



Monday, November 13, 2006

Exclusive articles on state policy, politics and trends from the staff of Stateline.org

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Winners in '06 governors' races

By Stateline.org Staff

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To read more about any of this November's 36 governors' races visit Stateline.org's interactive elections guide, click on the name of a state below or print a copy of our governors' races elections chart

Alabama

Alaska

Arizona

Arkansas

California
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New Hampshire
New Mexico
New York
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Vermont
Wisconsin

Wyoming Democrats won control of a majority of the governors' mansions for the first time since 1994, securing wins on Nov. 7 in Arkansas, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio, where incumbent Republican governors did not run again. Here is Stateline.org's state-by-state synopsis of the winners:

Lucy Baxley (D) Bob Riley (R) Alabama

A strong economy and the state's speedy response to recent hurricanes helped secure a second term for incumbent Gov. Bob Riley (R), who was able to rebuild support after the public slammed a proposal early in his administration for the largest tax hike in state history.

Riley, a former three-term congressman, bested Lt. Gov. Lucy Baxley, the Democratic nominee and the state's No. 2 elected official. Alabama is among 18 states that elect the governor and lieutenant governor separately, rather than as a team, creating the rather unusual matchup.

If Riley completes his second term, he would become the first Alabama governor to serve two full terms since George Wallace in the 1970s.

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Tony Knowles (D) Sarah Palin (R) Alaska

Republican Sarah Palin made history in Alaska, becoming the state's first female governor with a victory over former Gov. Tony Knowles (D). Palin, a former two-term mayor of a small city, rose to political prominence as chairwoman of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission. She made headlines by soundly defeating incumbent Gov. Frank Murkowski in the Aug. 22 Republican primary.

Knowles, governor from 1994 to 2002, had hoped to become the second former governor to reclaim Alaska's top job after a hiatus. The state constitution bars governors from running for a consecutive third term

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Janet Napolitano (D)

Len Munsil (R)

Arizona

Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano coasted to re-election in this very red state.

Napolitano, one of the rising stars in the Democratic Party, easily defeated Republican challenger, Len Munsil, who ran a prominent social conservative advocacy organization for the past decade.

The incumbent was bolstered by a generous crossover vote from the state's moderate Republicans. Recently named one of America's top governors by Time magazine, Napolitano also was helped when she successfully persuaded the Bush administration to pay for sending National Guard troops to the state's porous border with Mexico.

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Mike Beebe (D) Asa Hutchinson (R) Arkansas

Even a visit from President Bush the day before the election wasn't enough to help former U.S. Rep. Asa Hutchinson (R) defeat Arkansas Attorney General Mike Beebe (D) in the contest to succeed term-limited Gov. Mike Huckabee (R).

Beebe won over Hutchinson, the first-ever undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Beebe got help from Arkansas-born former President Bill Clinton, who attended fund-raisers for the candidate last month.

Beebe's conservative positions on abortion, intelligent design and gay foster parents denied Hutchinson gains on social issues from conservative, rural Democrats. These stances cost Beebe little Democratic support, considering Hutchinson's role as an impeachment manager in 1999 against Clinton when Hutchinson was a member of the U.S. Congress.

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Phil Angelides (D) Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) California Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) easily retained the office he won in a historic 2003 recall election, trouncing his Democratic challenger, State Treasurer Phil Angelides.

Schwarzenegger, the actor turned politician, won even though the state's electorate favors Democrats and the Democratic Party has an eight-point edge in voter registration.

Angelides' bid was hampered by an unusually cordial relationship between the governor and Democrats who control the Legislature. In August, the two sides cooperated to enact significant bills on such traditional Democratic talking points as global warming and an increase in the minimum wage.

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Bill Ritter (D) Bob Beauprez (R) Colorado A Democrat will take over the Colorado governor's mansion for the first time since 1998, with former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter's win over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez. Ritter will replace Republican Gov. Bill Owens, who stepped down because of term limits.

Polls had shown Ritter with solid support from Democrats, but also a 3-to-1 advantage among unaffiliated

voters, a crucial part of the Colorado electorate.

Late in the campaign, the Beauprez campaign found itself in hot water as the FBI announced it was investigating whether a federal immigration official illegally tapped into a confidential crime database to provide information to the Beauprez campaign. The information ended up in a TV ad attacking Ritter.

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John DeStefano (D)M. Jodi Rell (R)Connecticut

Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R) easily triumphed over Democratic challenger John DeStefano, the mayor of New Haven, winning her first election to the seat she assumed in 2004 when Gov. John Rowland (R) resigned in the face of impeachment.

Rell, the first Republican woman to be sworn in as governor of Connecticut, remains highly popular and has demonstrated her independence from the Bush administration by supporting civil unions for gay couples and funding for stem-cell research.

The governor's race was largely overshadowed by the contest to represent Connecticut in the U.S. Senate. That race garnered nationwide attention after incumbent Democrat Joseph I. Lieberman lost in the primary, but ran as an independent.

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Jim Davis (D)Charlies Crist (R)Florida

Charlie Crist became the first Republican since Reconstruction to succeed another Republican for the Florida governorship, beating five-term U.S. Rep. Jim Davis (D) to fill the shoes of term-limited Gov. Jeb Bush.

Crist, the state's attorney general, broke away from the GOP playbook, reaching out for votes from minority groups such as Hispanics and blacks. He portrayed himself as a civil rights champion and consumer advocate during the campaign, while calling Davis a tax-and-spend, liberal Washington, D.C., insider.

Crist led in all polls, but in recent weeks Davis had begun narrowing the gap.

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Mark Taylor (D)Sonny Perdue (R)Georgia

Republican Gov. George “Sonny” Perdue, who made history in 2002 by becoming the first Republican governor of Georgia since Reconstruction, earned a second term.

Perdue defeated Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor, the Democratic nominee and the state’s No. 2 elected official. Georgia is among 18 states that elect the governor and lieutenant governor separately, rather than as a team.

In 2002, Perdue, a former Georgia Bulldogs football player and retired Air Force captain, had stunned incumbent Democrat Roy Barnes. Perdue's victory was the first GOP win in a Georgia governor’s race in 146 years.

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Randy Iwase (D)Linda Lingle (R)Hawaii

With a 73 percent pre-election approval rating, Gov. Linda Lingle (R) cruised to victory in a state that usually leans Democratic.

The first female governor of Hawaii, and the first Republican Jewish woman governor in the nation, Lingle had no difficulties besting Democrat Randy Iwase, a Mililani attorney, former state senator and chairman of the Hawaii Labor and Industrial Relations Appeals Board.

One of Lingle’s biggest challenges will continue to be the Democratic-controlled Legislature, which she battled unsuccessfully in her first term on education and tax issues.

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Jerry Brady (D)Butch Otter (R)Idaho

U.S. Rep Butch Otter (R) held tight to win the Idaho governor’s race, despite a last-minute surge by his Democratic opponent, newspaper publisher Jerry Brady. Recent polls had shown Brady closing in by capitalizing on public discontent with a GOP-controlled Congress and Otter’s support for a plan to sell public lands to pay for Hurricane Katrina relief.

In an unusual twist, current Gov. Jim Risch (R) will return to his old job as lieutenant governor. Risch was elevated to the chief executive’s office in May 2006 after Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R) became the U.S. secretary of the interior.

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Rod Blagojevich (D)Judy Topinka (R)Illinois

Federal and state probes into his own administration weren't enough to undo incumbent Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D), who won a second term.

Blagojevich defeated Illinois Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R) and Green Party candidate Rich Whitney, who in recent weeks won a few newspaper endorsements and reached double digits in polls.

The candidates tried to distance themselves from disgraced former Gov. George Ryan, a Republican convicted of federal corruption charges who was recently sentenced to six-and-a-half years in prison.

Blagojevich, a former U.S. congressman, has vowed to continue pushing to lease the Illinois Lottery for \$10 billion that he says he would spend on schools, a move that would be the first of its kind in the country.

