

**Charlie Glaes - Legislative Update, Post-Election Edition**

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**From:** "masa-supt" <masa-supt@listserv.melg.org>  
**To:** <cglaes@vicksburg.k12.mi.us>  
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# MA Legislative Update

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**Legislative Update, Post-Election Edition****In this update . . .**

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**Snyder Takes the Governor's Office**

Striking a decidedly non-partisan tone, now Governor-elect Rick Snyder declared victory from the Westin Book Cadillac hotel in Detroit last night. In the end, Snyder captured nearly 60 percent of the vote as Republicans swept control of all 3 major statewide offices, both branches of the legislature, and the Supreme Court. Snyder comes to Lansing with an aggressive agenda to "reinvent Michigan," a vision that the massive Republican wave may put him in a position to enact.

Exactly what this will mean for schools is unclear, but budget-wise, Candidate Snyder was quoted in Gongwer (a Lansing political newsletter) earlier in the campaign as saying that groups should "not walk in my office and ask for funding. You should walk in and say, 'Here's an outcome or result that's important to achieve,' and then we should have a discussion about how that gets measured, why it's important, where it's a priority and then to the degree it's appropriate, we'll have a discussion about funding and resources."

As to his education priorities, Snyder has a detailed whitepaper on [his education platform](#).

**Republican Supermajority in Senate**

Republican control in the State Senate was never really in doubt, but the nationwide wave of Republican support that whittled the Democratic contingent down from 16 seats to 12 and gave the Senate Republicans a supermajority (two-thirds control) came as something of a shock to many observers. A 26 vote supermajority is the threshold needed to ensure complete control over procedural matters, such as granting immediate effect on legislation and overriding a veto. By not holding onto at least 13 seats, the Democrats will be unable to exercise much if any influence through procedural actions.

Though no incumbents were unseated, Republicans picked up 4 formerly Democratic seats to take the

supermajority with Senators-elect Rocca (R-Sterling Heights), Robertson (R-Grand Blanc), Green (R-Mayville), and Casperson (R-Escanaba) replacing Senators Switalski (D-Roseville), Cherry (D-Burton), Barcia (D-Bay City), and Prusi (D-Ishpeming).

It is too soon to have a clear picture of party leadership or committee chairpersonships for the Senate. While Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) and John Proos (R-St. Joseph) are contesting Senate majority leadership and Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) is the current frontrunner for the Democrats, nothing is certain. Regardless, the massive turnover in the chamber and the new Republican majority in state government are almost certain to translate into a new focus and direction for the Senate.

### **Republicans Take House on 20 Seat Swing**

The most significant political shift of the night came in the House where Republicans turned a 43 seat minority into a 63 seat majority, swinging 20 seats from Democratic to Republican control and unseating nine incumbents. While most observers projected that Democrats would lose several seats, including some incumbents, the sheer magnitude of the Republican wave came as a surprise.

Perhaps the most surprising loss for Democrats was that of Rep. Terry Brown (D-Pigeon), the current chair of the House Appropriate School Aid Budget Subcommittee, who finished the night down 28 votes in a very close election. Other unseated incumbents include Representatives Kennedy (D-Brownstown), Roberts (D-St. Clair Shores), Haase (D-Richmond), Ebli (D-Monroe), Griffin (D-Jackson), Huckleberry (D-Greenville), Scripps (D-Northport), and Nerat (D-Wallace). The margin could have been much bigger, but Democrats managed to hold onto 9 marginal seats, 3 of them open seats.

The size of the Republican majority, although not a supermajority like the Senate, will afford Republicans nearly unfettered control of state government for the next 2 years, particularly since procedural motions in the House, like granting immediate effect to bills, are often gaveled through by the chair instead of being put to a vote.

Unlike the Senate, it is not too early to discuss majority leadership in the House since Republicans have coalesced behind Rep. Jase Bolger (R-Marshall), making him the next Speaker of the House barring any unforeseen developments. Rep. Rick Hammel (D-Flushing) and Rep. Woodrow Stanley (D-Flint) are lined up to battle it out for minority leadership with the outcome uncertain given the massive Democratic losses.

### **Johnson Takes Secretary of State**

Former State Representative Ruth Johnson won the Secretary of State race handily over Democratic nominee Jocelyn Benson. In the closest top-of-the-ticket victory of the night, Johnson captured 51 percent of the vote to Benson's 45 percent.

Johnson's victory has the potential to bring back two contentious issues for Michigan schools: publically elected intermediate school boards and November only school elections. Johnson championed legislation to implement both proposals while she was in the House from 1998-2004 and it is possible if not likely that they will resurface next year with her as Secretary of State.

### **Republicans Take Control of U.S. House, Dems Hold Slight Senate Majority**

With the dust still not settled and several elections still up in the air, it looks as though Republicans will see at least a 60 vote swing in the United States House, wresting power from Democrats in the second straight national wave election. Republicans will also see at least a 5 seat pick up in the United States Senate which will leave Democrats with a slim majority going into the second half of President Obama's first term.

The new Speaker of the House will almost certainly be John Boehner (R-OH), the current Republican House Minority Leader, with the chair of the Education and Labor Committee likely to be the current ranking Republican on the committee, John Klein (R-MN). With the loss of Congressmen Hoekstra and Ehlers, Michigan loses not only its only 2 Republican seats on the committee, but also a great deal of seniority in the now majority party. Congressman Dale Kildee (D-MI) is Michigan's only remaining committee member.

### **The Rest of the Ticket and Implications for Education Policy**

The massive Republican wave swept elections all the way up and down the ticket in Michigan last night. In addition to taking firm control of all three branches of government, the GOP candidates also came out on top in the State Board of Education race and all three elected university boards. Eileen Weiser and Richard Zeile are the two newest SBE members with Weiser taking the largest share of the vote and Zeile eking out a win over the only incumbent, Elizabeth Bauer, by 1 percent and shrinking the Democratic majority on the board to 4-3.

The resounding upset in the House and the massive nationwide wave puts the Republicans firmly in control of the upcoming redistricting, just as they were at the beginning of the last decade when the party gerrymandered majorities in both the House and the Senate, the latter of which held firm for the entire decade despite the Democratic wave election in 2008.

Despite electoral outcomes, the state budget is still balanced on \$600 million in one-time revenue, a shortfall that the next legislature will have to resolve, either through massive spending cuts or new revenues. While the former may seem more likely given the political swing, cutting popular programs and social safety nets is difficult to accomplish in any political climate and making significant reductions is difficult without affecting those items. Policy-wise, the potential increases for reform legislation on such issues as consolidation, health care, tenure, collective bargaining and strike laws, and even chartering outside of existing collective bargaining agreements. Again, however, making such sweeping reforms may come with a bigger political price tag than Republicans are willing to pay.