

Governor Granholm Wins By Large Margin

The race for Governor was called early Tuesday night with exit polls showing the Governor in a comfortable lead. By the end of the night the Governor was leading her Republican opponent, Dick Devos, by a 13 point margin.

During the campaign, pollsters and political analysts were speculating that the race would be very tight, but in the end it wasn't even close. The November 8th edition of the Detroit News stated that the Governor's victory was so pervasive that she drew support from every major demographic group except self-described Republicans. The critical block of independent voters went to Granholm by a 33-point margin.

The next two years will be considerably different for the Governor, she will now have a Democratic House to work with and a Senate with a narrower Republican majority.

Democrats Take Control of the Michigan House, Narrow the Gap in Michigan Senate

Two years ago, the House Democratic campaign team shocked the state when Democrats picked up five seats in the House. This year, they went one better and picked up six more – two more than needed to win a majority. As the election neared, most observers felt that House Democrats were in a good position to make small gains in the House. However, the defeat of three Republican incumbents and the pick up of three open seats formerly held by Republicans took every pundit and pollster by surprise.

On the State Senate side, the question of whether the Republicans would maintain their majority was not decided until the day after the election as poll numbers continued to come in from two battleground races. There were five toss-up seats in all, and Democrats needed to win three of them to attain operational control of the Senate. On election night, Democrats learned early that they gained at least one seat when Representative Glenn Anderson defeated incumbent Senator Laura Toy in Livonia. However, as the night wore on into the morning of the next day, it was clear that Anderson was to be the only Democratic pick-up in the State Senate this year.

Assuming no changes before the results become official, the final tally in the House will be a 58-52 Democratic majority. Senate Republicans maintained control, but their majority narrowed to 21-17.

Here are some of the most competitive races in more detail:

House Battleground Seats

20th District (Plymouth) – In a race that frankly was off the radar screen for many of the Lansing experts, Democrat Mark Corriveau stunned Republican candidate Mark Abbo by

a percentage of 51-49. Abbo's more moderate Republican primary opponent Beth Stewart may have had better success in this district.

26th District (Royal Oak) – A targeted race in 2004, many observers felt that Republicans would make a major push to regain the seat won by Representative Marie Donigan two years ago. However, Republican challenger Kevin Konczal's campaign never got off the ground, and Donigan retained the seat by a comfortable margin of 62-35.

39th District (West Bloomfield) – One of the few areas of good news for Republicans this year, incumbent Representative David Law staved off a tough challenge from Democrat Lisa Brown. Although early returns made this seat seem like another Democratic pick-up, the final results gave Law a solid 55-45 victory.

51st District (Genesee County) – Democratic challenger Fred Starzyk nearly knocked off another GOP incumbent in a race that is one of the few blemishes for Democrats this year. Democratic campaign leaders will surely be kicking themselves for not taking this race more seriously. With little outside help, Starzyk amassed 49 percent of the vote against Republican Representative David Robertson, who took 51 percent.

52nd District (Washtenaw County) – First term incumbent Democrat Pam Byrnes faced a tough challenge from Republican Shannon Brown. Both candidates worked hard, but Byrnes cruised to victory, 63-37.

55th District (Washtenaw and Monroe Counties) – The first of three rematches between 2004 opponents, this race saw former Representative Matt Milosch trying to get his old seat back from Democrat Kathy Angerer who ousted him two years ago. In 2004 Angerer won by a mere 300 votes. This time the margin was much larger, as she racked up a solid win with 64 percent of the vote to Milosch's 36.

56th District (Monroe County) – This seat was made vacant due to the death of Representative Herb Kehrl in 2005. Kehrl's 2004 opponent, Republican John Manor, made another run at the open seat, this time against Democrat Kate Ebli. Ebli got the better end of this hard fought race, winning by a margin of 53-47 and keeping the seat in Democratic hands.

64th District (Jackson) – Another rematch of the 2004 election had the opposite outcome as Jackson Mayor Marty Griffin defeated incumbent Republican Representative Rick Baxter 52-47.

65th District (Jackson County) – Similar to the 64th District, the 65th also featured a rematch between the 2004 candidates, Democrat Mike Simpson and Republican Leslie Mortimer. It also mirrored the outcome in the 64th as challenger Simpson defeated incumbent Mortimer 52-47.

67th District (Ingham County) – With incumbent Democratic Representative Dianne Byrum term-limited this year, Republicans felt they had a good chance to take this swing

seat with Don Vickers. However, Byrum's daughter Barb threw her hat into the ring, and she easily kept this seat in Democratic hands.

