



2014 Election Wrap up

By Bill Stauffacher, Lobbyist

The national Republican tide found Washington, replacing the state Senate's GOP-led majority coalition with an actual Republican majority and reducing the state House Democrats' majority to a two-seat margin. Even with continued split control of the legislature, House Democrats and Senate Republicans have very little room to maneuver on the most critical policy, budget and political issue facing state lawmakers – responding by the end of the 2015 session to the state Supreme Court's ruling that the Legislature is failing to fully fund public education.

THE BREAKDOWN

In the Senate, the GOP-led Majority Coalition Caucus maintains a two-seat 26-23 majority, made up of 25 Republicans (an actual majority) plus one Democrat. Astonishingly, Senate Republicans ran the table on the campaign trail. They successfully defended all of their incumbents in critical races and picked up the only Democrat-held open seat in play.

In the House, the Democrats' new two-seat 51-47 majority reflects the Republicans' success on Election Day.

Like the Senate, the House GOP successfully defended all of their seats – then knocked off four Democrat incumbents, three in south Puget Sound districts and one in suburban Vancouver.

With the election in the rear-view mirror, lawmakers will begin preparing for the 2015 session. But if the Legislature fails to make substantial progress to increase K-12 education funding, there's a serious chance of a standoff sometime next spring between the Legislature and the state's High Court.

Legislative Democrats and Governor Inslee are expected to seek new tax revenues to fund schools and other health care and social programs while legislative Republicans plan to increase public school funding with existing tax revenues. Democrats continue to advocate for the need to close business tax loopholes and are likely to propose creation of a state capital gains tax. While the Senate Republicans will initially oppose tax increases, moderate GOP legislators will face mounting pressure to join Democrats to pass tax hikes to fund schools.

THE 2015 LEGISLATURE AND IIABW – PREPARING FOR A TAX FIGHT

With lawmakers continuing their quest to find additional tax revenue, IIABW is prepared to oppose two tax proposals if they emerge in the 2015 session:

1. A return of the 2013 proposal that sought to triple the B&O tax rate on insurance producers' commission income; and
2. Creation of a state-based capital gains tax.

The first hint of what IIABW may be facing on the tax front will occur the week before Christmas, when Inslee intends to roll out his proposed 2015-17 state budget proposal. Once again, IIABW members may be called upon to provide a strong grassroots effort in opposition to tax proposals that harm insurance producers and agencies.

LEGISLATIVE RACES

Below is a quick summary of House and Senate races that were either competitive or bring new faces to the Legislature. **Seats that switched from Democrat to Republican are highlighted in RED.**

Senate:

- **6th District (Spokane County/Spokane, north suburban Spokane):** GOP incumbent Sen. Michael Baumgartner beat Democrat challenger Rich Cowan.
- **13th District (Central Washington/Moses Lake, Cle Elum, Ellensburg):** GOP Rep. Judy Warnick moved up to the Senate, winning the seat that was held by Sen. Janea Holmquist Newbry, who ran unsuccessfully for the 4th congressional seat.
- **28th District (Pierce County/University Place, Lakewood):** GOP-appointed incumbent Sen. Steve O'Ban defeated former Democrat House Rep. Tami Green.
- **30th District (Federal Way):** GOP challenger Mark Miloscia beat Democrat challenger Shari Song. A former House Democrat legislator, the socially conservative and independent Milsocia, switched parties to run as a Republican and won this Democrat-held seat.
- **31st District (South King County/East Pierce County, Auburn, Enumclaw):** GOP Sen. Pam Roach defeated GOP challenger Rep. Cathy Dahlquist. Roach, an embattled 22-year incumbent, pushed back a challenge from Dahlquist by maintaining her solid Republican base while winning over populist and labor Democrats.
- **35th District (Mason and Kitsap counties/Shelton):** Conservative Democrat Sen. Tim Sheldon, who joined with Republicans to form the Senate's Majority Coalition Caucus, defeated Democrat challenger Irene Bowling.
- **37th District (south Seattle):** Democrat challenger Pramila Jayapal won easily in a top-two Democrat general election race.
- **42nd District (Whatcom County/Bellingham):** GOP Sen. Doug Ericksen beat Democrat challenger Seth Fleetwood.
- **44th District (Snohomish County/Snohomish, Mill Creek):** Democrat Sen. Steve Hobbs, a leading moderate Democrat, defeated GOP challenger Jim Kellett.
- **45th District (Kirkland, Bellevue, Redmond):** GOP Sen. Andy Hill, the Senate Ways and means chairman, defeated Democrat challenger Matt Isenhower.

