2018 Election Recap

November 7, 2018

MEMORANDUM

Summary
While the national media debates whether a “Blue Wave” occurred last night, there is no doubt about its impact in Illinois. Democrats won every statewide constitutional office and two additional Congressional seats. Voters gave the Illinois House a veto-proof Democratic majority and expanded the supermajority for the Senate Democrats as well.

U.S. Senate
Previous Breakdown: Republicans hold a 51-47-2 majority
January 2019: Republicans hold a 52-43-2 majority with three races yet to be decided.

With independent Senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Angus King of Maine caucusing with the Democrats, the advantage for the Republicans heading into the 2018 elections was a razor thin two-vote majority. However, the Senate seats up for election included more Democrat Senators representing GOP states, with few vulnerable Republicans on the ballot. Senate Democrats had a rough night, despite picking up a Senate seat in Nevada with Democratic incumbents losing in Missouri, Indiana and North Dakota. Democratic incumbents face races in Montana and Florida that are too close to call, while the Republicans look to hold their Senate seat in Arizona which is too close to call as well.

U.S. House
Previous Breakdown: Republicans hold a 235-193 majority with seven vacancies
Illinois Delegation: 11 Democrats and 7 Republicans
January 2019: Democrats hold a 222-199 majority with 14 races yet to be decided
Illinois Delegation: 13 Democrats and 5 Republicans

While the Senate was an anticipated victory for Republicans, the House did change parties as expected. The Democrats were able to win a net 29 seats and currently hold 222 seats with 218 needed for a majority. There are still 14 seats that remain undecided as of this writing, so that lead could expand.

Illinois played its role with political observers watching four contested Illinois Congressional districts held by Republicans. Democrats Sean Casten and Lauren Underwood defeated incumbent Congressmen Peter Roskam and Randy Hultgren, respectively, in the northeastern collar counties. Congressman Rodney Davis escaped with a victory over Democratic challenger Betsy Dirksen Londrigan in Central Illinois and Congressman Mike Bost defeated his Democratic challenger Brendan Kelly in Southern Illinois.

Statewide
Democrats now hold all statewide Constitutional offices for the first time since 2010 following last night’s election. Just after the polls closed last night, media outlets announced that Democrat J.B. Pritzker had defeated Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner. The more than 14 point loss is the worst for an incumbent Governor in 70 years. The high voter turnout, plus the historic spending by Pritzker, proved too much for Rauner.

In other statewide races, State Senator Kwame Raoul of Chicago defeated Erika Harold of Champaign County in the open race for Attorney General, and Susana Mendoza won re-election for Comptroller over Darlene Senger. Secretary of State Jesse White overwhelmed opponent Jason Hellend, and State Treasurer Mike Frerichs defeated his challenger Jim Dodge.

Illinois Senate
Democrats hold a 37-22 majority

There were thirteen contested races this year for Illinois Senate with millions spent on both sides. Pritzker's contributions to the Democratic legislative leaders enabled them to shore up those they needed to defend and allow for the opportunity for offense in districts they have not been able to go after in the past. The result was a gain of two suburban seats and the potential for a third.

Republican Senator Tom Rooney was defeated by Democrat Ann Gillespie in northwestern Cook County. Democrat Suzy Glowiak narrowly defeating Senator Chris Nybo in DuPage County. Gillespie spent more than $2 million in her $3.3 million race against Rooney, while $3.1 million was spent in the Nybo versus Glowiak contest. Currently, Republican Senator Michael Connelly is separated from his Democratic opponent Laura Ellman by a handful of votes in a race that saw $3.27 million in spending.

The most expensive race in the Illinois Senate this year is the Quad Cities’ 36th District, where $3.48 million has been raised/spent. Incumbent Republican Senator Neil Anderson defeated his Democratic challenger Gregg Johnson.

Democrats hold a 67-51 majority

Despite the loss of appointed Rep. Natalie Phelps-Finnie to Patrick Windhorst in deep Southern Illinois, House Democrats were able to achieve a supermajority by picking up six suburban seats with the possibility of adding a seventh that is currently separated by just a single vote.

The money advantage for Democrats also allowed House candidates to challenge in suburban districts not normally in play. DuPage County incumbent Rep. Peter Breen was defeated by Terra Costa Howard. DuPage incumbents David Olsen and Christine Winger are down narrowly to Anne Stava-Murray and Diane Pappas, respectively. Lake County Republican Rep. Sheri Jesiel was defeated by Democrat Joyce Mason and Rep. Jerry Long of Streator was defeated by Democrat Lance Yednock.

Open seats in the suburbs also provided Democrats with opportunities to pick up seats. Former Democratic Rep. Mark Walker defeated Eddie Corrigan in a northwestern Cook County seat being vacated by Republican Rep. David Harris and Democrat Karina Villa defeated Republican Tonia Khouri for retiring Republican Rep. Mike Fortner's western DuPage County seat.

Appearing to avoid defeat with small margins are Democrat Rep. Monica Bristow of Madison County and Republican Rep. Tom Morrison from suburban Cook County.

Local Elections

The trends at the top of the ticket also worked to the advantage of Democrats down the ballot as well. A few highlights include:

- State Republican Party Chairman Tim Schneider was defeated in his re-election for Cook County Commissioner by Kevin Morrison. Republican Cook County Commissioner Greg Goslin was defeated by Scott Britton. There are now just two Republicans on the Cook County Board.
- While DuPage County Board Chairman Dan Cronin was elected to his third term, Democrats picked up two county board seats and elected Jean Kaczmarek as County Clerk.
- Democrats took control of the Will County Board, and picked up seats in the County Boards of Kane and Lake.
- Democrats swept county-wide races in Champaign County.

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