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Chet Culver (D)Jim Nussle (R)Iowa

Democratic Secretary of State Chet Culver defeated his GOP opponent, eight-term U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R), to keep the Iowa governor's mansion in Democratic hands.

Nussle and Culver, both well-known Iowa political figures, were vying to succeed Democratic incumbent Tom Vilsack, who's leaving after two terms to explore a possible presidential bid. Culver's running mate is Secretary of Agriculture Patty Judge.

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Kathleen Sebelius (D)Jim Barnett
(R)Kansas

Moderate Republicans helped Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius lock in a second term by siding with her instead of her Republican challenger, state Sen. Jim Barnett.

Sebelius, the daughter of former Ohio Gov. John Gilligan (D), succeeded in a state where President Bush won overwhelmingly in the 2004 election.

Sebelius benefited from a splintering of the state's Republican Party. Frustrated that the party has veered too far to the right, some moderates have left the party and joined Sebelius. She is surrounded by former Republicans, including her running mate, Mark Parkinson, the former state Republican Chairman. Her current

lieutenant governor, John Moore, also was a Republican before joining the Sebelius ticket in 2002. Her husband, Topeka attorney Gary Sebelius, is the son of former U.S. Rep. Keith Sebelius, a Republican.

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John Baldacci
(D)Chandler Woodcock (R)Maine

Gov. John Baldacci (D) emerged as the victor of a five-way fight for governor despite voter unease over the economy, high taxes and the cost of health care.

His toughest challenge came from Republican state Sen. Chandler Woodcock, a social conservative. But two other candidates ran strong campaigns as well: former-Democrat-turned-independent Barbara Merrill and Green Independent Party nominee Pat LaMarche, a state representative and the 2004 party nominee for vice president. Independent Phillip Morris NaPier, a convicted felon, also ran.

The independent bids were bolstered by Maine's public financing system, although both major parties bought TV ads on their own to avoid sending public matching funds to the independents.

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Martin O'Malley (D)Bob Ehrlich Jr. (R)Maryland

Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley narrowly outpolled Republican Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr., the state's first GOP governor in 33 years, securing a return to Democratic control of both the governor's office and both houses of the Legislature. Ehrlich, however, has yet to concede.

In a contest that was dead even just days before the election, O'Malley, who made Time magazine's 2005 list of top mayors, criticized Ehrlich for practicing "the politics of division and fear."

O'Malley's running mate is state Delegate Anthony Brown, Democratic whip since 2004 and a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve who served in Iraq from Sept. 2004 to June of this year.

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Deval Patrick (D)Kerry Healey (R)Massachusetts
Democrat Deval Patrick became the state's first African-American governor and only the second elected black

governor in U.S. history with his victory over Republican Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey.

Patrick, a former Clinton administration civil rights official, replaces Gov. Mitt Romney (R), who chose not to run for a second term and is considering a bid for the White House.

Healey was unsuccessful in her bid to become the first woman elected as the state's governor. (Jane M. Swift was appointed acting governor in 2001 when then-Gov. Paul Cellucci resigned to become U.S. ambassador to Canada.).

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Jennifer Granholm (D) Dick DeVos
(R) Michigan

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) held on to her seat, despite an all-out media assault on her record of handling the economy by GOP challenger Dick DeVos, a millionaire businessman and heir to the Amway fortune.

Michigan's unemployment rate rivals those of Hurricane Katrina-devastated Louisiana and Mississippi because it is anchored in the struggling domestic car industry.

The two candidates had different ideas of how to dig Michigan out. DeVos wanted more tax cuts, especially for businesses. Granholm proposed a public investment campaign because potential employers are drawn to a well-educated workforce and government amenities. She said it could be done without raising taxes.

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Mike Hatch (D) Tim Pawlenty (R) Minnesota

Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty narrowly won a second term Tuesday, holding off Attorney General Mike Hatch of the D.F.L. (Democratic Farmer Labor party).

Pawlenty acknowledged several times during the race that he faced an uphill battle because of the nationwide discontent with the GOP. Pawlenty is next in line to chair the National Governors Association.

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David Hahn (D) Dave Heineman (R) Nebraska

Gov. Dave Heineman (R) had little difficulty winning in his own right the seat he assumed in January 2005 when Republican Gov. Mike Johanns left to become U.S. secretary of agriculture.

Heineman beat Democrat David Hahn, an Internet entrepreneur from Lincoln. Heineman had not been the favored GOP nominee, but he bested U.S. Rep. Tom Osborne, the legendary Cornhuskers coach, to win the GOP gubernatorial primary in May.

During the campaign, Heineman was forced to defend signing into law a measure splitting the Omaha public schools, a move that remains a sore issue because critics say the divisions would fall along racial lines and create de facto segregation.

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Dina Titus (D) Jim Gibbons (R) Nevada

U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons (R) managed to ride out the scandals that hit his campaign with just three weeks to go to defeat Democratic opponent Dina Titus, the minority leader in the state Senate since 1992, who was seeking to become the first female governor of Nevada.

Gibbons was accused by a casino cocktail waitress of grabbing her and propositioning her after a recent night of drinking. He also reportedly helped a friend land lucrative military contracts.

Gibbons will take over for term-limited Republican Gov. Kenny Guinn.

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John Lynch (D) Jim Coburn (R) New Hampshire

Gov. John Lynch (D) easily won a second two-year term against his Republican challenger, state Rep. Jim Coburn, who remained unknown to many in the Granite State.

Lynch has high popularity numbers, portraying himself as a practical chief executive who avoids nasty partisan

battles.

Lynch narrowly defeated incumbent Republican Craig Benson in his first run for office two years ago. Benson became the first New Hampshire governor in 78 years not to win a second term. New Hampshire and Vermont are the only states that have two-year terms for governors.

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Bill Richardson (D)John Dendahl (R)New Mexico

Gov. Bill Richardson (D) cruised to a second term, beating former Republican state chairman John Dendahl, who was drafted to enter the race after the GOP primary winner withdrew in June.

Richardson, who many consider to be eyeing a presidential run in 2008, enjoys wide name recognition. He served in Congress in addition to stints as ambassador to the United Nations and as secretary of the Department of Energy in the Clinton administration. He is chairman of the Democratic Governors Association.

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Eliot Spitzer (D)John Faso (R)New York

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer coasted to victory, making him the first Democrat in the governor's mansion in 12 years.

Spitzer routed Republican John Faso, formerly a minority leader in the state Assembly, in the contest to replace New York Gov. George Pataki (R), who is stepping down to consider a run for the White House.

Spitzer, who made a name cracking down on unethical business practices on Wall Street, vows to clean up politics in Albany. He advocates public financing for campaigns, nonpartisan redistricting and greater scrutiny of many state independent public authorities.

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Ted Strickland (D)Ken Blackwell (R)Ohio

For the first time in 16 years, a Democrat will be in the governor's mansion in Ohio, a state that helped deliver

a second term to President Bush, a Republican. U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland (D) easily beat J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio's Republican secretary of state, to replace outgoing Gov. Bob Taft (R).

Strickland was bolstered by scandals that have plagued key Republicans in the state, including Taft, who pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges that he violated state ethics laws, becoming the first governor in the state's history convicted of a crime.

Strickland also was helped by a flagging economy. Blackwell, who had been a darling of the GOP's hard-right wing, had been plugging a controversial plan to lease Ohio's 241-mile Turnpike to private interests as his tonic to cure the state's economic ills.

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Brad Henry (D)Ernest Istook (R)Oklahoma

Oklahoma might be a red state in federal elections, but its voters overwhelming re-elected Democratic Gov. Brad Henry for a second term.

Henry beat U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook (R), whose years in Washington, D.C., linked him indirectly to recent scandals. Istook gave to charity \$29,000 that he received from clients and associates of convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff, and one of his campaign workers got caught up in an investigation of inappropriate electronic messages between congressional pages and U.S. Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.), who resigned Sept. 29.

