



Election roundup 2018: For better or worse, Election Day brings opportunity for change - by Matt Engel

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As is the case every other year in the United States, after months and months of spirited buildup, election day brings an opportunity for change. For better or for worse, every state assemblyperson and senator in N.Y., as well as every U.S. Congressperson must run and generally face a challenger.

Leading up to the 2018 elections, hundreds of pundits and pollsters tried to make their predictions as to what would occur on the federal, state and local levels. This year, the pundits predicted a ground swelling of support for a Blue Wave, a Democratic turnout that would overwhelm the U.S. House of Representatives. And although the turnout was hoped for by many Democrats, the nature of the map made such successes in the Senate much more challenging. In a nutshell, most rational predictions expected the Democrats to flip the House and the Republicans to hold the Senate. Largely, that is what occurred.

Democratic momentum in the House was significant, though not as overwhelming as predicted, and as I write this, the Democrats look to have a small but reasonable majority of approximately 12 seats. So arguably the Blue movement in the House was more of a ripple than a wave nationwide. There were significant gains in the suburbs though, and the party saw the election of younger and diverse candidates.

However, in the Senate, the Republicans nearly swept the approximately 9 races that were predicted to be close. In the end, it appears that the Red tide in the Senate was a bit stronger. When all votes are finalized, it's expected the Republicans may have increased their Senate majority to 54 seats.

So on the Federal level, the Democrats flipped the House, but it's unclear who the real winner was.

On the state level, there is complete certainty. The Blue wave that was predicted was massive, sweeping over the Long Island Sound and enveloping Long Island and much of upstate. On the statewide races, as predicted, the governor and attorney general were elected with huge majorities. AG Letitia James has had much familiarity with the real estate industry and it will be interesting to see where she focuses her efforts. Promises in campaigning suggest that she will spend much time on rent regulation and other aspects of the industry.

As you may recall, the State Senate has sat with a pro-business majority of Senate Republicans and

variations of other Democrats who have caucused with them. Going into the election, the Republicans and one senator, Simcha Felder represented a one seat majority. Pundits generally predicted the Senate would flip to full Democratic control, perhaps by as many as three seats. The results were more than anyone could have predicted.

Armed with the momentum of the anti-Trump vibe, perhaps larger in New York than anywhere else, the Democrats swept away Republican control, eliminating three incumbent Republican state senators on Long Island (Elaine Phillips, Kemp Hannon, Carl Marcellino) and one expected to win an open seat (Dean Murray). The Democrats somewhat surprisingly defeated senator Marty Golden of New York City and even knocked off incumbent Terrance Murphy in the northern outskirts suburbs. In addition, the Democrats won two open Republican seats upstate, against Rabbitt and Basile.

When the dust has settled, it will likely show a State Senate with a pickup of seven Democratic seats, a majority that may prove near impossible for the Republicans to recover from for decades if ever, given demographic shifts.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins is expected to serve as the Senate majority leader where she will work with assembly leader Carl Heastie and governor Cuomo to craft policy for the state going forward. In addition to other general issues, the largest issue to face the industry will include the renewal of rent regulation in June, 2019.

So the big questions, what are the takeaways and who are the winners?

The takeaways vary depending on where you are and who you ask. Clearly the Democrats excelled in suburban regions even in places like Texas. Suburban Republicans were swept away. The Trump message has fallen on deaf ears in many suburbs.

Of course, with the Republican successes in the Senate there is a takeaway that Republicans are excelling in areas with non-college educated whites (even in traditional Democratic areas like Ohio). The Senate success may be enough to retain a Republican majority for at least another four years. That's critical for issues that involve judicial review and the Supreme Court.

Republicans even held key governor posts, including the biggest prize, Florida and important Presidential target states, like Iowa and New Hampshire.

Turnout was massive, but for both parties. Women drove the turnout and even the election winners. The previous record for number of women in the U.S. Congress will be shattered. Close to 100 new representatives will be women.

And the biggest winners? Is it possible that the biggest winners include Nancy Pelosi, Andrew Cuomo, Bill DeBlasio (championing the progressive New York wing that will control the New York legislature) and even Mitch McConnell and Donald Trump altogether?

Though perhaps the biggest winner of the night will be someone who lost his election, Beto O'Rourke, who raised more money in his race than anyone else, and is already creating buzz as a Presidential front runner for the Democrats in a little over a year...

Matt Engel is the president of Langsam Property Services Corp., Bronx, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540