

Election FOCUS



NOVEMBER 4, 2004

U.S. Department of State

ISSUE 1 • NO 16

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FAST FACTS:

- ✓ **An estimated 120 million Americans, or 60 percent of eligible voters, voted in the 2004 elections, compared to 105.4 million voters, or 54 percent, in 2000.**
- ✓ **At least six states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, plus the District of Columbia—set new records in voter turnout.**

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Bush Wins 2004 U.S. Presidential Election



President George W. Bush greets cheering supporters at a victory rally, November 3 in Washington. (© AP/WWP)

President George W. Bush on November 2 was re-elected president of the United States.

“Voters turned out in historic numbers and delivered a historic victory,” Bush said in a November 3 speech to supporters in Washington. “America has spoken, and I’m humbled by the trust and the confidence of my fellow citizens.”

As of November 3, Bush had won 29 states and 274 electoral votes with results in Iowa and New Mexico remaining too close to call. “President Bush’s decisive margin of victory makes this the first presidential election since 1988 in which the winner received a majority of the popular vote,” said Andrew Card, Bush’s chief of staff, on November 3. “And in this election, President Bush received more votes than any presidential candidate in our country’s history.”

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Republicans Widen Control in Senate, House

The Republican Party retained control of both the Senate and House of Representatives in the November 2 elections, expanding its current majorities and extending the party’s control of Congress.

Republican candidates won 19 of the 34 Senate seats up for election (voters elect one-third of the 100-seat body for six-year terms every two years), increasing their current 51-seat majority by four seats. Since

the majority party sets the legislative agenda and chairs every Senate committee, party control of the Senate is important regardless of who is president or which party controls the House.

The 19 Republican victories included eight of the nine most competitive race—in Alaska, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina,

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Bush also won the state of Florida – a state that was hotly contested in the 2000 election and a 2004 prize coveted by both candidates – with 52 percent of the popular vote to Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry’s 47 percent. Experts agreed that if either candidate won both Florida and Ohio they would secure the victory, and Bush did just that.

Bush led Kerry by about 140,000 votes in Ohio after the polls closed November 2, but uncounted provisional ballots resulted in delaying the official announcement of the winner. It was clear by November 3, however, that Kerry would not have enough votes to win the state even if the provisional ballots were included in the

tally. As a result, the Kerry campaign conceded the election to Bush on November 3.

In his concession speech from Boston, Kerry said he spoke to the president and offered him and first lady Laura Bush his congratulations. “We talked about the danger of division in our country and the need . . . for unity, for finding common ground and coming together,” he said. “Today, I hope we can begin the healing.”

In his speech to the nation, Bush echoed this theme of unity, reaching out to those who voted for Kerry, saying, “To make this nation stronger and better, I will need your support and I will work to earn it. I will do all I can do to deserve your trust. A new term is a new opportunity to reach out to the whole nation. We have one country, one Constitution, and one

future that binds us.”

The 2004 presidential election was marked by high voter turnout that resulted in long lines at many polling places even after the official closing time. Bush maintained a lead in the national popular vote throughout the evening, but the race appeared close as Kerry secured many of the country’s most populous states, including New York and California, which together have 86 Electoral College votes.

In the end, however, Bush trumped Kerry’s 256 electoral votes with wins throughout the South and Midwest, especially in Florida and Ohio, which earned him 274 electoral votes, enough to win the election even with the results from Iowa and New Mexico still uncertain. ■



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Washington, DC 20547

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The U.S. Department of State is pleased to present its election coverage newsletter, **Election Focus 2004**. The newsletter will provide non-partisan coverage of the U.S. election process, featuring articles, interviews, public opinion polls, and other information on the presidential primaries, debates, conventions and campaign activities of the major presidential candidates.

Election Focus 2004 is produced by the Democracy and Human Rights team in the Bureau of International Information Programs.

If you are interested in receiving this newsletter via a listserv, please send your request to: <http://lists.state.gov/archives/election2004.html>

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Republicans Widen Control in Senate, House

Oklahoma, South Carolina and South Dakota. Republican John Thune's victory in South Dakota over current Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle marked the first loss by a Senate leader of either party since 1952.

