

2026 Election Summary

Ohio played a major role in the blue tsunami that swept across the country on November 3rd. Democrats in the Buckeye state made substantial gains in statewide executive seats by winning four of five contests (including the Governor's office) while also winning two Ohio Supreme Court contests. In both the Ohio House and Ohio Senate, Democrats gained two Senate seats while apparently capturing enough House seats to break the current supermajority held by House Republicans.

Ohio Democrats also returned a former Senator to the US Senate by winning one of the most contested and expensive Senate races in history and defeated three incumbent Republican members of the US House. Ohio saw massive midyear election voter turnout in many areas of the state, most notably around urban areas around major cities like Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati.

Governor

In a scenario that seemed most improbable just six months ago, Ohioans returned a Democrat to the Governor's mansion for the first time in twenty years by electing Dr. Amy Acton, who served as the former Director of the Ohio Department of Health under current Republican Governor Mike DeWine. Acton's election also made history, as she became the first woman elected to be Ohio's Chief Executive (Republican Nancy Hollister was appointed to serve as Governor for 11 days when George Voinovich won election to the US Senate in the 1990's). Governor-Elect Acton easily defeated Republican businessman and venture capitalist Vivek Ramaswamy 52.31%-44.38%. Ramaswamy had the backing of President Donald Trump and many business groups, but despite spending millions of his own money and receiving the assistance of many outside "dark money" groups, Ramaswamy was unable to clearly separate himself from Acton throughout the campaign.

While economic and other factors at both the national level and state level helped Democrats in Ohio in many races, one of the issues that will be talked about regarding this campaign for years to come was Ramaswamy's choice to produce and utilize a controversial ad that used Acton's 82-year-old estranged mother, who accused Acton about lying about her past story of physical and sexual abuse as a child at the hands of her stepfather. Despite the words of her brother, court records that backed Acton's account of the past, and her mother's criminal past and other issues, Ramaswamy used a $4 million media buy to run the ad on television in the closing weeks of the campaign. Time will tell if this ad had any impact on voters in Ohio. Acton's nearly 8% margin of victory is a figure very few, if any, believed would be possible.

State Executive Races

NOTE: This writing is based on the unofficial final vote count. The Secretary of State lists that there are still some outstanding absentee and provisional ballots. It remains to be seen if these ballots will be validated or have an impact on the outcomes of any pending races.

Democrats continued their rather surprising success by sweeping three of four of the remaining statewide races. Most observers around Capitol Square expected Republicans to maintain their majorities in the following four state executive races heading into November 3. However, in the last two weeks, several polls surfaced that classified a few of these races (mainly for Secretary of State and Attorney General) as "toss ups." As part of the historic "blue wave," Democrats defied the odds and have appeared to have captured three of these four statewide races.

Secretary of State: In what many around Capitol Square consider a big surprise, former House Democrat Leader Allison Russo defeated current Republican State Treasurer Robert Sprague by a margin of 50.25%-46.80%. Sprague has called Russo to concede this race.

Treasurer: Democrats also have appeared to capture the State Treasurer's race, as Democrat Cincinnati City Council Member Seth Walsh defeated former Republican House of Representatives member (and House Finance Committee chairman) Jay Edwards. Walsh won this race by 50.55%-49.45%.

Auditor: Current Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose was the only Republican to win a statewide contest, defeating Democrat Annette Blackwell by a margin of 50.79%-49.21%.

Attorney General: In what might be the biggest surprise of the four statewide contests, Democrat John Kulewicz of Columbus defeated current Republican Auditor Keith Faber by 50.31%-49.69%. Faber is a former President of the Ohio Senate, while Kulewicz is an attorney that formerly worked for a prominent Columbus law firm.

As of now, although some of the races were close, it remains to be seen if there will be a recount in any of these contests.

Ohio Supreme Court

Leading into the election, Republicans on the Ohio Supreme Court enjoyed a 6-1 advantage and felt they had a great opportunity to defeat incumbent Democrat Justice Jennifer Brunner and control every seat on the Court. However, not only did Brunner retain her seat but Democrats unseated an incumbent Republican Justice that, as of this writing, will leave the Court at a 5-2 Republican advantage.

Democratic Justice Jennifer Brunner turned back a robust challenge of Republican Judge Colleen O'Donnell by a 51.37%-48.63% margin.

Democratic Justice Marilyn Zayas shocked incumbent Republican Justice Dan Hawkins by a margin of 51.01%-48.99%.

