2020 Texas General Election Report

The 2020 General Election in Texas began with record early voting numbers seemingly driven by the hopes of Democrats for a “blue wave” based upon the results of the 2018 General Election. Tuesday’s election, however, provided very few changes. Democrats targeted several races in the Texas House in hopes of taking back the majority for the first time since 2002. However, it is evident that Texas remains a reliably red state and Republicans will keep their majority in the Texas House.

President Trump was victorious in Texas, receiving 52% of the vote with the overall election still in limbo as of Thursday afternoon. The last time a Democrat won Texas in a Presidential Election dates back to 1976 with Jimmy Carter. U.S. Senator John Cornyn defeated Democratic challenger and military veteran MJ Hegar with over 54% of the vote to continue as the senior Senator from Texas.

The partisan makeup of Texas delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives remains unchanged as well with 23 Republicans and 13 Democrats. Congresswomen Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX 7) narrowly defeated her Republican challenger Wesley Hunt with just over 50% of the vote for the District 7 seat in the Houston area. In the Central Texas region, Congressman Michael McCaul (R-TX 10) defeated Democrat Mike Siegel with over 52% of the vote. Incumbent Congressman Chip Roy (R-TX 21) held on to defeat former Fort Worth area State Senator Wendy Davis with 52% of the vote. In the DFW metroplex, Republican candidate Beth Van Duyne appears to have won with 48.8% of the vote against Candace Valenzuela, who received 47.5%. In San Antonio, Republican Tony Gonzalez squeaked out a win with 50.7% of the vote against Gina Ortiz Jones for the District 23 seat.

In a notable race outside the state of Texas, U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR 4) was victorious with 51.6% of the vote over Republican challenger Alek Skarlatos.

An interesting outcome from Tuesday was in the Texas Senate for the Senate District 19 seat in the San Antonio region, with incumbent Republican Senator Pete Flores losing to Democrat and current State Representative, Roland Gutierrez. Senator Flores received 46% of the vote and his loss now puts the Senate’s 3/5’s Rule in jeopardy. In 2015, the Senate voted to replace its traditional 2/3’s Rule with a 3/5’s rule, reducing the required number of Senate votes from 21 to 19 (31 total Senators) to bring a bill to the floor in the upper chamber to be discussed. This was a strategic maneuver by Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick to give Republicans the decision-making power on bringing bills to the floor. With the loss by Sen. Flores, the number of Republican Senators now falls to 18, giving the Democrats a strategy to block bills in the 2021 Legislative Session, unless the rule is altered.
The Texas House of Representatives partisan makeup was ultimately unchanged at 83 Republicans and 67 Democrats. All incumbent Republicans in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex were victorious on Tuesday. This had been the targeted area for Democrats to pick up seats and one could deduce from the results that the elimination of straight ticket voting helped Republican incumbents. Two noteworthy results occurred in the Houston region with former State Representative Mike Schofield (R-Katy) returning to the Texas House by defeating the Democratic incumbent, Representative Gina Calanni (D-Houston), and Representative Sarah Davis (R-West University) losing her reelection bid to Democratic challenger Ann Johnson, whom she had defeated in previous elections.

For more information on the 2020 General Election, please contact Scott Stewart, ACEC Texas Vice President for Legislative Affairs, at Scott@ACECTX.org.