

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

KDHA Kansas General Election Report

November 9, 2022

Super Majorities Hold, Dozens of New Faces Head to Topeka

After several months of hard campaigning in state and national elections, the suspense is finally over. In a razor thin gubernatorial race, Governor Kelly will be returning to Topeka with the win over challenger Derek Schmidt. Ballots are still being counted but major media outlets have projected the winner. All other Kansas races, for statewide office, state legislature and federal seats are settled. The Kansas House held on to its Republican super majority though it will look very different with 27% turnover. The top GOP House leadership posts will all change, along with many of the committee leaders.

The election results bring Kansas closer to a complete view of what can be expected in the 2023 and 2024 Legislative sessions. The coming weeks will continue to provide more insight with the election of House leaders and finalization of House committee rosters.

Kansas' Federal Delegation Will Look the Same

The dust has yet to settle on which party will control the United States Senate and House of Representatives, but Kansas, however, saw no changes in their representation. At the top of the ticket, Senator Jerry Moran (R-Manhattan) will be returning for his third term after defeating challengers with 60% of the vote. Below Moran on the ballot, all four incumbents in the U.S. House of Representatives won their elections. Congressman Tracy Mann (R-Salina) defended his seat in the First Congressional District known as "The Big First," which encompasses all or part of 60 plus counties in western and northern Kansas. Second Congressional District Representative Jake LaTurner (R-Galena) won his chance to return to Washington after defeating Topeka Democrat Patrick Schmidt. Congresswoman Sharice Davids (D-Kansas City) representing, the Third Congressional District (Kansas City area), defeated Republican challenger Amanda Adkins for the second time. Congressman Ron Estes (R-Wichita) in the Fourth Congressional District (encompasses mostly the Wichita metro area) will return for his fourth term.

Preparing for Second Term

The morning after the election, Governor Laura Kelly declared victory, affording her a second term. She will be able to hit the ground running with her staff and cabinet already in place to resume work that began during the first term. The Governor will also be able to roll out new priorities for the next four years in January during the State of the State address.

New Statewide Officials

The announcement of Attorney General Derek Schmidt (R-Independence) to run for Governor opened the door to a hotly contested Attorney General race. After winning the Republican primary, former two-term Secretary of State Kris Kobach (R-Lecompton) narrowly defeated Chris Mann (D-Wyandotte).

The close races of the Governor and Attorney General was the exception for the balance of the statewide races. Incumbents for both the Insurance Commissioner and Secretary of the State handily won their elections. Vicki Schmidt (R-Topeka) defeated challenger Kiel Corkran (D-Olathe) to retain her place for Insurance Commissioner and Scott Schwab (R- Olathe) beat Jenna Repass (D-Overland Park) to remain Secretary of State, by 26% and 21% margins, respectively. The Kansas Treasurers office will have a new commander after Steven Johnson (R-Assaria) defeated appointed Incumbent Treasurer Lynn Rogers (D-Wichita).

34 New House Reps Head to Topeka

The Kansas House elections did not offer any major shocks. Going into the election, the high turnover was already assured after two dozen representatives did not file for re-election and a handful more lost their August primary race. After the November election, the total shows 34 of the 125 member House will be brand new, thus a 27% turnover. This is a common trend showing a state without term limits has a revolving door in Topeka.

Super GOP House

Of the 125 House seats, Republicans won the majority 85 to 40, holding a 68% super majority. This, matched by the Senate's super majority, gives the Republican's the ability to override bills vetoed by the Governor, if the party is unified on the issue.

New House Leadership at the Top and Committee Level

Along with the 27% turnover, the House leadership will look different, along with many of the committees. The retirements of House Speaker Ron Ryckman and Speaker Pro-Tem Blaine Finch creates two vacancies with Majority leader Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita) seeking the speakership. Minority Leader Tom Sawyer (D-Wichita) has announced his run to retain his position. Leadership elections are held on December 5 where the new members will elect their leaders of the top GOP and Democrat posts.

Once the leadership elections are resolved, the next question turns to committee assignments. Leadership of both parties will have to determine new committee assignments including committee chairs, vice chairs, and ranking minority members. The committee appointments are announced in mid-December, generally a few days before Christmas.

Kansas Senate Remains the Same After Special Election

Though the Kansas Senate is not on the ballot until 2024, Senator Ron Ryckman Sr. (R-Meade) won his special election to retain his Senate seat. Kansas requires Senate members to stand for election after being appointed before year two of the four-year term. The Republicans hold a super majority in the Senate.

The 2023 Legislative Session

The Governor will prepare to present their legislative agenda and vision for the state in January's State of the State address. All previously introduced legislation from the 2022 session is dead so new proposals must be introduced, leaving the Legislature with many policy areas to tackle, including the yearly

constitutional requirement of passing a balanced budget. The 2023 Legislative Session will begin January 9.

Looking Ahead for KDHA

For the committees most relevant to KDHA, it will look different. The House Committee on Health and Human Services will see several new members. Ranking minority committee leader Rep. Kathy Wolfe-Moore (D-Kansas City), Rep. Jim Kelly (R-Independence), Megan Lynn (R-Olathe) and John Barker (R-Abilene) will not return, opening the door for member shifts and new perspectives.

To our knowledge, at least one new healthcare professional will be coming to Topeka next session. Dr. Melissa Oropeza (D-Kansas City), who is a nurse practitioner, was elected in an open seat. Another registered nurse, Kristin Clark (R-Olathe), lost a bid for an open seat by 125 votes.

The coming weeks will provide glimpses of emerging legislative issues that could be on the KDHA radar.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Travis Lowe, CAE