State Ballot Issue

State Issue 3, a proposal to place Ohio's current statutory requirement to have and produce a valid ID when voting into the state's constitution, easily passed 65.33%-34.67%

US Senate

Ohio followed many states by electing a Democrat Senator (which enabled the Democrats to regain control of the US Senate) by sending former US Senator Sherrod Brown back to Washington, defeating incumbent Republican John Husted 50.01%-45.15%. Brown will now hold this seat for two years and be forced to run again in 2028; this election filled the remaining unexpired term of former Senator and now Vice President JD Vance. Husted was appointed to this seat by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine.

Ohio Senate

Democrats continued their success on Tuesday night by picking up two seats in the Ohio Senate. When the new session of the Senate begins in January, Republicans will still control the chamber by 22-11 (the margin was 24-9 heading into last night).

In the 3rd Senate District (near Columbus), Democrat Stacie Baker unseated Republican incumbent Michelle Reynolds by a 51.88%-48.12% margin.

In the 27th Senate District, Democrat Mike Roberto defeated Republican Steve Demetriou by 53.54%-46.46%. This was an open seat created by term limits for current Republican Senator Kristina Roegner.

Republicans did hold onto a hotly contested seat in the 13th district, as current Republican House Speaker Pro Tempore won this race against current Democratic Ohio House member Joe Miller by a 50.73%-49.27%. Gayle Manning, who once had this Senate seat, will return to the Ohio Senate to fill the seat most recently held by her son Nathan (who departed the Senate to accept a judicial appointment from Governor DeWine).

Ohio House of Representatives

Democrats achieved their stated pre-election goal of flipping enough seats to break the Republican supermajority in the House. This will be especially important to them with the election of Governor-

elect Acton, as the House Republicans will be unable to muster enough votes (without Democrat help) to override any vetoes that might be coming from the new Governor.

As of this writing, it appears that Democrats were able to flip at least 8 seats to cut into Speaker Matt Huffman's majority. In several races, specific House Republicans either very narrowly lost or won by incredible small vote totals and a recount will take place in those races. As of now, here are the seats and districts that are considered "pick-ups" for House Democrats:

7th District: D Megan Coy defeats incumbent R Mike Dovilla
35th District: D Samantha Salamon defeats R Vic Sandhu (Demetriou seat)
31st District: D J. Noah Spence defeats R Mike Kahoe (Roemer seat)
36th District: D Rose Lounsbury defeats R incumbent Andrea White
37th District: D Tom Heiner defeats R incumbent Tom Young (probable recount-134 vote difference)
39th District: D Daquan Neal defeats R Mark Campbell (Plummer House seat)
49th District: D Krista Allison defeats R incumbent Jim Thomas
52nd District: D Mike Baker defeats Republican Cliff Winkel (Gayle Manning seat)
60th District: D Shelby Kimball defeats R incumbent Brian Lorenz

Pending Races with Possible Recounts
44th District: R incumbent Haraz Ghanbari leads D Richard Retting by 126 votes
29th District: R incumbent Cindy Abrams leads D Jonathan Bradner by 19 votes
44th District: R Edward Schimmel leads D David Fournier by 56 votes (this is the Rep. Josh Williams seat)

Again, outstanding absentee and provisional ballots could also impact some of these very close races. The 37th district race which has incumbent R Tom Young losing is considered a Democratic "pick-up" for now but the 134-vote difference will trigger a recount.

US House of Representatives

Ohio's congressional delegation was also positively impacted for Ohio Democrats, knocking off three Republican incumbents and somehow hanging on to the redrawn 9th Congressional District in Northwest Ohio through a late victory by long-time Democratic Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur.

The following are the three Republican "flip" seats:
7th District (NE Ohio): D Brian Poindexter unseats R Max Miller 54.93%-45.07%. Miller had been plagued by domestic issues in this race.

10th District: In a true shocker, D Kristina Knickerbocker defeats long-time Republican incumbent Mike Turner 49.34%-47.71%.

15th District: D challenger Don Leonard defeated R incumbent Mike Carey 51.90%-45.27%. This district covers sections of Columbus and goes both to the east and west of the city. This outcome was a large surprise as well.

Perhaps just as shocking as the Turner and Carey defeats was the victory of long-time Democratic incumbent Marcy Kaptur in the 9th Congressional District, defeating former Republican Ohio House member Derrick Merrin 52.73%-47.27%. This district in Northwest Ohio was redrawn to include more conservative counties running west to the Ohio-Indiana border in an attempt to unseat Kaptur.

Ohio now has an 8-7 Democrat delegation to the US House of Representatives.