



Virginia Elections Equalize Power, Setting Up Tough Battles in 2018

Last month, as anyone in the DMV area knows, Virginia held its elections for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and all 100 seats for the House of Delegates. Seen by most pundits as a referendum on the 2016 national election, Virginia saw not just a wave but a tsunami of Democratic support across the Commonwealth. As one of only two states in 2017 to hold elections for this many officials, this highly anticipated election proved the existence of momentum well beyond what most would have thought. The result? A significant shift in the political makeup of the state of Virginia.

Most voter turnout models seemed to give the impression of close races

in all three statewide elections and safe bids for Republican incumbents and candidates for a number of contested House races. While turnout was slightly higher from the GOP than in past gubernatorial elections, the Democratic turnout was explosive and more than many Republican candidates could handle.

Based on the turnout, Democrats handily swept all three statewide races. Incoming Governor Ralph Northam (current lieutenant governor) won the day by nearly nine percent, a much larger margin than what any poll had predicted. Incoming Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax will be new to the political scene, while incumbent Attorney General Mark Herring will continue his duties in that role.

Ideologically speaking, there will be little change from the top three Virginia legislative positions.

While many across the country had their eyes on the governor's race, at the end of the day, the elections for the House of Delegates are what stole the show. While the initial election results were still unofficial at the time this was written, Democrats are expected to pick up 15 of the 17 seats that Hillary Clinton won over Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. These anticipated wins create a dramatic shift from a 66-34 Republican majority in the House to a slim 51-49 majority. In three key races, incumbent delegates Tim Hugo (R-Clifton) and David Yancey (R-Newport News) and candidate

Bob Thomas (R-Stafford) all lead their respective races by less than one percent of the total votes cast in their races, with Yancey holding onto an astonishingly small 10-vote lead.

As it stands at the time of this writing, recounts are anticipated in all three of the races listed above. The outcome of these recounts will determine which party will control the majority in Virginia's House of Delegates. There is also the very real possibility that a 50-50 split will occur if one of the aforementioned races flips following the recount. The last time there was a 50-50 split in Virginia was 1999. At that time, the

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