

Legislative

Update

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2010 Post-Election Wrap-Up

Hurricane. Tsunami. Wave. Take your pick as to how to describe the results of the 2010 mid-term election. What a dynamic year on the political landscape, both nationally and at the state level. With historic voter unhappiness and frustration, an economy on the brink, and unemployment running rampant, the political climate leading up to the election was unlike anything seen in recent memory. Unprecedented negativity and spending in campaigns across the country, including Indiana, indeed made this one of the most talked about, polled, and anticipated elections ever! And it lived up to the hype. The end result -- big change in both Washington, DC and in the Indiana state legislature.

ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

For weeks, the media has focused on whether or not Republicans would be able to muster enough victories to flip the US House of Representatives and possibly even the Senate over to GOP control. Well, flip it they did! Republicans needed to gain 39 seats to recapture that Chamber. The final tally supports what pollsters were saying all along, that the GOP was going to win big. At this writing, Republicans are poised to win at least 60 seats, several of which were held by high ranking Democrat committee chairs, for a total of 239 in the US House of Representatives.

Even though there was a sense of optimism that Republicans could also gain control of the US Senate, that turned out to be more of an uphill battle than expected. Some thought Republicans had a good chance of winning enough Senate seats that even THAT chamber would swing. However, at the end of the day, Republicans have officially succeeded in only 5 of the 10 contests they need to win. While Democrats will retain control, Republicans have much more than the minimum necessary to carry out a filibuster.

Will this spell gridlock in the coming weeks

and months? It could, or it could spur both parties and the White House to work together. We will see.

In Indiana, the announcement last February that US Senator Evan Bayh would be retiring at the end of his term sent shockwaves throughout the political establishment. Former Republican Senator Dan Coats jumped into the race as did Democrat Congressman Brad Ellsworth, but the Congressman ran from behind throughout the campaign. In one of the first senatorial races in the country to be officially called, Senator Coats came away with the victory with 55% of the vote.

All 435 US Representatives were up for re-election, including Indiana's 9 members of Congress, with three of those districts (2nd, 8th and 9th) in the national spotlight and in the toss-up category throughout the campaign.

The 8th District was an open seat due to Congressman Brad Ellsworth running for the US Senate seat. Dr. Larry Buschon, a heart doctor, ran a strong campaign against former State Representative Trent Van Haften. Dr. Buschon won the race by a margin of 58%-37%, with a Libertarian candidate receiving 5% of the vote.

In the 9th District, Republican challenger Todd Young and incumbent Democratic Congressman Baron Hill had a spirited campaign throughout the last several months. Election night, however, belonged to Mr. Young, who garnered 53% of the vote. Congressman Hill received 42% and the Libertarian candidate only 5%.

The 2nd District went down to the wire. Democratic Congressman Joe Donnelly eeked out a victory over Republican challenger Jackie Walorski by a little more than 2,500 votes, thus making the margin of victory about 1%.

Here is a breakdown of Indiana's new delegation:

- Congressional District 1: Pete Visclosky (D)
- Congressional District 2: Joe Donnelly (D)
- Congressional District 3: Marlin Stutzman (R)
- Congressional District 4: Todd Rokita (R)
- Congressional District 5: Dan Burton (R)
- Congressional District 6: Mike Pence (R)
- Congressional District 7: Andre Carson (D)
- Congressional District 8: Dr. Larry Buschon (R)
- Congressional District 9: Todd Young (R)

In total, there will be four new faces in Indiana's Congressional delegation. The political split is 6 Republicans and 3 Democrats.

ON THE STATE SCENE

Indiana Senate

Going into November 2, Republicans firmly controlled the State Senate by a 33-17 margin. That margin has grown to what is referred to as a quorum-proof super majority (meaning no Democrats will be needed to conduct business) of 37-13.

Senate Republican Successes

- SD 26: Doug Eckerty (R) defeated incumbent Senator Sue Errington (D)
- SD 45: Jim Smith (R) defeated incumbent Senator Jim Lewis (D)
- SD 46: Ron Grooms (R) defeated challenger Charles Freiberger (D)
- SD 49: Jim Tomes (R) defeated challenger Patty Avery (D)

Indiana House of Representatives

In the Indiana House of Representatives, Republicans have gained 12 seats and now have a 60-40 majority in that Chamber. One district appears to have a Republican winner with a margin of a mere 8 votes. A recount is expected.

With these developments in the Senate and House, Governor Mitch Daniels and the Republicans have complete control of the state legislature, a feat not seen since 2005 and 2006. This next legislative session is a budget writing year, AND it is time for the decennial drawing of new legislative districts. Their collective good fortune could not be more timely with such significant issues — and many others — coming before them!

House Republican Successes

- HD 30: Mike Karickhoff (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Ron Herrell (D)
- HD 31: Kevin Mahan (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Joe Pearson (D)
- HD 44: Jim Baird (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Nancy Michaels (D)
- HD 46: Bob Heaton (R) defeated challenger Bionca Gambill (D)
- HD 62: Matt Ubelhor (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Sandra Blanton (D)
- HD 68: Jud McMillan (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Bob Bischoff (D)
- HD 70: Rhonda Rhoads (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Paul Robertson (D)
- HD 73: Steve Davisson (R) defeated challenger Ryan Bower (D)
- HD 74: Sue Ellspermann (R) defeated incumbent Rep. Russ Stilwell (D)
- HD 75: Ron Bacon (R) defeated challenger Mike Goebel (D)
- HB 76: Wendy McNamara (R) defeated challenger St. Senator Bob Deig (D)
- HD 89: Cindy Kirchhofer (R) defeated incumbent Rep. John Barnes (D)

Organization Day for the State Legislature is November 16th, which is the first official day of the 2011 "long" legislative session. The General Assembly will reconvene in early January 2011. It's already interesting. Stay tuned!

Other Offices

Also up for election this year were the offices of Indiana State Treasurer, Secretary of State and Auditor of State. All of these offices were won by the Republican candidates, Richard Mourdock, Charlie White, and Tim Berry, respectively.

CONCLUSION

As Public Power entities, all of these changes impact us in one way or another. We have our work cut out for us with both our Congressional delegation and with the Indiana General Assembly. The economy, energy issues of all kinds, and a whole host of other important issues will be ripe for consideration. I know we are all up to the task! Stay tuned for more information as things unfold. As always, feel free to give me a call if you have any questions or would like more information on specific election items. My number is 317-575-3873, or email me at cwright@impa.com.