

Elections Change the Political Landscape in Washington – ever so slightly.

Federal/Congressional Races:

The big news to report on is our Congressional Races. Sadly, our Republican candidate Dino Rossi just couldn't gain enough muster to beat out Senator Patty Murray in their race for Senate. With a near split state on votes, Murray won the most challenged race of her career. As they approached November 2nd, it was apparent her campaign was concerned about Rossi's momentum with the seemingly unending visits to Washington State by Democratic supporters such as President Obama, President Clinton, First Lady Obama, and Vice President Biden. The first few days after the election even felt like Rossi's first two bids for Governor whereas we could have a recount to determine our victor. But in the end, a 45,000 vote spread was just much for Dino to gain and he graciously conceded on November 4th.

In our House of Representatives our results seems to show only one big change. Jamie Herrera, Republican, from southwest Washington (3rd District) was successful in her bid for the seat left vacant by Brian Baird (D). The race in the 2nd District is still too close to call. In early hours, it appeared John Koster, Republican, could gain a seat in Northwest Washington against incumbent Rick Larsen, but numbers now show Larsen the likely victor. Dave Reichert fought a strongly contested race against Susan DelBene, but was able to pull out his votes at the end of the day and retain his seat in the 8th District.

State Races:

Coming into the election cycle, the state Democrats held a substantial majority in both the House and Senate. Democrats held 61 seats to the Republican 37 seats in the House and 31 Democratic vs. 18 Republican seats in the Senate. This landscape marginalized the Republican vote thus far, putting ourselves in a significant budget shortfall and taxes every which way consumers turned.

While the election is still not certified at the time of writing, Republicans have certainly tightened the gap. With a few races still in play, it appears the R's have gained 4 seats in the Senate making the gap 27 vs. 22 seats and picked up 8 seats in the House, closing that gap to a 53-D vs. 45-R seats.

So what does this really mean? While we still have a triple-D majority in Olympia, the Republicans have a much stronger voice that will resonate in the halls this session. The most significant impact will be the need for their input when budget negotiations begin. One message sent loud and clear to Olympia was "balance the budget without taxing the people". With an expected \$5 - \$7 billion state budget deficit for the 2011 – 13 biennium, this message will be enforced with a new balance in power. However, reaching a balanced budget will be a very difficult task for lawmakers that will largely be accomplished through substantial program cuts by the end of the 105-day session.

Measures:

- I-1053: ☺ Succeeded. This measure restates existing statutory requirements that a 2/3rd vote of the Legislature, or a vote of the people, is required to increase any existing taxes or fees as well as added taxes. This repeals the Legislature's attempt last session to bypass the voters and impose taxes to consumers without a majority vote of the Legislature or the people. Hopefully this will provide the industry with much needed relief from its ongoing battle over storm water cleanup and increased MTCA taxes.
- I-1082: ☹ Failed. This measure would have ended the State Department of Labor & Industries' monopoly over Workers' Compensation Insurance and allow private enterprise to enter the marketplace.
- I-1098: ☹ Failed. An attempt to impose a state income tax on wage earners making more than \$200,000 annually (\$400k couple) was defeated by voters. While most county voters defeated the measure by 73%+, King County voters were nearly split on the concept. If you look at the statistics, it is apparent that King County voters carry the largest stick in the State.
- I-1100 and I-1105: Failed. 1100 proposed to privatize the liquor sales system and 1105 secured the ability for Distributors to sell in the state. Sadly, 1105 confused voters and took votes away from 1100. In all, both initiatives failed and the State continues to control any liquor hard sales.
- I-1107: ☺ Succeeded. This initiative repeals many taxes imposed by the Legislature last year in a feeble attempt to balance the state budget. This will require the roll-back of taxes to such items as soda, candy and bottled water. Also goes hand-in-hand with I-1053.

Overall, the Republicans and Tea Party goers have much work to be done. Their job will be to take the voice of the general population (not including those of King County) back to Olympia and restore balance within the ranks of our lawmakers. I strongly believe that the independent voter can swing from left to right from election to election. The Republicans have been given a message and it will remain to be seen if they execute the will of the voters. If they don't succeed in the next two-years, it is surely possible to see the gains made this cycle dwindle away. The Republicans must remain true to their constituents and produce results... they have two years to prove their worth.

Welcome Steve Clark to the Chairs:

Effective November 1st, Steve Clark of Genesee Heating out of Seattle will be entering into the chairs of WOMA as 2nd Vice President. Steve will bring great perspective and experience to the chairs. His involvement and commitment to WOMA have been steadfast since the merger between PNOC and WOMA five years ago. It's exciting for me to have his leadership in our ranks and continues to solidify a great future for WOMA. In addition, Steve has agreed to another 2-year term as our NORA Board Member as well as will sit on the Heating Fuels Committee at PMAA. Please extend your thanks to Steve for his willingness to serve.