

Blue Moon Election Brings Record Turnout, Changes

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Despite 2018 being a “blue moon” election cycle, North Carolina experienced near-record voter turnout for yesterday’s election.

Once in a “blue moon,” North Carolina does not have any marquee, statewide races on the ballot. Turnout typically suffers in these cycles because there is less to draw voters to the polls. This year was different – more than 52% of voters turned out to the polls. This is the highest turnout in a non-presidential election year since 1990.

The results showed that North Carolina continues to be a very purple state. Republicans held onto their contested NC Congressional seats, while at the state-level, Republicans may have lost a supermajority in both chambers. Democrats gained a seat on the NC Supreme Court, bringing their majority to 5-2.

While the official results have not yet been certified, and the possibility for recounts in some races remains...

Here's what we know:

Congress

While there had been talk of potential upsets in District 2 and District 13, Representative George Holding and Representative Ted Budd defeated their challengers and will be returning to Congress.

The main question of the night was whether Democrat Dan McCready could overcome the Republican leanings of the district to defeat Republican pastor Mark Harris. In May, Harris defeated incumbent Congressman Robert Pittenger in a contentious primary. Given the absence of an incumbent, many saw the seat as up for grabs. Harris appears to have won by 1,845 votes, although this race could be subject to a recount.

Overall, Republicans maintain a 10-3 advantage in the state’s congressional delegation.

NC General Assembly

Going into the election, Republicans held a 75-45 majority. This represents a “supermajority,” meaning, if members vote by party, Republicans had the 3/5 majority needed to override gubernatorial vetoes. Republicans lost their House supermajority in this election, but kept control

of the House chamber. If current vote totals hold, Democrats will have a net gain of 9 seats with Republicans now holding a 66-54 advantage.

Republicans also held a supermajority in the NC Senate heading into the election, with a 35-15 advantage. It appears that Democrats gained 6 seats, potentially erasing the supermajority. Republicans will maintain control of the chamber, 29-21, pending recounts in close races.

Several incumbents lost their re-election bids, especially in urban areas. On the Republican side, four incumbent Senators lost (Barringer (Wake), Meredith (Cumberland), Lee (New Hanover), and Wade (Guilford)). Eight incumbent Republican Representatives lost (Jordan (Watauga), Bradford (Mecklenburg), Stone (Mecklenburg), Dulin (Mecklenburg), Clampitt (Avery), Malone (Wake), Dollar (Wake), and John Adcock (Wake)). Two incumbent Democrats lost their bid for re-election (Richardson (Franklin) and G. Graham (Lenoir)). There could be recounts in a few districts, as several races were very close.

NC Supreme Court

Following multiple statute changes, a primary cancellation, and court challenges surrounding the ability for judicial candidates to change their party affiliation leading up to an election, Democrat Anita Earls upset incumbent Republican Barbara Jackson in a three-way contest that featured two Republican candidates. The Court's partisan balance stands at 5-2.

Constitutional Amendments

Voters approved four of the six constitutional amendments on the ballot. We expect the General Assembly to come back into session November 27 to take up enabling legislation for the following:

- Requiring a voter ID
- Expanding crime victim's rights
- Lowering the income tax cap from 10 to 7 percent
- Guaranteeing the right to hunt and fish

Voters rejected two of the proposed amendments: one would have changed the way members of the State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement are chosen and the other would have shifted the power to appoint judicial vacancies from the governor to the legislature. Five former governors and seven former chief justices of both parties joined together to publicly oppose both amendments.

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