

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

KDHA

Kansas General Election Report

November 4, 2020

After several months of hard campaigning in state and national elections, the suspense is finally over, at least in Kansas. The Kansas House and Senate will have many new faces next session, along with two new members of Congress and a U.S. Senator. The election results bring Kansas closer to a complete view of what can be expected in the 2021 and 2022 Legislative Sessions.

Beginning with the national view, U.S. Senator Pat Roberts did not seek a fourth term, opening up a hotly contested battle for his open seat between Congressman Roger Marshall and State Senator Barbara Bollier. Marshall won the election and will become the junior senator from Kansas. The GOP may maintain control of the United States Senate but a handful of key races across the nation remain to be called.

Congresswoman Sharice Davids defeated Amanda Adkins to hold the Third Congressional District. State Treasurer Jake LaTurner, who won the Second Congressional District's primary election in August, defeated Michelle De La Isla, while Congressman Ron Estes defeated Laura Lomard in the Fourth Congressional District. The open seat for the First Congressional District, currently held by Roger Marshall, elected former Lt. Governor Tracy Mann over Kali Barnett. Democrats maintained control in the United States House of Representatives for the next two years. A new State Treasurer is expected to be appointed by Governor Kelly to replace Jake LaTurner, who will serve in Congress.

Beyond the national elections, Kansas will see many changes in the coming months. Though Governor Laura Kelly and other statewide offices are in place through 2022, the Legislature will look very different with many new faces while maintaining a GOP super majority in both houses. All 125 Kansas House members and 40 senators stood for election, although many ran in uncontested races. After the smoke cleared, 43 new members will head to the Statehouse in January. This equates to a 23% total turnover for the House and 35% for the Senate.

The biggest surprise of the evening was the defeat of Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, first elected to the Senate in 1993. This adds to a complete new look to the Kansas Senate. Four senators opted not to run for re-election while seven incumbents lost the August primary election. Last night, four seats flipped to the opposite party (two Republican and two Democrat). In all, there will be 14 new senators and an overall break even with 29 Republicans and 11 Democrats compared to the previous four years. The August primary election results also infer the Senate will be more conservative. The retirements of Senate President Susan Wagle and Majority Leader Jim Denning created a vacuum for new leadership, in which Senators Ty Masterson and Jeff Longbine both announcing they will seek to be the new president, with a handful more eyeing the majority leader and vice president role. Anthony Hensley's loss creates an opening for the Democrats' top post.

In last night's election of the Kansas House, several seats flipped to the opposite party, resulting in a net loss of three Democrat seats. Of the 125 House seats, 87 are now Republican and 38 are Democrat. Additionally, because of the August primary election results where six GOP representatives were defeated, five of the six were moderate-leaning, this gives a nudge more power to the conservative ranks in the Kansas House.

Kansas House Speaker Ron Ryckman plans to run to retain his spot as the highest-ranking member of the House for a third term in the December leadership elections. House Speaker Pro-Tem Blaine Finch, Majority Leader Dan Hawkins and Minority Leader Tom Sawyer also aim to run for their positions for another two years without major opposition apparent to date.

The general election finally provided clarity with a complete list of legislators, but there is still much in question. Until the legislative leadership elections take place in Topeka, it is unclear who will hold the Senate's top posts. Once the House and Senate leaders are in place, they will determine and publish committee assignments, generally sometime before Christmas.

At first glance, the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee and the House Health & Human Services Committee, where many dental policy issues reside, will have different looks. The seventeen member House committee will have four members not return to the Legislature while the nine member Senate committee will lose two. The bigger impact, however, is the Senate committee vice chair Ed Berger (R-Hutchinson) and ranking minority Barbara Bollier (D-Mission Hills) and House committee ranking minority Monica Murnan (D-Pittsburg) are among those that will not return.

The 2021 Legislative Session will begin January 11 where it is largely expected to be in accordance with traditional timelines, albeit COVID-19 safety precautions will be in place. Governor Laura Kelly will present her legislative agenda and vision for the state in January's State of the State address. The Governor has already announced her intention to address statewide COVID-19 safety precautions. The Legislature has many policy areas to tackle, such as including lingering 2020 issues cut short by the early dismissal. All previously introduced legislation is dead so new proposals must be introduced.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

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