- **48th District (East King County/Bellevue): Democrat Rep. Cyrus Habib** moved up to the Senate, winning the seat that was held by retiring Democrat Senate Majority Leader Rodney Tom. Along with conservative Democrat Sen. Tim Sheldon, Tom crossed party lines to join the GOP to form the Majority Coalition Caucus.

House of Representatives:

- **4th District (Spokane County/Spokane Valley): GOP challenger Bob McCaslin**, the son of a popular former state legislator, won easily in an all-Republican general election race.
- **13th District (Central Washington/Moses Lake, Cle Elum, Ellensburg): Republican challenger Tom Dent** won in another all-GOP race.
- **14th District (Yakima/Columbia River Gorge): GOP challenger Gina McCabe** had an easy victory in this long-held Republican seat.
- **17th District (Clark County/suburban Vancouver): First-term Democrat incumbent Rep. Monica Stonier lost to GOP challenger Lynda Wilson.**
- **21st District (Snohomish County/Mukilteo): Challenger Strom Peterson** easily won the Democrat-held open-seat race.
- **25th District (Pierce County/Puyallup): Democrat incumbent Rep. Dawn Morrell lost to GOP challenger Melanie Stambaugh.**
- **26th District (Pierce & Kitsap counties/Gig Harbor Peninsula, Port Orchard): Appointed Republican Rep. Jesse Young** defeated Democrat challenger Nathan Schlicher.
- **26th District (Pierce & Kitsap counties/Gig Harbor Peninsula, Port Orchard): Long-time Democrat Rep. Larry Seaquist lost to Republican challenger Michelle Caldier.**
- **28th District (Pierce County/University Place, Lakewood): Democrat challenger Christine Kilduff** held this Democrat seat by defeating Republican challenger Paul Wagemann.
- **30th District (King County/Federal Way): The late Democrat Rep. Roger Freeman** died from cancer one week before the election, but was re-elected. Two county councils will appoint a replacement by early January.
- **31st District (South King County/East Pierce County, Auburn, Enumclaw): Republican challenger Drew Stokesbary** won comfortably in the seat that was vacated by Rep. Cathy Dahlquist.
- **35th District (Mason and Kitsap counties/Shelton): Incumbent Democrat Rep. Kathy Haigh lost to Republican challenger Dan Griffey.**
- **42nd District (Whatcom County/Bellingham): Republican challenger Luanne Van Werven** defeated Democrat challenger Satpal Sidhu.

- **44th District (Snohomish County/Snohomish, Mill Creek):** Republican challenger Mark Harmsworth edged out Democrat challenger Mike Wilson to win the GOP open seat that was previously held by Rep. Mike Hope.
- **48th District (East King County/Bellevue):** Democrat challenger Joan McBride picked up the seat held by Rep. Cyrus Habib, who moved up to the Senate.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

PASSED: Voters approved by a narrow margin Initiative I-1351, the state teachers' union-backed ballot measure that mandates significant classroom size reductions in K-12 public schools. I-1351 requires the hiring of an additional 7,400 teachers and approximately 17,000 additional education-related employees. The estimated cost for implementing I-1351 in the next three state budget biennia is \$4.7 billion. Expect the Legislature to suspend by a supermajority vote implementation of I-1351 due to the budget impact.

PASSED: Voters approved I-594, which applies background checks to all firearms sales and transfers of ownership, including gun-show sales and online purchases. This proposal was backed by gun safety advocates and opposed by the NRA.

FAILED: Voters rejected I-591, which proposed to prohibit background checks on firearms sales unless a national standard is required. This initiative was supported by the NRA and opposed by gun safety advocates.

FEDERAL RACES

Senate: Neither U.S. Senate races were on the 2014 ballot.

House of Representatives: All 10 House races were up for election and, in nine of those races, the incumbents won easily. The only competitive congressional race was an open-seat battle in the 4th (central Washington/Yakima, Tri-Cities). **GOP challenger Dan Newhouse** defeated fellow Republican Clint Didier in a close election. The seat was open due to the retirement of Republican U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings. Backed by the Republican Party establishment, Newhouse - a farmer, former state legislator and state agriculture director under Democrat Gov. Chris Gregoire – survived a hard-charging effort by Didier, a Tea Party-backed candidate.

For election results visit: <http://results.vote.wa.gov/results/current/default.htm>