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Ted Kulongoski (D)Ron Saxton (R)Oregon

Gov. Ted Kulongoski became only the third Democratic governor in Oregon's history to win a second term, defeating Republican Ron Saxton, a lawyer and former Portland School Board member.

Both candidates focused on retaining their party's core voters. Although Kulongoski led in most polls, recent polls showed the gap tightening.

In his campaign, Kulongoski jumped on the national anti-Republican mood, tying Saxton to President Bush and the unpopular Iraq war.

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Ed Rendell (D)Lynn Swann (R)
Pennsylvania

Gov. Edward Rendell (D) trounced his Republican opponent, former Pittsburgh Steeler and Hall of Fame wide-receiver Lynn Swann, winning his second and final term allowed under Pennsylvania law.

Rendell, the former mayor of Philadelphia, is a popular incumbent, despite signing into law a controversial pay raise for lawmakers that was so unpopular the Legislature later repealed it.

Swann was one of two black Republicans who sought and were denied governorships this year. (J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio's Republican secretary of state, is the other).

The race for U.S. Senate overshadowed the gubernatorial race, particularly after Rendell jumped out to a commanding lead. U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum (R) was being challenged by Bob Casey (D), the state treasurer and son of a former Pennsylvania governor.

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Charles Fogarty (D)Don Caricieri (R)Rhode Island

Gov. Don Carcieri (R) beat back a strong challenge from Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty (D) to earn a second term in this Democratic-leaning state.

Both campaigns focused on ethics and gambling issues, as well as the state's high unemployment rate. Carcieri managed to overcome Fogarty's attempts to link him to President Bush, who is unpopular in Rhode Island.

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Tommy Moore (D)Mark Sanford (R)South Carolina

Republican Gov. Mark Sanford secured a second term despite several high-profile Republicans around the state lending their support to the Democratic candidate, state Sen. Tommy Moore.

By almost any measure, the governor and his Republican partisans in the legislative leadership have not gotten along. Most observers attribute the disharmony to Sanford's unwillingness to work a system designed to

favor the legislative branch. The governor once brought live pigs to the Statehouse to protest what he called pork in the state budget proposal.

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Jack Billion (D)Mike Rounds (R)South Dakota

South Dakota hasn't elected a Democratic governor since 1974, and that didn't change on Tuesday. Republican incumbent Gov. Mike Rounds won over former state Rep. Jack Billion, a retired surgeon from Sioux Falls.

A slate of 11 ballot measures attracted far more attention during the election. The measures included a repeal of the state's strict new abortion ban -- which Rounds signed -- and proposals to ban gay marriage, hike taxes on tobacco products, revoke video lottery machines and legalize medical use of marijuana.

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Phil Bredesen (D)Jim Bryson (R)Tennessee

Gov. Phil Bredesen (D) had no problem defeating Republican challenger Jim Bryson to win a second term.

Bryson, the former Nashville mayor, made immigration an issue in the race by joining Nashville government efforts to participate in a federal deportation program.

The governor's race was overshadowed by one of the most competitive and watched races for U.S. Senate. That contest was between U.S. Rep. Harold Ford Jr. (D) and former Chattanooga mayor Bob Corker to fill the seat vacated by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R). Ford was hoping to become the first southern black senator in more than a century.

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Chris Bell (D)Rick Perry (R)Texas

Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) survived one of the wackiest governor's races in modern-day history, fending off four challengers.

Perry advanced from lieutenant governor to governor when George W. Bush moved to the White House.

Perry's Democratic rival was former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell, followed by the two independent candidates – singer/humorist/mystery writer Kinky Friedman, and state comptroller and former Republican Carole Keeton Strayhorn, who unsuccessfully tried to have “Grandma” included in her ballot name. Libertarian James Werner also ran.

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Scudder Parker (D)James Douglas (R)Vermont

Gov. James Douglas (R) won his third two-year term, defeating Democratic challenger Scudder Parker, an ordained minister who served in the state Legislature.

Vermont and New Hampshire are the only states that have two-year terms for governors.

Douglas, a GOP moderate, distanced himself from the Bush administration in several areas, including environmental policy and prescription drugs, but he was sharply criticized by some at home for siding with big agriculture in the debate over genetically modified seeds and for failing to advance wind power.

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Jim Doyle (D)Mark Green (R)Wisconsin

Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle (D) won a tight race for re-election and became the first Democratic governor to win a second term since the 1970s.

Both Doyle and his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Mark Green, were dogged by negative stories throughout the race. Conviction of a mid-level state supervisor for throwing a contract to Doyle contributors hurt the incumbent. But Green was put on the defensive when a state elections board demanded that Green give up nearly \$468,000 of campaign money he raised from out-of-state donors as a member of Congress.

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Dave Freudenthal (D)Ray Hunkins

(R)Wyoming

Gov. Dave Freudenthal, a Democrat, easily secured a second term in Wyoming, a Republican stronghold, by trouncing Republican challenger Ray Hunkins, a lawyer and rancher.

Wyoming residents overwhelmingly voted for George Bush and Wyoming's native son, Dick Cheney, in the last two presidential elections. Freudenthal, however, has high performance ratings and his victory was assured early.

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Contact Pamela M. Prah at pprah@stateline.org Comment on this story in the space below by registering with Stateline.org, or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at letters@stateline.org.

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Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Govs -- Dems gaining on GOP

By Pamela M. Prah, Stateline.org Staff Writer

(11:54 p.m. EST, Tuesday)

In this year's sweepstakes for 36 governors' seats, Democrats started the night by securing open seats in Colorado, New York, Massachusetts and Ohio, where Republican governors did not run again. But the GOP hung on to the open seat in Florida, according to early results from CNN and The Associated Press.

Votes still were being tallied in six other open gubernatorial races in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa and Nevada.

What had been expected to be three tight races were called early for the Democrats.

According to AP and CNN projections, Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) held on to her seat, despite an all-out media assault on her handling of the economy by GOP challenger Dick DeVos, a millionaire businessman and heir to the Amway fortune.

Maine Gov. John Baldacci (D) emerged as the victor of a five-way fight. His toughest challenge came from Republican state Sen. Chandler Woodcock, a social conservative. And in Wisconsin, Gov. Jim Doyle (D) was the projected winner over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Mark Green.

Other tight races challenged the re-election hopes of GOP incumbent Govs. Robert Ehrlich Jr. of Maryland and Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota. Republicans had their sights on Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski of Oregon, who on election night was still in a tight race.

Democratic governors in Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Tennessee were on track to retain their seats, while incumbent GOP governors in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Nebraska, South Carolina, South Dakota and Texas also were projected winners, according to early results from CNN and AP.

In a historic win, Deval Patrick is set to become the state's first African-American governor and only the second elected black governor in U.S. history with his projected victory in Massachusetts over Republican Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey. Patrick, a former Clinton administration civil rights official, replaces Gov. Mitt Romney (R), who chose not to run for a second term and is considering a bid for the White House.

The two other black gubernatorial candidates in this election -- both Republican -- appear to have lost, according to the AP. In Pennsylvania, former Pittsburgh Steelers Lynn Swann lost to Democratic incumbent Gov. Edward Rendell. And in Ohio, U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland (D) toppled Republican J. Kenneth Blackwell, who as Ohio's secretary of state and chairman of President Bush's re-election campaign was considered a key figure in helping the president win Ohio in 2004.

Strickland may have been bolstered by scandals that have plagued key Republicans in the state, including outgoing Gov. Bob Taft (R), who pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges that he violated state ethics laws, becoming the first governor in the state's history convicted of a crime.

The Denver Post projected that former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter wins over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez to replace Republican Gov. Bill Owens, who stepped down because of term limits.

In New York, Attorney General Eliot Spitzer was the projected winner over Republican John Faso. Spitzer will be the first Democrat in the governor's mansion after 12 years of Gov. George Pataki (R), who opted not to run to mull a presidential bid in 2008.

