



Not Many Surprises In Oregon Election Results

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The 2016 election cycle - the one that everyone suffered under - has mercifully ended. The result is one of the biggest presidential election upsets in U.S. history. Once again calling the electoral college into the spotlight, the winner of the popular vote and the President-Elect are not the same person. With the Republicans maintaining control of both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, and both the legislative and executive branches of government controlled by the same party, perhaps they will finally get something accomplished.

Speculation is rife about what Trump's election could mean to both this country and to the world. He offered so few policy specifics on the campaign trail, it is hard to predict with any certainty what the impacts will be. Just as John Kennedy successfully introduced television to presidential politics in 1960, Trump recognized the potential for social media in presidential politics and how to effectively use Facebook and Twitter. He was able to position himself as the outsider and tapped into a political loneliness in the "flyover states" that none of the professional polling firms were able to elicit.

In Oregon, at least, the election results brought few surprises. Senator Ron Wyden, Oregon's five members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum all won re-election handily. Governor Kate Brown cruised to an easy victory in the special election to fill the final two years of what would have been John Kitzhaber's historic fourth term. State Representative Tobias Read eked out a win in the State Treasurer's race, in part because Independent Chris Telfer, a former Republican legislator, likely siphoned votes away from Republican candidate Jeff Gudman.

Probably the biggest upset in Oregon was the Secretary of State's race. Former Republican State Representative Dennis Richardson beat Democratic Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian to become Secretary of State. That makes Dennis the first Republican to be elected to a statewide office here since 2002. In a non-Presidential election year, Republicans tend to pick up seats. Some wonder if this could serve as the

reboot of the Republican bench in Oregon, with popular Representative Knute Buehler widely known to be eyeballing a challenge for the Governor's Office in 2018.

Oregonians barely survived the onslaught of television ads and mail pieces, as the most expensive campaign in Oregon's history, Measure 97, was soundly rejected at the polls. The measure would have raised \$3 billion a year through a gross sales tax on companies with annual sales of more than \$25 million. While politicians pledged that it would be spent on fully funding our education system, expanding life-saving human services (oh, and covering the millions and millions of debt created by PERS), too many concerns remained about them keeping that promise.

In the State Legislature, Democrats still control both the House and the Senate. In fact, the House remains a 35 to 25 majority for the Democrats – one short of a three-fifths super-majority needed to pass a tax measure in Oregon without a single Republican vote. In the Senate, the Republicans picked up a seat, reducing the Democrats' current three-fifth majority to 17 and 13. Democrats losing that seat and a surprise, difficult challenge in the south coastal district of Arnie Roblan's, likely means that the Senate will become even less stoic about passing the kind of progressive policy likely to arrive from the House, such as renter's protections, gun control legislation and more.

The Governor and the Legislature will be facing some tough issues in 2017. The biggest challenge will be adopting a budget for the state. While Oregon will have \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion additional revenue this coming biennium, the gap between revenues and the amount needed to fund current services will be around \$1.4 billion. Because public employee pension costs are one of the main causes of this gap, pension reform should be on the table once again. A transportation package to address the state's highway and bridge infrastructure needs which have been the cause of gridlock, lost productivity and increased transportation expense is another priority. Add to the list the dozens of other expensive and highly politicized issues as a back drop, including carbon controls or health care reform and it should be a very challenging session.

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions by emailing Bill Cross at bill@wvcross.com or Niki Terzieff at niki@leadingedgepublicaffairs.com