



TRA 2020 Election Recap

As votes continue to be counted in races around the country – particularly in the Presidential race, TRA is providing an initial 2020 election recap to our members. Specifically, this recap focuses on initial election results in Texas for both state and federal offices.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Abbott extended early voting in Texas by six days. This extension not only gave voters more time to participate in early voting, but it gave journalist and political analysts more time to examine election data to try to predict a winner. However, up until Election Day, there was no way to predict the outcome.

Since 2016, Texas added 1.8 million registered voters to the voter rolls and hit an all-time record high of 16.9 million registered voters. During the early voting period, almost 9.7 million people, or 57.3% of registered voters in the state, voted early. This was a 47% increase from the number of voters who voted early in the 2016 general election. In fact, before Election Day, 735,000 more people had voted early this year in Texas than had voted in the entire 2016 presidential election.

On Election Day, over 1.4 million people voted in Texas, making this the highest election turnout our state has ever seen with over 11.1 million people in total voting. While the Democrats were hopeful for big wins in Texas, that was not the case in this year's election. As a result, 2021 in Texas state politics will look very similar to 2020.

Presidential Race

Here in Texas, President Trump defeated former Vice President Biden by 6 points, 52% to 46%, which gave Texas's 38 Electoral College votes to the President. However, on Saturday November 7th, the overall election for President was called for former Vice-President Biden, when several of the battleground states were called for him, making him the President-elect, who will be sworn in as the nation's 46th President on January 20th, 2021. Although President Trump's winning margin in Texas was down from the 9 points he won Texas by in 2016, there was no "Blue wave" here in Texas.

U.S. Senate Race

Senator John Cornyn easily defeated MJ Hegar 54%-44%. Given that Beto O'Rourke came within 2 percentage points of defeating Senator Ted Cruz in 2018, some had thought this race would be closer. Hegar, a political newcomer, could not defeat our state's most senior Senator, so Senator Cornyn will be going back to Washington to serve his 4th term. However, the balance of power in the U.S. Senate will not be known until the results from the January 5th run-off races for both of Georgia's U.S. Senate seats are known. The Democrats would have to win both of those run-offs to secure a working majority in the U.S. Senate. If that happens, the U.S. Senate would be split evenly between Republicans and Democrats at 50-50, with the Vice-President, casting the tie-breaking votes. As of noon on January 20th, Vice-President elect Kamala Harris will be sworn in and have the tie-breaking vote in the Senate, which will throw the majority to the Democrats and result in Sen. Chuck Schumer becoming Majority Leader. Conversely, unless both of the Georgia run-offs are won by the Democrats, the Republicans would stay in the majority with a slim one or two vote margin, and Sen. Mitch McConnell would remain Majority Leader.

Congressional Races

Texas will get 7 new representatives in the U.S. House in January, but with the new faces come no changes in the delegation's party breakdown. There were 7 open Congressional seats in Texas and Republicans won each of them. No member of the Texas Congressional delegation who sought reelection lost his or her race. As a result, the Texas Congressional delegation will remain 24 Republicans and 13 Democrats.

Texas Legislative Update

The Texas Legislature will remain relatively stable from a political perspective as we move into 2021 and head into the 87th Texas Legislative session. The most significant impacts of the elections will likely be that there will now be 13 Democratic senators (up one from last session) in the Texas Senate, which provide the Democrats newfound procedural power.

Additionally, as you all know, TRA endorsed 123 members of the Texas Legislature, and 97.6% of TRA's endorsed candidates for the State Legislature won their elections. This is very significant for TRA and the Texas retail industry as we go into the next legislative session in 2021.

Texas House Races

There will be at least 13 new members in the Texas House since the last legislative session. 7 were open seats, 4 members lost their primaries and 2 incumbent Representatives lost their general races.

Republicans lost one Texas House seat - Sarah Davis (R- Bellaire) was defeated by Ann Johnson and Democrats lost one seat, as Democratic Rep. Gina Calanni lost to Republican Mike Schofield.

Come January, the Texas House will be comprised of 83 Republicans and 67 Democrats. Additionally, it's now clear that State Representative Dade Phelan has the votes to be the next House Speaker, and he has established a transition team. House members will officially vote to nominate the Speaker on the first day of the legislative session in January.

Texas Senate Races

In the Senate, only one incumbent lost his election. Senator Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) was defeated by state Representative Roland Gutierrez (D-San Antonio). This race became one to watch because while Senate District 19 was a long-time Democratic district, Senator Flores, a Republican, was able to win this seat in a special election in 2018. With Gutierrez's win, the Texas Senate picked up a Democratic seat. Next session, there will be 18 Republican and 13 Democratic Senators. This election could have an effect on the way the Senate operates next session as it takes at least 13 members to stop legislation from hitting the Senate floor for a vote and Democrats now have 13 seats.