Going into the midterm elections, Republicans commanded a 28-to-22 advantage in the nation's governor's suites, but the GOP had 22 governor's posts to defend while Democrats had 14. In addition, nine of the 10 open gubernatorial seats, in which no incumbent was running, are currently in GOP hands.

Other Democratic governors who kept their seats, according to AP projections

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano over Len Munsil.(R)Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich over Illinois Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R)Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius over state Sen. Jim Barnett (R)New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch over state Rep. Jim Coburn (R)New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson over John Dendahl (R)Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry over U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook (R)Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen over Jim Bryson (R)

For the Republicans, the following are retaining their seats:

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley over Lt. Gov. Lucy Baxley (D)Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell over John DeStefano (D)California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over State Treasurer Phil Angelides (D)Georgia Gov. George "Sonny" Perdue over Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor (D)Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle over Randy Iwase (D)Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman over David Hahn (D)South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds over Jack Billion (D) Texas Gov. Rick Perry over former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D) and three other challengersVermont Gov. James Douglas (R) over Scudder ParkerVotes were still being tallied in several competitive governors' races. In Alaska, for example, Republican Sarah Palin goes up against former Gov. Tony Knowles (D) to replace Republican incumbent Gov. Frank Murkowski who lost in the GOP primary.

In Iowa Democratic Secretary of State Chet Culver and GOP opponent, eight-term U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R), are battling to succeed Democratic incumbent Tom Vilsack, who's leaving after two terms to explore a possible presidential bid.

In Nevada, recent allegations put Democrats in striking distance to take the governorship from the GOP. U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons, the Republican candidate for governor to replace term-limited Gov. Kenny Guinn, has denied accusations that he assaulted and propositioned a cocktail waitress after a night of drinking or that he acted improperly in helping a friend get a military contract. However, the incidents could help give Nevada its first female governor, Democratic challenger Dina Titus.

Voters Nov. 7 cast their ballots for 36 governors and 6,119 state lawmakers in 46 states. Also up for grabs were spots for 30 attorneys general and 27 secretaries of state, posts that often serve as launching pads for the governorship. And in a handful of states, voters took up important but fractious social issues such as abortion, stem cell research and affirmative action that could trigger national repercussions. See other Stateline.org stories for the latest updates on statehouse races and ballot measures.

The election is expected to change the balance of power in several statehouses, but results were still pending.

Legislative chambers in at least 14 states are considered in play -- the majority would flip with a change of five or fewer seats and there is a competitive political environment.

Three of those states are Colorado, Iowa and Montana, where Democrats made surprise gains in the 2004 elections. Other states with hot battles for statehouse control include Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Contact Pamela M. Prah at pprah@stateline.org

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For the GOP, Charlie Crist became the first Republican since Reconstruction to succeed another Republican for the governorship, beating five-term U.S. Rep. Jim Davis (D) to fill the shoes of term-limited Gov. Jeb Bush.

Wednesday, November 8, 2006

Untitled

Democrats take majority of governorships

By Pamela M. Prah, Stateline.org Staff Writer

(Updated 3:10 p.m. EST, Wednesday)

For the first time since 1994, Democrats won control of a majority of the nation's governors' mansions, wresting away five Republican seats and ousting one GOP incumbent, Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr.

Unofficial results of the Nov. 7 election put Democrats in charge in 28 states. The party picked up open governor's seats in Arkansas, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio, where Republican governors did not run again. The GOP won open seats in Alaska, Florida, Idaho and Nevada, according to CNN and The Associated Press.

Going into the midterm elections, Republicans had commanded a 28-to-22 advantage in the nation's governor's suites. Preliminary results from the mid-term Nov. 7 contests showed Democrats flipped those margins.

In a close race in Maryland, several news organizations projected Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D) as the winner over Republican Gov. Ehrlich, the state's first GOP governor in 33 years. Ehrlich conceded the race Wednesday afternoon. In another tight contest, Minnesota incumbent Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) was named the victor against Attorney General Mike Hatch.

A state-by-state summary of the 36 gubernatorial winners is provided in a separate story and on Stateline.org's

updated Interactive Elections Guide. Or, [click here](#) for a one-page printable PDF guide to all 36 races.

What had been expected to be three tight races were called early for the Democrats.

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) held on to her seat, despite an all-out media assault on her handling of the economy by GOP challenger Dick DeVos, a millionaire businessman and heir to the Amway fortune.

Maine Gov. John Baldacci (D) emerged as the victor of a five-way fight. His toughest challenge came from Republican state Sen. Chandler Woodcock, a social conservative. And in Wisconsin, Gov. Jim Doyle (D) was the projected winner over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Mark Green (D).

Democratic governors in Arizona, Illinois, Kansas, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Wyoming were on track to retain their seats, while incumbent GOP governors in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Nebraska, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Vermont also were projected winners.

In a historic win in Massachusetts, Deval Patrick is set to become the state's first African-American governor and only the second elected black governor in U.S. history with his projected victory over Republican Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey. Patrick, a former Clinton administration civil rights official, replaces Gov. Mitt Romney (R), who chose not to run for a second term and is considering a bid for the White House.

The two other black gubernatorial candidates in this election -- both Republican -- appear to have lost, according to the AP. In Pennsylvania, former Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann lost to Democratic incumbent Gov. Edward Rendell. And in Ohio, U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland (D) toppled Republican J. Kenneth Blackwell, who as Ohio's secretary of state and chairman of President Bush's re-election campaign was considered a key figure in helping the president win Ohio in 2004.

Strickland may have been bolstered by scandals that have plagued key Republicans in the state, including outgoing Gov. Bob Taft (R), who pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges that he violated state ethics laws, becoming the first governor in the state's history convicted of a crime.

In other open seats, Arkansas Attorney General Mike Beebe (D) was projected the winner over Asa Hutchinson (R) in the contest to succeed term-limited Gov. Mike Huckabee (R). Meanwhile, in Iowa, Democratic Secretary of State Chet Culver appeared to edge out his GOP opponent, eight-term U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R), to keep the Iowa governor's mansion in Democratic hands.

The Denver Post projected that former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter won over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez, to replace Republican Gov. Bill Owens, who must step down because of term limits.

In New York, Attorney General Eliot Spitzer won over Republican John Faso. Spitzer will be the first Democrat in the governor's mansion after 12 years of Gov. George Pataki (R), who opted not to run to mull a presidential bid in 2008.

The GOP's four victories in open-seats included the key state of Florida. Attorney General Charlie Crist became the first Republican since Reconstruction to succeed another Republican for the governorship, beating five-term U.S. Rep. Jim Davis (D) to fill the shoes of term-limited Gov. Jeb Bush. In Idaho, U.S. Rep Butch Otter (R) held tight to win the Idaho governor's race over his Democratic opponent, newspaper publisher Jerry Brady. In Alaska, Republican Sarah Palin made history, becoming the state's first female governor with a victory over former Gov. Tony Knowles (D). Palin replaces Republican incumbent Gov. Frank Murkowski, whom she beat in the GOP primary.

And Wednesday morning, the AP gave the Nevada race to Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons over Democratic challenger Dina Titus. Gibbons will replace term-limited Gov. Kenny Guinn (R). The race tightened late in recent weeks after allegations surfaced that Gibbons assaulted and propositioned a cocktail waitress after a night of drinking or that he acted improperly in helping a friend get a military contract. Gibbons denied wrongdoing

Republicans were at a numerical disadvantage going into the midterm elections. The GOP had 22 governor's posts to defend, while Democrats had 14. In addition, nine of the 10 open gubernatorial seats, in which no incumbent was running, are currently in GOP hands.

