



Red to Blue

A wrap up of the 2016 Election in Nevada

For the last 26 years, Nevada voters cast their ballots for the winning President each and every time. Until Tuesday night. After nine consecutive successful votes for the man who would occupy the White House, Nevada's blue wave Monday washed that streak ashore when Silver State voters this time selected Hillary Clinton. She, of course, lost. But that was one of the few times on November 8 a Democrat failed to win here. Big blue kept rolling all night long, from Jackpot in the north to Searchlight in the south.

Just one Republican federal officeholder was returned to Washington, Northern Nevada Congressman Mark Amodei. Republican Congressman Joe Heck lost to Nevada's newest Senator, former Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto. The seat Heck vacated was won by Democratic newcomer Jacky Rosen. Rosen beat frequent GOP candidate Danny Tarkanian. One-termer Crescent Hardy lost to state Senator, and now Congressman-elect, Ruben Kihuen. Democratic stalwart Dina Titus was easily reelected to her Las Vegas congressional seat giving the Nevada Congressional Delegation a decidedly D advantage, 4-2.

But the real story will be told in February, when the 63-member Nevada State Legislature convenes in Carson City for the 79th Session. Nevada Republicans lost control of both houses in spectacular fashion. The Democrats regain control of the state Senate with an 11-10 razor thin margin and are firmly in control of Assembly by a near supermajority lead of 27-15.

First, in the state Senate, the open SD 6 seat formerly held by a Republican went to a Clark County prosecutor. Democrat Nicole Cannizzaro defeated Republican Realtor Victoria Seaman.

Across the valley, in SD 5, Henderson Democratic incumbent Joyce Woodhouse slipped past Republican Carrie Buck by one percentage point. In northern Nevada, the Republicans did hold on to one contested Senate race with former Assembly Minority Leader Heidi Gansert winning the Reno seat vacated by the GOP's Greg Brower.

A massive shift back to Democratic control in the Assembly was, surprisingly, not totally unexpected. The Republicans had a daunting task, trying to hold on to 10 seats where the Democrats had the edge in voter registration. The GOP lost every single one of those seats. Every. One. Democrat Jason Frierson, unexpectedly caught up in the Red Wave two years ago, is reclaiming the Assembly District 8 seat. Well known attorney Ozzie Fumo beat incumbent Derek Anderson and newcomer Sandra Jauregui beat back the challenge of Republican Nick Phillips in AD 41.

Where do we go from here?

It's no secret, the controlling party in Nevada controls the entire legislative process in that chamber. In 2017, the Democrats will control BOTH chambers. That means, excluding tax votes, internally united Democrats can pass legislation out of both houses with little to no Republican involvement. The one fly in that ointment is across the courtyard in the Capitol Building. He is the Republican governor, the very popular Brian Sandoval. Democrats can pass all the bills they want, but are savvy enough to know they can only pass what the governor will sign.

As we set the stage for 2017, those of us in the Legislative Building remember the harsh treatment meted out by some during the recent past. Everyone now is talking about unity. Will what's said today equate to bipartisan action in February? The state's budget hole, I've been told, is far higher than the \$400 million gap stated publically. The Democrats will need Republican votes to reach the two thirds threshold required to pass any tax package. That's going to take compromise on items like the yet to be funded Education Savings Account.

It's not going to be pretty, post-election rhetoric aside. In fact, it's going to be ugly. There's a reason we never really see the sausage being made.