

GOP Expands Statehouse Dominance in 2020 Election

By: Katie Caprez

Election Day is now behind us. Though voters had been repeatedly cautioned to be patient, Ohioans need not wonder who will control the Ohio Statehouse come January. Republicans saw resounding victories, picking up seats in both the Ohio Senate and the Ohio House.

Each of Ohio's 88 counties began the vote tally by counting absentee ballots. Statewide, nearly 3.8 million Ohioans requested absentee ballots for this year's General Election. As of writing, the 197,858 absentee ballots remained unreturned, and nearly 89,851 provisional ballots were not yet recorded.

That the wide majority of mail-in ballots were returned was a "very strong indicator that election mail is moving quickly," per Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose's office. In a press conference Tuesday afternoon, LaRose himself called early voting "a resounding success," and described smooth logistical sailing for BOEs on Election Day.

Fear about voter intimidation, massive technical glitches or other catastrophe dominated conversations before Election Day. What actually happened? Ohio voters enjoyed a day with generally clear skies and without any major, systemic voting problems.

One hundred and sixteen contests for seats in the Ohio House and Senate were on voters' ballots this year. As of writing, winner-indicating results are available for most contests, and though the election has not yet been certified, it is abundantly clear that November 3, 2020 was a winning night for Ohio Republicans.

It was always known that Republicans would retain their supermajority in the Ohio Senate, but come January, it seems there may be an additional GOP vote to count on. Sen. Sean O'Brien, a Brookfield Democrat, lost his seat to his GOP challenger, Sandra O'Brien. Sen. Stephanie Kunze of Franklin County presently holds a lead of just 41 votes over her well-funded Democratic challenger, Crystal Lett. Her race is headed to a mandatory recount and may depend upon the provisional and absentee ballots yet to be counted. Should these results hold, the State Senate will be made up of 25 Republicans and 8 Democrats.

Democrats in the Ohio House were unable to leverage the Householder corruption scandal to bust Republicans' supermajority in their Chamber. In fact, the Republicans picked up four seats, defeating incumbent Democrats Randi Clites (D-Ravenna) and Gil Blair (D-Mineral Ridge) and flipping two vacant Democratic seats on the Pennsylvania border. In the 134th General Assembly, the Ohio House will be comprised of 64 Republicans and 35 Democrats.

Former-Speaker Larry Householder's hyper-conservative Perry County supporters re-elected him to another term, but the FBI investigation into Householder's wrongdoing provided valuable ammunition against one of his Republican colleagues – Rep. Dave Greenspan of Cuyahoga County. Monique Smith, his Democratic challenger, won with 50.88% of the vote.

There will be no changes to Ohio's Congressional delegation to the 117th Congress, with all incumbents who were on the ballot in 2020 retaining their seats.

Boards of Elections must count any absentee ballot postmarked by November 2 and received by November 13. The official canvass will begin on November 14. Upon the canvass' completion on November 18, changes in vote totals may be made. Regardless, Ohio Republicans will retain strong majorities in the Ohio General Assembly.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of the listed professionals.

Lewis Adkins, Jr.

Practice Group Manager
Public Law, Regulatory and Finance
216.615.4842 | ladkins@ralaw.com

Todd Book

614.723.2010 | tbook@ralaw.com

Katie Caprez

614.723.2038 | kcaprez@ralaw.com

Jason Dodson

330.849.6631 | jdodson@ralaw.com

Diana Feitl

216.615.4838 | dfeitl@ralaw.com

Daniel G. Hilson

614.723.2060 | dhilson@ralaw.com

Marcus Pringle

216.696.7077 | mrpringle@ralaw.com

George Sarkis

330.849.6606 | gsarkis@ralaw.com

Galen Schuerlein

216.820.4238 | gschuerlein@ralaw.com

Sherri Warner

614.723.2110 | swarner@ralaw.com

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