Other Democratic governors who kept their seats, according to AP projections

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano over Len Munsil.(R) Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich over Illinois Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R) Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius over state Sen. Jim Barnett (R) New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch over state Rep. Jim Coburn (R) New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson over John Dendahl (R) Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry over U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook (R) Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski over Ron Saxton (R) Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen over Jim Bryson (R) Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal over Ray Hunkins (R)

For the Republicans, the following are retaining their seats:

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley over Lt. Gov. Lucy Baxley (D) California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over State Treasurer Phil Angelides (D) Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell over John DeStefano (D) Georgia Gov. George "Sonny" Perdue over Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor (D) Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle over Randy Iwase (D) Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman over David Hahn (D) Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri (R) over Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty (D) South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds over Jack Billion (D) Texas Gov. Rick Perry over former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D) and three other challengers Vermont Gov. James Douglas (R) over Scudder Parker Record-low approval

of Washington didn't play a factor in three of the eight races that had current U.S. congressmen as candidates. Idaho U.S. Rep. Otter (R), Nevada U.S. Rep. Gibbons (R) and Ohio U.S. Rep. Strickland (D) all were elected as governors.

Voters Nov. 7 cast their ballots for 36 governors and 6,119 state lawmakers in 46 states. Also up for grabs were spots for 30 attorneys general and 27 secretaries of state, posts that often serve as launching pads governorships. And in a handful of states, voters took up important but fractious social issues such as abortion, stem cell research and affirmative action that could trigger national repercussions. See other Stateline.org stories for the latest updates on statehouse races and ballot measures.

Contact Pamela M. Prah at pprah@stateline.org

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Wednesday, November 8, 2006

S.D. abortion ban, Ariz. gay marriage ban fail

By Daniel C. Vock, Stateline.org Staff Writer

(Updated 2:32 p.m. EST, Wednesday)

Arizona has become the first state in the country to reject a ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriage, on the same night that South Dakota voters refused to make their state a test case in the fight to outlaw abortion.

South Dakota voters pulled the plug on an attempt to challenge the landmark abortion case of Roe v. Wade, as citizens there overrode a law that would have banned abortion in that state. In a ballot campaign that drew nationwide attention and dollars, opponents of the ban succeeded in taking it off the books by a vote of 56 percent to 44 percent with 99 percent of votes tallied.

The gay marriage vote in Arizona is likely to capture national attention, even as seven more states on Election Day joined the 20 states that already had passed constitutional prohibitions on gay marriage.

Arizona refused to outlaw gay marriage by a vote of 51 to 49, with 98 percent of voting precincts counted. The vote is likely to spur debate about whether public opposition to same-sex unions is weakening since Massachusetts became the lone state to allow gays and lesbians to marry in May 2004.

Among the most contentious of the 205 measures on ballots in 37 states was a proposal on stem cell research in Missouri. The measure to write protections for stem cell research into the Missouri Constitution won by a narrow margin, according to The Associated Press and CNN. The Missouri secretary of state listed 51 percent of voters approving the initiative, with 95 percent of precincts counted and a margin of fewer than 27,000 votes.

Anti-tax activists lost campaigns to impose limits on state spending in Maine, Nebraska and Oregon through what are popularly called a Taxpayers' Bill of Rights.

Minimum wage hikes passed in six states -- Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio. Likewise, voters in at least nine states passed ballot measures to limit government's power to condemn private land through eminent domain. But more controversial proposals to reimburse landowners for land-use restrictions failed in California, Idaho and Washington.

Here's a look at hotly contested measures on state ballots, based on vote tallies from secretary of state offices and projections by The Associated Press, CNN, the National Conference of State Legislatures and local news sources:

ABORTION: South Dakota lawmakers touched off a national tempest by passing a strict abortion ban aimed at setting up a legal challenge to Roe v. Wade, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court landmark ruling legalizing abortion. South Dakota voters rejected that law, which would have made it a felony for anyone to help a woman end her pregnancy, except to save the life of the mother.

In Oregon and California, voters defeated measures that would have required doctors to notify a parent before performing an abortion on a minor. In both states, voters had previously rejected similar measures. Thirty-five

states already have laws requiring parental involvement in a girl's abortion decision.

GAY MARRIAGE: Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin decided to amend their state constitutions to ban gay marriage. Arizona defeated the measure.

President Bush and other Republicans seized on a New Jersey court ruling released just two weeks before the election to rally conservatives in the final days of campaigning. The Garden State's high court said the state constitution required lawmakers to provide equal legal rights for gays, either through civil unions or same-sex marriage.

Twenty states already have adopted similar constitutional same-sex marriage bans; no state had ever rejected one.

In addition to a ban on gay marriage, Coloradoans rejected a separate bid to extend marital rights to same-sex couples through "domestic partnerships." See Stateline.org's Backgrounder for a full rundown on the same-sex marriage issue.

MINIMUM WAGE: The citizens of Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio voted to increase the minimum wage in their states above the federally mandated \$5.15 an hour. They will join 23 states that already have set their minimum wages higher than the federal level. Democrats favor wage hikes as a way to alleviate poverty, while some Republicans say government mandated wage increases hurt businesses and endanger jobs.

With a Democratic majority just voted into the U.S. House of Representatives, a federal minimum wage increase is likely to be one of the first proposals considered by the new Congress.

SPENDING LIMITS: Maine, Nebraska and Oregon voters soundly rejected ballot measures that would cap increases in state spending.

Approval of the measures this year would have breathed new life into anti-tax crusaders' efforts to clamp down on state spending. Similar spending initiatives this year got booted off ballots in Michigan, Montana, Nevada and Oklahoma, primarily because of concerns about the validity of the signatures.

The measures were modeled after Colorado's landmark Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, which was temporarily suspended in 2005 after voters decided the limits were cutting too deeply into education, transportation and other programs.

STEM CELLS: Missouri voters narrowly endorsed a measure that would ensure the legality of embryonic stem-cell research in the state, after several unsuccessful attempts by Missouri lawmakers to ban those studies. The Missouri secretary of state listed 51 percent of voters approving the initiative, with 95 percent of precincts counted and a margin of fewer than 27,000 votes.

Supporters of the measure touted its potential for finding life-saving cures, as well as its economic benefits. Opponents called the research immoral, because it requires the destruction of human embryos. Since President Bush restricted funding for the research in 2001, six states have moved to support the science.

PROPERTY RIGHTS: Voters in 12 states decided whether to strengthen property rights, making the issue the most popular one on state ballots this year.

Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon and South Carolina rolled back governments' eminent domain powers by prohibiting the forced sale of land to private developers for economic development. Nevada must pass the measure again in 2008 for it to take effect. (Louisiana voters approved a similar measure in September.)

In related measures, California, Washington and Idaho voters refused to follow Oregon's 2004 example of requiring state and local governments to pay property owners whose land values were diminished by land-use restrictions. Arizona, however, approved a similar "regulatory takings" clause.

The Arizona, California and Idaho measures combined regulatory takings provisions with eminent domain questions.

The property rights backlash is a response to the Supreme Court's July 2005 decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*, which allowed a local government to raze homes to make way for an office and shopping center.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: Michigan voters overwhelmingly decided to end affirmative action programs in college admissions and government hiring.

The issue became a political hot potato after the U.S. Supreme Court decided in 2003 to allow the University of Michigan to use race as a factor in admissions.

The Michigan proposal is based on a 1996 California measure that bans preferential treatment based on race and gender. Washington state voters also passed the measure in 1998, but the issue lost momentum when it failed to get on the Florida ballot in 2000. No state voted on it again until this year. The outcome in Michigan could influence whether the measure's backers attempt to take the issue to voters in other states.

SMOKING: Tobacco-related measures were on the ballot in eight states. Arizona, Ohio and Nevada voters chose a strict smoking ban and rejected a looser ban backed by Big Tobacco.

Arizona and South Dakota imposed higher cigarette taxes, while voters in Missouri and California rejected similar tax hikes. Florida and Idaho citizens decided to earmark funds from the national tobacco settlement toward designated causes.

GAMBLING: Questions on gaming were on the ballot in five states: Arkansas, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Ohio and South Dakota.