75th District (Grand Rapids) – This race was targeted early on by both parties as a battleground seat as incumbent Republican Representative Jerry Kooiman was forced out of office by term-limits. Democrat Robert Dean was heavily outspent by Republican Tim Doyle, but still managed a 51-47 victory.

83rd District (Port Huron and Sanilac County) – Two years ago, this was a sleeper race that did not garner much attention from either party. It catapulted into the headlines when Democrat John Espinoza won a stunning upset victory over Republican Paul Muxlow. This year, it was expected that Republicans would launch an all-out assault to retake the seat. Challenger Ed Smith's campaign never got off the ground, though, and Espinoza won by a staggering 73-27 margin.

84th District (Huron and Tuscola Counties) – Another under the radar race in the Thumb area pitted Republican John Hunt against Democrat Terry Brown, a social worker, in a fight to succeed term-limited Republican Representative Tom Meyer. Brown took the victory in a very close 51-49 race.

91st District (Muskegon County) – Unlike the 84th district which received little statewide attention, the 91st was ground zero for some of the heaviest campaigning of any House race in Michigan. Embattled Republican incumbent David Farhat, stung by some well-publicized allegations of shady business dealings, lost his seat to political newcomer Mary Valentine by a wide margin of 56-44.

101st District (Manistee and Benzie Counties) – Republican incumbent Representative David Palsrok barely fought off a spirited campaign by Democratic challenger Dan Scripps to hold this seat for the GOP.

107th District (Western U.P. and Northern L.P.) – Democratic Representative Gary McDowell pulled off an amazing upset in 2004 of heavily favored Republican Walter North. GOP challenger Jay Duggan hoped to recapture this leaning Republican district this year, but only managed to get 41 percent of the vote against McDowell's 59.

Senate Battleground Seats

6th District (Livonia and Westland) – Republican Senator Laura Toy faced the battle of her long political career from challenger Glenn Anderson, himself a term-limited State Representative. Anderson garnered a 52-47 victory to unseat the incumbent.

13th District (Royal Oak, Troy) – In one of the two closest contests in the Michigan Senate this year, former Republican State Representative John Pappageorge eked out a razor-thin victory over Democratic challenger Andy Levin.

17th District (Monroe and Washtenaw Counties) – Former Republican State Representative Randy Richardville will return to Lansing after defeating Democratic challenger Bob Schockman 53-47.

20th District (Kalamazoo County) – In a race Democrats were pinning their hopes on, Republican Senator Tom George was able to stave off a tough run from Democratic Representative Alexander Lipsey. The final margin was 51-49.

32nd District (Saginaw and Gratiot Counties) – This was the second Senate race which was too close to call until the morning after the election. When the dust cleared, Republican Representative Roger Kahn had won a thin 520 vote victory over Democratic State Representative Carl Williams.

34th District (Muskegon, Oceana and Newaygo Counties) – Former Democratic State Representative Julie Dennis ran a tough race, but she was unable to oust Republican Senator Gerald Van Woerkom, losing by a margin of 51-49.

Statewide Judicial Results

Michigan Supreme Court

Justice Michael Cavanagh (i)	40%	1,943,597 votes
Justice Maura Corrigan (i)	34%	1,654,213 votes

Out of the five candidates for Michigan Supreme Court, voters chose to re-elect the two incumbents of the Court, Justices Michael Cavanagh and Maura Corrigan. First elected in 1982, Justice Cavanagh has served on the Supreme Court for twenty-three years, serving as chief justice from 1991-1994. Since 1998, Justice Corrigan has served on the Supreme Court as both associate justice, 1998-2001, 2004-current; and chief justice from 2001-2004. Justices on the Supreme Court serve eight year terms.

Michigan Court of Appeals

Judge Kirsten Kelly (i)	35%	308,466 votes
Judge Brian Zahra (i)	28%	247,907 votes

Judges Kirsten Kelly and Brian Zahra were re-elected above two other challengers. Judge Kirsten Kelly was elected to the Court in 2000. Previously, she was a municipal judge (three terms), a judge of the Wayne Circuit Court, and presiding judge of the Family Division of the Wayne Circuit Court. Chief Judge Pro Tem Zahra was appointed to the Court in 1999. Previously, he served as a judge of the Wayne Circuit Court. Judges on the Michigan Court of Appeals serve six year terms.

State and University Board Results

Candidates for the State Board of Education also benefited from the Democratic victories at the national level and top of the ticket state level. Democratic candidate Casandra Ulbrich defeated State Board incumbent Eileen Weiser, and Democratic incumbent Reginald Turner was also successful in his re-election bid. Democrats now have a 5-2 majority on the Board, compared to their previous 4-3 majority.

