



Texas Election Wrap-Up

November 5, 2014

To no one's surprise, GOP candidates easily carried the statewide offices, continuing a trend that began in 1998. But for the first time in 12 years, Texas will see a reshuffling of all of the major statewide offices. Attorney General Greg Abbott won the big prize, the Governor's office, winning 59% of the vote in a big victory over State Senator Wendy Davis (D-Fort Worth). Senator Dan Patrick (R-Houston) likewise won big over Senator Leticia Van de Putte (D-San Antonio) to become Lieutenant Governor. Other GOP winners include Sen. Ken Paxton (R-McKinney) for Attorney General, Sen. Glen Hegar for Comptroller, attorney George P. Bush for Land Commissioner, former Rep. Sid Miller for Agriculture Commissioner, and businessman Ryan Sitton for a seat on the Texas Railroad Commission. Texas Supreme Court incumbents Phil Johnson, Jeff Brown, and Jeff Boyd all won easily as well.

The GOP strengthened its hold on the Texas Senate and House as well when the Fort Worth Senate seat vacated by Wendy Davis went to GOP candidate Konni Burton. Republicans now hold a 20-11 majority in the Texas Senate, one short of the two-thirds needed to bring legislation to the floor for debate. Lieutenant Governor-elect Patrick has indicated that he will try to persuade the Senate to abolish the two-thirds rule in favor of a lower 60% requirement for suspension, though whether he has the votes to accomplish this remains to be seen. If the two-thirds rule is changed, it not only will substantially reduce the influence of Democrats in the Senate, but will likely diminish the ability of senators with rural districts to protect agricultural and other rural interests. The new Lieutenant Governor has also said publicly that he will not appoint any Democratic committee chairs, though he has also indicated that he will consider retaining some of them, such as Dean of the Senate John Whitmire, who currently chairs the Senate Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.

The House will see little change as well. Though Republicans picked up three seats, they are still short of the 100-vote threshold needed to pass constitutional amendments or suspend certain constitutional rules. TADC members Sarah Davis (R-Houston), Travis Clardy (R-Nacogdoches), and Rene Oliveira (D-Brownsville) all won re-election. Speaker Joe Straus (R-San Antonio) appears on track to win election to his fourth term in the hot seat. Rep. Scott Turner

(R-Rockwall), a Tea Party favorite, has indicated that he will challenge the incumbent speaker, but it seems unlikely that he will mount a serious challenge.

The TADC will continue to monitor and update as to how these legislative changes could potentially affect the up-coming legislative session.

Texas Association of Defense Counsel, Inc.

400 W. 15th Street, Suite 420, Austin, Texas 78701 512.476.5225 - 512.476.5384 FAX - tadc@tadc.org