Ohioans defeated a question that would have allowed slots at race tracks and at two Cleveland-area facilities, while Rhode Island voters turned down a proposal to permit a tribal casino. Arkansas voted to allow charities to hold bingos. Nebraska voted against allowing video gambling, but in South Dakota where video gambling is now legal, residents chose to keep it.

OTHER: Several one-of-a-kind measures generated interest but failed, including a measure to enter Arizona voters into a \$1 million lottery; an attempt to let Massachusetts grocery stores sell wine; an effort to overhaul child custody rules in North Dakota; and a move to allow mourning dove hunting in Michigan.

Wisconsin voters approved a non-binding, advisory measure calling for reinstatement of the death penalty. As a result, the Legislature is likely to consider calling for the death penalty in first degree, intentional homicide convictions that are supported by DNA evidence.

Among the 37 states to certify ballot measures this fall, Arizona had the heftiest ballot – with 19 questions. The next-longest list was in Colorado (with 14 measures), California (13), South Dakota (11) and Nevada and Oregon (both with 10). Louisiana voters weighed in on 13 ballot issues in the Sept. 13 primary and eight more yesterday.

For more details about this year's ballot measures, including links to the full text of the questions put to voters, check out Stateline.org's interactive voting guide. Complete coverage of this year's elections can be found on Stateline.org's 2006 state elections page.

-- Stateline.org staff writers Kavan Peterson, Pamela M. Prah, Christine Vestal and Pauline Vu contributed.

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Wednesday, November 8, 2006

Democratic wave washes over statehouses

By Eric Kelderman, Stateline.org Staff Writer

(Updated 5:25 p.m. EST, Wednesday)

Democrats broke the partisan deadlock in the nation's statehouses Nov. 7 by capturing control of one or both legislative chambers in at least seven states, including the New Hampshire House for the first time since at least 1922.

Democratic statehouse victories paralleled the party's coup in the U.S. House. Democrats now will control both legislative chambers in 23 states, more than they have held since 1994, up from 19 currently. Republicans will control both chambers in 16 state legislatures, down from 20 currently. Ten statehouses will be split between the parties, including dead-even ties in the Montana Senate and Oklahoma Senate, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

(The totals do not include Nebraska's unicameral Legislature, which is nonpartisan.)

In addition to New Hampshire, Democrats won new legislative majorities in Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon and Wisconsin. They also widened their majorities in several other closely divided statehouses, including in Colorado, Kentucky and North Carolina.

One of only two bright spots for the GOP was in Montana. Republicans lucked into a one-seat advantage in the Montana House, a chamber that had been tied 50-50, when a Constitution Party candidate defeated a Democrat. In addition, the GOP added two seats in the Montana Senate to erase a Democratic majority and move that body to a 25-25 tie.

In Oklahoma, Republicans gained two state Senate seats to move that chamber from a Democratic advantage to a 24-24 tie. However, a Democratic lieutenant governor who can cast tie-breaking votes still gives Democrats an edge in that chamber.

Altogether, 6,119 of the nation's 7,382 state legislative seats were on the ballot in 46 states. Going into the election, Democrats held a tiny, 21-member majority in total legislative seats nationwide, nearly an even divide between Republicans and Democrats. Now, preliminary numbers from NCSL show Democratic legislators will outnumber Republicans by 667 nationwide.

Historically, Democrats dominated statehouses from the 1950s until the 1994 midterm election -- during President Bill Clinton's first term -- when the GOP netted more than 500 seats and gained control of a majority of state legislatures for the first time in 40 years. Republicans continued their gains through the 2002 elections when they captured a nationwide majority of state legislative seats -- the only time since 1938 that the president's party won statehouse seats.

Democrats on Nov. 7 made a net gain of at least 275 state legislative seats, actually fewer than the 360-seat average net loss for the president's party in a midterm election, according to NCSL.

The most stunning shift was in New Hampshire, home of the nation's kickoff presidential primary and of popular Democratic Gov. John Lynch, who won re-election in a landslide. Democrats gained more than 80 seats to grab a majority in the 400-member House, where Democrats had been in the minority since at least 1922, according to The Associated Press. Democrats also picked up five seats -- giving them 13 of 24 seats -- to flip control of the New Hampshire Senate, where they have been in the minority since 1988.

Democrats also ended election night with control of the Iowa House, Senate and governor's mansion for the first time in 40 years. The party gained five seats in the Iowa House and now has a 54-45 majority, with one seat undecided, according to NCSL. Democrats moved the state Senate from a 25-25 tie to a 29-21 majority, according to NCSL. Democrat Chet Culver defeated U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R) in the gubernatorial race to replace outgoing Gov. Tom Vilsack (D).

In Colorado, considered a bellwether for Democratic prospects to regain footing in the West, the election of Democrat Bill Ritter to replace term-limited Republican Gov. Bill Owens puts Democrats in complete control of the Denver statehouse for the first time since 1958. The party widened its 2004 legislative gains, improving its one-seat margin in the state Senate to a 20-15 majority and gaining three seats in the state House for a 38-27 lead, NCSL reported.

Other states where Republicans lost control to Democrats include:

- The Indiana House, where Democrats won control with a 51-49 majority in a chamber that has changed hands in seven of the past 10 elections, including 2004 when the GOP prevailed. Republicans held their 33-17 majority in the state Senate.
- Michigan Democrats took control of the state House for the first time in 12 years, gaining six seats for a 58-52 majority. Republicans lost a state Senate seat but hung on to a 21-17 majority.
- In Minnesota, Democrats now will control both legislative chambers after winning 20 seats to take an 86-48 majority in the House and keeping control of the state Senate.

- In the Oregon House, Democrats won four seats and took a 31-27 majority over the GOP.
- The Wisconsin Statehouse will be split between the parties, with Democrats winning four seats and an 18-15 majority in the state Senate. They also gained seven seats in the state House, but the GOP will hold a 53-46 majority.

Democrats held off Republican challenges and widened their lead in several other chambers, including:

- In Kentucky, Democrats picked up five seats and increased their majority in the House to 61-38. The GOP maintains a 21-16 majority in the state Senate.
- In North Carolina, early returns showed that scandal-tainted Speaker Jim Black (D) maintained his seat by fewer than 10 votes, said elections expert Tim Storey of NCSL. Democrats added at least three House seats to their majority and won two seats in the state Senate to widen their margin there to 31-19.

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Wednesday, November 8, 2006

Democratic swell buoys attorneys general

By Kavan Peterson, Stateline.org Staff Writer

In races for state attorney general, Democrats ousted the incumbent in Kansas and picked up two open seats from Republicans, increasing their hold on state top cop offices from 29 to 31, while the GOP picked up one Democratic seat in Wisconsin.

The biggest upset was in Kansas, where Democrat Paul Morrison defeated incumbent Republican Attorney General Phill Kline by 58 percent to 42 percent, with 100 percent of precincts reporting. Democrats also gained in Nevada and Ohio, winning open seats formerly held by Republicans. The GOP gained one formerly Democratic seat in Wisconsin, where incumbent Democratic Attorney General Peggy Lautenschlager had already been knocked out of the race in the primary.

Kline, a maverick social conservative, blamed national abortion rights groups for pouring nearly a million dollars into the race to help his Democratic opponent, who switched over from the GOP prior to the race. Kline angered critics by subpoenaing women's medical records from two abortion clinics. He also was accused by two abortion clinics of leaking some of the records to conservative TV talk show host Bill O'Reilly, but Kline denied he shared any documents.

A spokesperson for NARAL Pro-Choice America, the nation's largest abortion rights group, said only volunteers, not cash, were sent to Kansas.

Democrats won all but two of 12 open attorneys general races, including Arkansas, California, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York and Ohio.

Wisconsin Republican J.B. Van Hollen, a former U.S. attorney, defeated Dane County Executive Kathleen M. Falk, a Democrat, to become the first Republican attorney general in Wisconsin in 16 years. Falk had defeated Lautenschlager in a bitter primary race that focused attention on the incumbent's 2004 guilty plea for drunken driving.