For the Michigan State University Board of Trustees, both Republican incumbents Dee Cook and Dave Porteous were defeated by their Democratic challengers Faylene Owen and George Perles. That changed the composition of the Board from a 4-4 split to a 6 Democrat-2 Republican split.

The University of Michigan Board of Regents again saw both Democratic candidates successfully win over their Republican challengers. Incumbent Republican regent David Brandon lost to Julia Darlow and incumbent regent Kathy White (D) was successful in retaining her seat. The Democrats increased their margin on the Board from 5-3 to 6-2.

Debbie Dingell (D) was successful in her bid for the Wayne State University Board of Governors and Eugene Driker (D) also retained his post on the board. The Board had an open seat with Elizabeth Hardy (R) having chosen not to run for re-election. The new make-up of the Board is 7 Democrats to 1 Republican.

All in all, the elected education boards demonstrated the impact of Governor Granholm's victory on these less well-publicized races.

Statewide Ballot Proposal Results

Proposal 1 (DNR Funds)

APPROVED, 81% Yes; 19% No

The amendment addresses nine funds or accounts that currently exist in the Natural Resources Act. These funds are now granted constitutional protection from diversion for purposes other than those intended, such as using the funds to plug gaps in other unrelated parts of the state budget.

Proposal 2 (Michigan Civil Rights Initiative)

APPROVED, 58% Yes; 42 No%

The Michigan Constitution now *bans* public institutions from using affirmative action programs that give preferential treatment to groups or individuals based on their race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin for employment, education or contracting purposes. Public institutions affected by the proposal include state government, local governments, public colleges and universities, community colleges and school districts.

Michigan is now the 3rd state to ban some affirmative action programs, behind California and Washington. Private entities are not prohibited from using affirmative action programs under this constitutional amendment.

Analysis on the proposal from a long-time East Lansing political consultant had suggested that once voters who were not paying attention to the ballot proposals went into the voting booth and read the language for the first time, they would most likely support it.

Proposal 2 led 56 – 42 among whites and 55 – 44 among men. Interestingly, those with no high school diploma and those with some college, a degree or a post-graduate degree voted against Proposal 2, while high school grads or students with technical training voted for it. Republicans and Democrats were almost exactly opposite with each other, with 76% of Republicans voting for it and 75 % of Democrats voting against it.

Proposal 3(Mourning Doves)

REJECTED, 31% Yes; 69% No

The question on this initiative was whether or not to approve PA 160 of 2004, which reclassified the Mourning Dove as a game bird to allow the doves to be hunted. Previously, they were classified as a song bird, which are off-limits for hunters. Since the question was rejected, Mourning Doves will be reclassified as song birds and off-limits to hunters.

Proposal 4(Eminent Domain)

APPROVED, 80% Yes; 20% No

The Michigan Constitution now protects the standards that a Government must achieve in order to transfer, or, transfer private property via Eminent Domain. These standards were recently established in a Michigan court case, County of Wayne v. Hathcock. Those standards include that the property must remain under public oversight and that the property is selected due to other circumstances than the sole benefit of the entity wishing to seize it.

The amendment also requires governments to provide compensation equal to 125 percent of a residential property's fair market value. Also, it shifts the burden of proof that the transfer of the property in question is for a public use from the owner (objecting to the transfer) to the government (proposing the transfer).

Proposal 5 (K-16 Funding)

REJECTED, 38% Yes; 62% No

This initiative would have guaranteed a base-level of funding every year for Michigan's K-16 education system, spanning from Elementary and High Schools to Community Colleges and Michigan's major Universities. The proposal would have increased annual per pupil spending by the rate of inflation, narrow the gap between highest- and lowest-spending districts, required GF/GP dollars to fund any shortfalls from this new funding level, based funding on a 3-year student average, set required spending for various programs such as special education and schools with declining enrollment, and reduce and cap the retirement fund contributions paid by K-16 schools.

Proposal 5's supporters believe that the last few weeks' worth of negative ads against Proposal 5, which linked its passage to massive budget constraints and stated that none of the funds were tied to an increase in student or teacher performance, were largely responsible for its defeat.

Proposal 5 failed among women *and* men, with 52% and 57% voting against it, respectively. African Americans were the only ethnic group tracked that voted for the proposal. Proposal 5 failed along all education lines, from no diploma all the way through post-graduate training. The only groups that favored the proposal were Democrats (52%) and Union households (51%).

*Unofficial results posted by the Detroit News, 11/8/06, rounded by Capitol Services to the nearest whole percent.