



KEEPING AMERICA'S DREAM AFFORDABLE



## 2018 General Election Recap

Yesterday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, Tennessee held its general election for state and federal offices. Voter turnout in the midterm election reached historic highs across the nation and Tennessee was no exception.

Businessman and self-proclaimed political outsider Bill Lee (R) was overwhelmingly elected to be Tennessee's next governor. The election was called in favor of Lee shortly after the polls closed on Tuesday. Lee received 59.59% of the vote. Lee defeated Former Nashville Mayor Karl Dean (D). Dean received 38.53% of the vote. In his acceptance speech on Tuesday night, Lee's message was one of unity as he promised to spend each day working to make Tennessee a better place to live for all Tennesseans. Lee specifically spoke to those who did not vote for him saying, ". . . I want you to know from the bottom of my heart, I care about you, I care about your family, and I'm going to do my very best to make you proud that I'm your governor."

Following the general election, Tennessee Republicans have held on to the supermajority in both the State House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, the breakdown remains the same. There are 28 Republicans and 5 Democrats. The House Democrats picked up one additional seat bringing the numbers to 73 Republicans and 26 Democrats.

Three Senators chose not to seek reelection this year leaving three open seats. Democrat Brenda Gilmore (Nashville), a former House member, ran against two Independent candidates in the general election for longtime Senator Thelma Harper's seat. Gilmore prevailed with 85.82% of the vote. House member Dawn White (R-Murfreesboro) won the general election for Former Senator Bill Ketron's seat receiving 57.09% of the vote. Raumes Akbari (D-Memphis), also a House member, won the former seat of Lee Harris who was elected Shelby County Mayor in August. Akbari defeated Republican Tom Stephens receiving 83.39% of the vote. Additionally, ten Senate Republicans faced general election challenges with several races attracting attention with close polling numbers before the election.

Senator Brian Kelsey (R-Memphis) was challenged by St. Jude Researcher Gabby Salinas (D-Memphis). Senator Kelsey prevailed by a narrow margin receiving 50.96% of the vote. Senator Richard Briggs (R-Knoxville) faced opposition from Attorney Jamie Ballinger (D-Knoxville). Though the race was predicted to be close, Senator Briggs was able to hold on to his seat with 55.57% of the vote.

Forty-six House Republicans faced general election opposition. Several House races were also close. Representative Eddie Smith (R- Knoxville) was challenged by Democrat Gloria Johnson, whose seat he took in 2014. It was a hard-fought race and ended in Johnson regaining her seat by a vote of 54.92%. Representative Martin Daniel faced opposition from former Knox County Administrator of Elections Greg Mackay. Rep. Daniel narrowly prevailed receiving 51.48% of the vote.

Four House Democrats were challenged by Republican opposition in the general election. Longtime Democratic Representative John Mark Windle (Livingston) prevailed against opponent Republican Ed Butler receiving 55.17% of the vote. Representative Bo Mitchell (D-Nashville) defeated Republican Judd Cowan receiving 56.65% of the vote. Representative Jason Powell (D-Nashville) also held on to his seat defeating Republican Amberlee' Brooks receiving 63.88% of the vote. Lastly, Representative Dewayne Thompson (D-Cordova) faced Republican Scott McCormick challenger and prevailed with 57.34% of the vote.

There were twenty-four House seats vacated this year. Notably, longtime Representative and House Speaker Beth Harwell (R-Nashville) did not seek reelection to run for Governor. Republican Brent Moody and Democrat Bob Freeman faced off in what was a widely talked about race. Freeman prevailed over Moody receiving 51.42% of the vote. This flips Harwell's former seat from Republican held to Democrat held. Representative Charles Sargent (R-Franklin) also chose not to seek reelection this year after serving over two decades in the General Assembly. Republican Brandon Ogles defeated Democrat Rebecca Purington. Ogles received 65.46% of the vote. House Minority Leader and longtime member of the General Assembly Craig Fitzhugh also vacated his seat to run for Governor. Republican Chris Hurt and Democrat Andrea Bond-Johnson faced off in what was expected to be a close race. Inevitably, Hurt prevailed with 57.26% of the vote and flipped the seat to be Republican held.