Florida Republican Bill McCollum held onto that state's Republican-controlled attorney general office, defeating Democrat Walter Campbell.

Among the 30 races for attorney general Nov. 7, all eight incumbent Democrats won re-election and Republican incumbents held onto nine of 10 seats. Incumbent attorneys general in Iowa, Nebraska and South Carolina ran unopposed this year.

The office of attorney general is the second most powerful in state government and increasingly has served as a stepping stone to higher office. Three of four sitting attorneys general who ran for governor this year were elected. Arkansas Attorney General Mike Beebe (D), Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist (R) and New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer (D) won their bids for governor, while Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch (D) lost narrowly to incumbent Gov. Tom Pawlenty (R). Six current governors and seven U.S. senators are former state attorneys general.

The Democratic pickup in Kansas was surprising because defeating an incumbent attorney general is particularly difficult, said James E. Tierney, the director of the National State Attorneys General Program at Columbia Law School and former Democratic attorney general of Maine. The nature of the office -- locking up bad guys, going after corrupt businesses and alerting consumers to fraud -- generates a steady stream of positive news for incumbents to campaign on. In fact, three incumbent attorneys general in Iowa, Nebraska and South Carolina ran unopposed this year.

In addition, powerful business interests backing Republican attorneys general through groups such as the

U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) claim to have spent an estimated \$10 million to \$15 million each in hopes of expanding their hold on attorney general seats. The exact amount cannot be verified because local chambers of commerce and other groups that receive donations from these organizations do not have to report it.

In comparison, the Democratic Attorneys General Association (DAGA) was reported to have spent an estimated \$2 million to support Democratic candidates this election cycle.

State attorneys general have been in the spotlight in recent years for taking on big tobacco, corporations such as Microsoft, and even the Bush administration. Corporations have chafed at what they see as an attempt by mostly Democratic attorneys general to regulate big businesses through multi-state litigation.

The top donors to groups such as RAGA have been corporations such as GlaxoSmithKline, cigarette maker Philip Morris' parent Altria, casino operator Harrah's, Pepsi-Cola and AT&T, reported the The News Journal in Wilmington, Del.

Led by former Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore (D), several states won the largest civil settlement in U.S. history against tobacco companies in 1998, requiring the companies to pay states more than \$246 billion over 25 years. New York's Spitzer, who is moving from the attorney general's office to the governor's suite, made headlines suing major Wall Street firms for fraud, microchip manufacturers for price-fixing and the Bush administration and Midwest power plants over air pollution.

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Contact Kavan Peterson at kpeterson@stateline.org.

Related stories:

Wis. AG election a race to the bottom

Friday, November 10, 2006

Untitled

Dems grab state balance of power

By Pamela M. Prah, Stateline.org Staff Writer

Democrats posted big gains across the board in Tuesday's election, nearly doubling the number of states where they control both the legislature and the governor's office as well as sweeping to power in the U.S. Congress.

Fifteen state governments are now solidly blue politically, seven more than before the voting. Ten state capitals are fully in Republicans' hands, down from 12. The other 25 states have divided government.

The Democratic surge was not restricted by region, and puts the party in a strong position going into the 2008 presidential election because of the vast new extent of its grip on the levers of politics and policy.

In Tuesday's election, the Democrats picked up four open governors' seats that had been in GOP hands. The statehouses likewise remained in Democrats' hands:

Arkansas - state Attorney General Mike Beebe (D) defeated Asa Hutchinson (R) in the contest to succeed term-limited Gov. Mike Huckabee (R).

Colorado- Former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter won over his Republican challenger, U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez, to replace Republican Gov. Bill Owens, who must step down because of term limits.

Maryland - Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D) prevailed over Republican Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr., the only incumbent governor to go down in the midterm elections. It was the first time an incumbent Maryland governor was defeated since 1951, according to The Washington Post.

Massachusetts – Deval Patrick (D) trounced Republican Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey in the contest to replace Gov. Mitt Romney (R), who chose not to run for a second term and is considering a bid for the White House. Patrick becomes the state's first African-American governor and only the second elected black governor in U.S. history. Two other important pickups came in Iowa and New Hampshire. In Iowa, Democrats now control both the legislature and governor's mansion for the first time in 40 years. The party gained five seats in the Iowa House and now has a 54-45 majority, with one seat undecided, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Democrats moved the state Senate from a 25-25 tie to a 29-21 majority, according to NCSL. The governor's mansion remains in Democratic hands as Secretary of State Democrat Chet Culver defeated U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R) to replace outgoing Gov. Tom Vilsack (D).

Even more remarkable was the Democratic tide in New Hampshire, which put the party in control of both the legislative and executive branches for the first time since just after the Civil War..

"There were many gratifying wins [Nov. 7], but the most gratifying of all was seeing New Hampshire (turn) from what was a red state ... to a blue state," former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, chair of the Democratic National Committee, said at a Nov. 8 news conference.

Voters in New Hampshire, home of the nation's kickoff presidential primary, re-elected Democratic Gov. John Lynch in a landslide over state Rep. Jim Coburn (R). Democrats gained more than 80 seats to grab a majority

in the 400-member House, where they had been in the minority since at least 1922. Democrats also picked up five seats – giving them 13 of 24 seats -- to flip control of the New Hampshire Senate, where they have been in the minority since 1988.

And in Oregon, Democrats won four seats in the House, giving them a 31-27 edge over the GOP and maintained their majority status in the Senate. Oregon incumbent Gov. Ted Kulongoski (D) was re-elected over Ron Saxton (R).

Some Democrats are already showing how they would like to exert their new power:

In New Hampshire, several prominent Democrats indicate they want to roll back the state's controversial 2003 parental notification law on abortion, according to Foster's Daily Democrat in Dover. Gov. Lynch likewise opposes the law.

Iowa's new leaders there made hiking the state minimum wage a top priority, the Sioux City Journal reported.

In Michigan, newly re-elected Gov. Jennifer Granholm has indicated she will push to lift restrictions on embryonic stem cell research and to revise or renew an expiring business tax. Granholm defeated Dick DeVos (R), a millionaire businessman and heir to the Amway fortune.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who heads the Democratic Governors Association, told Stateline.org that his party will use their majorities to advance policies that expand health care to the uninsured, improve education, including higher pay for teachers, and make the country more energy sufficient.

“Democratic governors throughout the country have been the true innovators in finding an energy policy for this country that reduces our energy dependence from 65 percent to a goal that I think is achievable, to 10 percent,” Richardson said.

States with Democratic governors command 295 electoral votes, up from 126 before the election, a factor Richardson said will be a “huge impact for the presidential race in '08.” Richardson, who trounced Republican challenger John Dendahl, said he would announce in January whether he would run for president.

Historically, the party that controls the governorships has an advantage in a presidential contest. When Bill Clinton was first elected president in 1992, for example, Democrats held most of the governors' seats (27), and when George W. Bush first took the White House in 2000, Republicans were in charge (31).

The party in charge likewise casts a long shadow over future congressional campaigns. That's because in 44 states, state lawmakers are in charge of redrawing congressional districts and can use their power to help their political party.

Going into the midterm elections, Republicans had a 28-to-22 advantage in governors. That number has now flipped.

Democrats now have a majority of the governor for the first time since 1994 and the party controls 23 state legislatures, more than they have held since 1994. Republicans now control both chambers in 16 state legislatures and nine statehouses will be split between the parties, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Democrats also picked up governorships in Ohio and New York, where Republican incumbents did not run again. While Democrats gained seats in the Ohio legislature, they were not enough to wrest either chamber from the GOP. The chambers remain split in New York.

In Ohio, U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland (D) toppled Republican J. Kenneth Blackwell, who as Ohio's secretary of state and chairman of President Bush's re-election campaign was considered a key figure in helping the president win Ohio in 2004.