Another significant Republican victory came in Louisiana, where David Vitter became the first Republican senator from the state since the 1880s. He won a majority of votes in the state's open Election Day primary, avoiding the runoff election expected by some analysts.

The Democratic Party won 15 Senate seats, lowering its current 48-seat membership by four seats to 44. The 15 victories included the competitive race in Colorado, where Ken Salazar joined Republican Mel Martinez of Florida as the first Hispanic Americans elected to the Senate since 1977. Democrat Barack Obama, who won with a wide margin in Illinois, will be the first African American in the Senate since 1999.

In the House of Representatives, where all 435 seats are up for election every two years, Republicans won 231 races, expanding their current 22-seat majority by four seats.

Democrats won 200 races, resulting in a net loss of five seats. Three House races remained undecided—in Louisiana and New York. The two uncalled races in Louisiana, where no candidate received over 50 percent of the vote, will be decided in a December 4 runoff election.

Despite the expanded Republican majority in the 109th Congress, both

houses are expected to remain partisan and combative, according to Republican political consultant Paul Pelletier.

For example, the expanded Republican majority in the Senate does not reach the 60-vote majority needed for actions such as stopping a filibuster, an extended floor debate used to forestall a vote. The new Senate could still find itself "deadlocked," said analyst Jim Thurber of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University.

Since Congress has exclusive power to pass legislation and approve appropriations, it plays a crucial role in whether or not an administration can accomplish its goals. President Bush will need to engage closely with the new Congress and provide strong direction to push his legislative agenda, said Thurber. ■

Governors' Races

During the November 2 balloting, 11 of the state's governors were up for election. Republicans were victorious in Indiana, Missouri, Utah and Washington, while retaining the governorships in Vermont and North Dakota. The Democrats won in New Hampshire, Montana and West Virginia, while retaining seats in Delaware and North Carolina. As a result of these elections, the Republicans now occupy the governor's office in 28 states, while the Democrats have 22.

Campaign★Highlight

Ballot Initiatives Give Voters the Opportunity to Make New Laws

Voters in 34 states voted on more than 150 ballot initiatives, including measures on stem cell research, same-sex marriages, decriminalizing marijuana and residency requirements for state welfare benefits or voting.

California voters approved by a significant margin a measure that will allocate \$3 billion to human embryonic stem cell research. About 59 percent of the 9.5 million people who cast ballots on the measure voted in favor. The Bush administration has placed restrictions on government-funded stem cell research. The Roman Catholic Church and other religious groups oppose these kinds of experiments since stem cells are harvested from human embryos, which are destroyed in the process. The measure, Proposition 71, authorizes the state government to sell \$3 billion in bonds and dispense about \$300 million a year to researchers. Supporters of the research argue that it holds great promise for developing treatments for a wide range of diseases.

Voters also registered their disapproval of same-sex marriages in all 11 states where the issue was on the ballot. The voters approved measures in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah to define marriage as between a man and a woman. In some of the states, the measure also banned same-sex couples from receiving benefits as “domestic partners.” None of the states explicitly allows same-sex

marriages, although such unions had been taking place in several states.

Voters defeated a measure in Alaska to decriminalize the use of marijuana by a considerable margin. Meanwhile, voters in Montana approved an initiative to allow the medical use of marijuana, but in Oregon voters defeated a measure to significantly expand medical use of the substance.

In Arizona, voters approved by a significant margin an initiative that would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and to get Arizona state welfare benefits. The initiative requires that state and local government officials confirm the legal residency of applicants for welfare benefits and requires that they report suspected illegal aliens who apply for the benefits. This requirement would not apply to federal benefits. The governor of Arizona and a coalition of other groups opposed the initiative.

In Colorado, voters handily defeated an initiative that would have divided the state’s nine electoral votes proportionally according to how many popular votes the two presidential candidates received. Instead, the state continued to give all its electoral votes to the candidate winning more than 50 percent of the vote. If approved, the measure was supposed to take effect immediately, so it could have been significant if Colorado’s electoral votes became crucial to a victory by President Bush or Senator Kerry.

Voters in other states also voted on limits on medical malpractice claims, the minimum wage, employee-paid health care and many other issues. Not all states allow these kinds of ballot initiatives. ■