

2022 Washington Primary Results

By Bill Stauffacher, IABW Lobbyist

In Washington's August 2nd primary election, Democrats had an unexpectedly successful effort, cutting against national trends by scoring surprising leads in competitive legislative races throughout the state.

Heading into this evening, Republicans had several factors working to their advantage. Most significantly, in the first midterm election following the presidential election the party out of power in the White House routinely has advantage at the ballot box. Coupled with voters' anxiety about inflation (gas prices in particular), and local crime and homelessness, the primary was shaping up to be a successful one for Republicans.

Then along came the U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Both parties' campaign teams recognized the abortion issue was a difficult one to assess so close to the primary election. From first review, it appears *Dobbs* gave Democrats a small boost – but until post-primary polling is completed by both parties it is unclear what types of voters were driven to action by the decision and to what extent these voters had an impact on the election. Additionally, Democrats had a serious tactical advantage, spending \$10 million for advertising and get-out-the-vote programs to boost two races, Democrats U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Congresswoman Kim Schrier.

Currently, state legislative Democrats hold a 28-21 majority in the Senate and a 57-41 majority in the House. After the primary results, the make-up of the legislature is exactly the same. In the Senate, no seats have flipped to the other party. In the House, each party won two seats held by the other party and lost two seats to the other party, leaving the House majority unchanged.

This is a disappointing showing for Republicans. Senate Republicans set their sights on two Democratic-held seats with the belief that both could be brought into the GOP column. Democrats are winning both of those races. House Republicans expected to pick up five to six seats, possibly more; now they'll likely be fighting to protect seats they currently hold. Nevertheless, the low primary turnout among swing/independent voters means many races in the general election will remain competitive and unpredictable.

Federal Elections

All 10 U.S Congressional seats and one U.S. Senate seat are up in 2022. Murray, first elected in 1992, has a significant lead over GOP challenger Tiffany Smiley. Election outcomes for Reps. Dan Newhouse and Jaime Herrera-Beutler, two Republican members of Congress who voted to impeach then-President Donald Trump, came out differently. Herrera-Beutler lost in the primary to GOP challenger Joe Kent while Newhouse survived a challenge from six Republican candidates. In the state's one true swing congressional race, Democrat Schrier sits just under 48% and will face Republican Matt Larkin in the general election.