Strickland may have been bolstered by scandals that have plagued key Republicans in the state, including outgoing Gov. Bob Taft (R), who pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges that he violated state ethics laws, becoming the first governor in the state's history convicted of a crime.

Blackwell was one of two black gubernatorial candidates who lost in this election. Former Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann lost to Democratic incumbent Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell.

In New York, Attorney General Eliot Spitzer won over Republican John Faso. Spitzer will be the first Democrat in the governor's mansion after 12 years of Gov. George Pataki (R), who opted not to run to mull a presidential bid in 2008.

Republicans picked up victories in four gubernatorial open-seats, of which three are in states in which the GOP had already controlled the governor and statehouses.

Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist became the first Republican since Reconstruction to succeed another Republican for the governorship, beating five-term U.S. Rep. Jim Davis (D) to fill the shoes of term-limited Gov. Jeb Bush.

Idaho U.S. Rep Butch Otter (R) held tight to win the Idaho governor's race over his Democratic opponent, newspaper publisher Jerry Brady.

Alaska Republican Sarah Palin made history, becoming the state's first female governor with a victory over former Gov. Tony Knowles (D). Palin replaces Republican incumbent Gov. Frank Murkowski, whom she beat in the GOP primary.

And in Nevada, Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons held on to defeat Democratic challenger Dina Titus to replace term-limited Gov. Kenny Guinn (R). The race tightened late in recent weeks after allegations surfaced that Gibbons assaulted and propositioned a cocktail waitress after a night of drinking or that he acted improperly in helping a friend get a military contract. Gibbons denied wrongdoing. The Nevada statehouse remained split, with Republicans holding on to the majority in the Senate and Democrats in the House.

Republicans were at a numerical disadvantage going into the midterm elections. The GOP had 22 governor's posts to defend, while Democrats had 14. In addition, nine of the 10 open gubernatorial seats, in which no incumbent was running, are currently in GOP hands.

Other Democratic governors who kept their seats:

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano over Len Munsil.(R) Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich over Illinois Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R) Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius over state Sen. Jim Barnett (R) Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry over U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook (R) Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen over Jim Bryson (R) Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal over Ray Hunkins (R)

For the Republicans, the following retained their seats:

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley over Lt. Gov. Lucy Baxley (D) California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over State Treasurer Phil Angelides (D) Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell over John DeStefano (D) Georgia Gov. George "Sonny" Perdue over Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor (D) Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle over Randy Iwase (D) Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman over David Hahn (D) Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri (R) over Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty (D) South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds over Jack Billion (D) Texas Gov. Rick Perry over former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D) and three other challengers Vermont Gov. James Douglas (R) over Scudder Parker
Record-low approval of Washington didn't play a factor in three of the eight races that had current U.S. congressmen as candidates. Idaho U.S. Rep. Otter (R), Nevada U.S. Rep. Gibbons (R) and Ohio U.S. Rep. Strickland (D) all were elected as governors.

The '06 election also was historic for the highest number of women governors elected at six, raising the number of women governors to nine and matching the record high set in 1994.

The '06 election also was historic for the number of women governors elected at six, putting the number of women governors in the country at nine, the same as 1994.

Voters Nov. 7 cast their ballots for 36 governors and 6,119 state lawmakers in 46 states. Also up for grabs were spots for 30 attorneys general and 27 secretaries of state, posts that often serve as launching pads governorships. And in a handful of states, voters took up important but fractious social issues such as abortion, stem cell research and affirmative action that could trigger national repercussions. See other Stateline.org stories for the latest updates on statehouse races and ballot measures.

A state-by-state summary of the 36 gubernatorial winners is provided in a separate story and on Stateline.org's updated Interactive Elections Guide. Or, click here for a one-page printable PDF guide to all 36 races.

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Voters wisely shun ill-advised initiatives

By Neal Pierce, special to Stateline.org, posted 11/12/06

Voters across the nation didn't just deliver what President Bush now calls a "thumping" to his Republican Party and its congressional and state house candidates.

Americans also voted down some very ill-advised initiatives that aim to control how we spend our money and shape our land.

Three states had so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (Tabor) amendments on their ballots, and all failed badly -- in Oregon, the measure went down 71-29 percent; in Nebraska, 70-30 percent, and in Maine, 54-46 percent.

Tabor amendments are the anti-tax crusaders' most recent hope. They're modeled after a 1992 Colorado initiative (now suspended) that limited the state budget to the sum of inflation plus population change. Taxes or spending can only be raised by a supermajority of the Legislature or popular statewide referendum. Several Tabor efforts appear to be funded by fiercely anti-tax New York real estate magnate Howard Rich and his Americans for Limited Government organization -- imported formulas some critics suggest are the opposite of "grass roots," in fact more like transplanted "Astroturf."

Still, ever since California's Proposition 13 in 1978 sparked nationwide votes to curb government, every camp from local officials to teacher groups to police and firefighters have jumped to oppose financial straightjackets on state or local government. Their defensive argument: don't hobble essential services; let elected representatives manage public budgets.

But what if people believe taxes or overall government spending are too high? The anti-Tabor campaign in Maine this year was bolstered by an unusual Brookings Institution report on the state's choices, commissioned by a statewide nonprofit, GrowSmart Maine.

True, said the report, Maine does have unusually high property and personal income taxes, and true, with 262 school districts, it's overspending the norm for K-12 education. Plus, state administrative expenses are high.

How then to cope? The Brookings proposal: Think, then cut. Create a bipartisan Maine Government Efficiency Commission of civic leaders, empowered to review all state functions, identify practical savings, and then send its proposals, with a top goal of \$100 million budget reduction, to the Legislature for a single up-or-down vote.

To spur revenues, there'd be a \$200-million Maine Innovation Jobs Fund investing in research and development for promising industries and partnerships. To help towns and cities spur tourism and curb sprawl, there'd be simplified building codes. An increased lodging tax would shift taxes to tourists. The top Maine income tax rate would be cut.

Instead of the "gimmickry, one-size-fits-all" of Tabor amendment budget cuts, says Brookings's Mark Muro, principal author of the report, the Maine formula does economize, but then goes on to outline strategic moves for shared future prosperity.

A continent away, the same theme of forward-looking investment sparked voters' approval -- much to veteran observers' surprise -- of the entire \$37 billion panoply of public works bonds that Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger thrashed out in negotiations with California's Democratic legislators last spring. Roads, bridges, schools, ports, levees, seismic refits, port security, affordable housing, local transportation funds -- all and more are included.

Why did such a mega-package pass? In significant part, says William Fulton, president of Solimar Research Group and publisher of California Planning & Development Report, because of its bipartisan support. He suggests that Schwarzenegger, analogous to the legendary Earl Warren, governor at the end of World War II, is positioned (collaborating with Democrats controlling the Legislature) to shape the entire next generation of California growth.

What Californians didn't pass was a "regulatory taking" property rights measure proposition that would give private owners sweeping rights to sue government for the purported value they claim their property loses because of government regulations.

The takings measure, modeled on the controversial Measure 37 initiative that Oregon voters approved two years ago, goes far beyond simple eminent domain reform (passed in eight states this fall). Instead, it gives private property owners standing to sue governments for dramatic settlements in compensation for alleged profit if they were free to build on protected farmlands or open spaces.

Oregon voters gave 61 percent to the regulatory takings in 2004. But now some serious buyers' remorse is reported. More than 60 percent of Oregonians who say they've heard a lot about the impacts of Measure 37 indicate they'd now oppose it, according to a poll released in late October by the Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund and the Izaak Walton League of America.

Maybe other states are wising up. Nov. 7's "no" votes on the Oregon-like regulatory taking measures were 48-52 percent in California, 24-76 percent in Idaho, 42-58 percent in Washington. Only Arizonans, by a 65-35 percent margin, approved, possibly confusing the issue with eminent domain.

The moral, from spending to takings, should be simple: bipartisanship and thoughtful debate produce dramatically better results than the rigid formulas today's political ideologues so often try to foist on us.

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