involvement with Phyllis Schlafly’s *Eagle Forum*, an unabashedly conservative Christian organization that recruits and trains future public leaders.

Are we running a victory lap because, on a national scale, so many new Republicans were selected this election cycle? Absolutely! We have studied the underlying platform positions of both political parties, including their many recorded votes in recent years. For us, it’s a no-brainer. You might as well ask us if we have a bias favoring the Bible over the Quran!

That said, we are obliged to pray “... *For kings, and for all that are in authority...*” (1 Tim 2:1-4), including Republicans and Democrats. We do so obediently and willingly. And, we may even welcome our newest elected leaders with some home baked goodies to boot! *Et vous?*

Rick Forcier

¹ fellowshipoftheminds.com/2014/11/10/how-christians-and-other-religious-groups-voted-in-2014-midterm-elections/

² The election of Mark Milocia (R-Federal Way) to the Senate, gives Republicans a 25-24 edge in that chamber.