This election year brings many changes to the General Assembly for 2019 with 30 new members, unprecedented in recent years. Additionally, the leadership, including both Speakers, Majority and Minority leaders and the Caucus chairman will all be elected by their peers. The House will have its leadership elections on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Representatives Glen Casada, David Hawk, and Curtis Johnson are running for Speaker of the House. Representatives William Lamberth and Ryan Williams are running for Majority Leader. Representatives Ron Gant and Jay Reedy are running for Assistant Leader. Representatives Cameron Sexton and Jason Zachary are running for Caucus Chairman. The election for Speaker Pro Temp will be between Representatives Bill Dunn, Kelly Keisling and Dennis Powers. Lastly, Representatives Tim Rudd and Rick Tillis are running for Caucus Whip.

The House Democrats have not announced a date for caucus elections. Longtime Minority Leader Craig Fitzhugh did not run for re-election leaving that position open. As a result, there will be some shifting of leadership.

On the Senate side, it is unlikely that there will be a change in the Speaker. Lt. Governor Randy McNally will be reelected by the Senate. However, the Majority Leader position and Caucus Chairman position are both open. Former Majority Leader Mark Norris (R- Collierville) was nominated to a federal judgeship by President Trump. He was confirmed by the Senate in October. Senators Jack Johnson and Mike Bell plan to run for Majority Leader. Former Caucus Chairman Bill Ketron (R-Murfreesboro) did not seek reelection to the Senate this year. He was elected Mayor of Rutherford County in August. Senators Ken Yager and Becky Massey are running for Caucus Chairman.

In addition to changes in leadership, new committees will be appointed and will include newly elected Members who hold various opinions about the issues that are important to you, our clients. Our team will monitor upcoming leadership changes and work to ensure that you are well positioned for continued success in 2019.

At the Federal level, Tennessee quickly became a state to watch as the U.S. Senate race between Marsha Blackburn (R) and Phil Bredesen (D) had the ability to tip the balance in the Senate. As the election drew nearer, the polling numbers showed that the race remained very close and it began to garner national attention. President Trump visited Tennessee multiple times to attend rallies in support of Blackburn. Even Taylor Swift got involved posting a message in support of Bredesen on her Instagram account. Spending also hit record highs at \$85 million,

surpassing the amount spent in the August Republican primary for governor. In the end, the numbers were not as close as many expected and Blackburn won with 54.74% of the vote.

All incumbent Congressmen prevailed over their opposition. Phil Roe (R-1st District) defeated Marty Olsen (D) receiving 77.07% of the vote. Chuck Fleischmann (R-3rd District) won over Danielle Michell (D) receiving 63.70% of the vote. Scott DesJarlais (R-4th District) prevailed over Mariah Phillips (D) with 63.39% of the vote. Jim Cooper (D-5th District) received 67.85% of the vote prevailing over Republican challenger, Jody Ball. David Kustoff (R-8th District) won over Erika Stotts Pearson (D) receiving 67.64% of the total vote. Steve Cohen (D-9th District) also defeated his Republican challenger, Charlotte Bergmann, receiving 79.91%.

Congressman John Duncan Jr. retired from his role as the representative for Tennessee's 2nd congressional district. Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett faced Democrat Renee Hoyos for Duncan's seat. Tim Burchett prevailed receiving 65.94% of the vote. U.S. District 6 Representative Diane Black vacated her seat to run for Governor. Republican John Rose and Democrat Dawn Barlow faced off for Black's former seat. Rose prevailed over Barlow with 69.48% of the vote. Former State Senator Mark Green (R-Clarksville) and Democrat Justin Kanew vied for the 7th District seat formerly held by Marsha Blackburn. Mark Green was successful receiving 66.84% of the total vote.

We will continue to monitor all legislative changes and will provide you with updates as we receive them. As always, please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.