



Election 2008

West Virginia Opts For Status Quo

November 5, 2008

While change was the sentiment of the nation last night, here in West Virginia voters opted, generally, for the status quo. Election results across the Mountain State show that incumbents and familiar faces had the upper hand over new opponents. This clearly was the case in several statewide races and in many legislative contests. Provided is an election overview and analysis:

Governor Joe Manchin won handily in his bid for a second term – receiving an astounding 70 percent of the vote. The Governor campaigned on his record of positive change and showcased the state's improved economic and fiscal situation. The West Virginia Chamber looks forward to building on its close working relationship with the state's "CEO" and to continuing efforts to improve the state's business climate, create more job opportunities, reduce taxes and health care costs and enhance educational outcomes at all levels.

In the state Supreme Court race, Democrats Menis Ketchum and Margaret Workman were elected for 12-year terms on the five-member high court. Chamber-backed candidate Beth Walker (Republican) came within one percentage point of victory. The West Virginia Chamber congratulates top vote getters Menis Ketchum and Margaret Workman and believes the new court will represent a more balanced and fairer venue for appeals.

In the Attorney General contest, Chamber-backed Dan Greear (Republican) battled neck-and-neck all last night with Democratic incumbent Darrell McGraw. In the end, though, the 50-50 split went to McGraw, who prevailed by roughly 4,000 votes. During this campaign, Greear consistently challenged McGraw on the AG's expenditure of settlement funds and McGraw's refusal to provide greater transparency in the hiring of outside counsel. The West Virginia Chamber will continue to urge lawmakers to crack down on McGraw's current practices ([click to read Chamber policy paper](#)).

In the Legislature, 2008 Election results indicate that incumbents – whether Democrat or Republican – were able to maintain their seats. Moreover, very little change will take place in the political or philosophical make-up of either house.

In the state Senate, Democrats will welcome three additional members with the elections of Jack Yost (D-1st), Corey Palumbo (8th) and Bob Williams (D-14th). Republicans Karen Facemyer (4th) and Don Caruth (10th) both fought back challengers backed by organized labor. Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin was re-elected easily in his district. The results also indicate that there will be no change in the leadership of the Senate. ([Click to see unofficial state Senate election results.](#))

In the House of Delegates, almost no change was made in the make-up of the members. The one caveat is that the Republicans will have a net gain of an extra representative in the 100-member body. Many Republican incumbents fought back efforts by labor-backed candidates. Incumbent Republican Delegates Mitch Carmichael, Tom Azinger, Patrick Lane, Patty Eagloski Schoen, Mike Porter, Kelli Sobonya and Carol Miller all were victorious. The only incumbent to lose Tuesday night was Marshall Long, a Democrat from Mercer County. One appointed Delegate, Louis Gall of Raleigh County, also was defeated. ([Click to see unofficial House election results.](#))

In the hotly contested Second Congressional District, incumbent Shelley Moore Capito (Republican) easily bested Democrat Anne Barth. Jay Rockefeller coasted to victory, as well as Third District Congressman Nick Rahall.

The West Virginia Chamber looks forward to working with the leadership and members in the Legislature and to continue recent progress that is helping to propel the state's economic good times. In the past few weeks West Virginia has been able to stand out from nearly all other states thanks to its continued high employment levels, low jobless rate and ongoing budget surplus. None of this would have been possible if key changes had not been made in the areas of Workers' Compensation, insurance reform, medical malpractice, tax relief, and prudent fiscal management and discipline.

Now is the time to accelerate our state's growth while the demand for energy remains strong and the rest of the nation languishes under housing and credit-related problems.

We also plan to expand out interactions with the state's congressional delegation to make sure they are well informed about state employer views on key federal matters in 2009, such as the proposed Employee Free Choice Act (check card), tax reform, health care restructuring and economic/credit reform plans.