

October 28, 2010

## ELECTION PREVIEW

Regardless of how the results tally next Tuesday, major change is coming to Michigan's political landscape.

We are assured of a new Governor and Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. These offices are all without an incumbent for only the second time since 1946!

Because of term-limits, death, or resignation, 52 out of 110 districts in the Michigan House of Representatives are open. Only eight Senators are eligible to seek re-election to the 38-member Senate. The battle for bipartisan control of the non-partisan Supreme Court intensified with the resignation of Justice Weaver and the appointment of Alton Davis.

## GOVERNOR

From the beginning of the General Election campaign, Ann Arbor businessman Rick Snyder has held a significant lead in almost every poll over Democratic nominee Virg Bernero. Without question, his messaging, strategy, money and timing have him the prohibitive favorite to be Michigan's next Governor. The dramatic movement of independent voters carried the Snyder Campaign to victory in the August Primary and appears poised to do so again on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## STATE SENATE

Eighteen months ago, most prognosticators would have given the edge to Democrats to regain control of the State Senate for the first time since 1984. Needless to say, it has been a rough 18 months for Democrats nationally and especially rough for the Senate Democratic Caucus.

The first GOP break came when Governor Granholm waited until November to call a special election to fill the seat vacated by Mark Schauer who was elected to Congress. The difficult first year of the Obama Administration allowed Senator Mike Nofs to easily win the November special election giving the Republicans a 22-16 majority. The second blow came when Representative Gary McDowell (D-Rudyard) passed up a State Senate bid to seek the Congressional seat vacated by Bart Stupak. This moved the Republican held 37<sup>th</sup> district seat from toss up to safe Republican. Next came the decision by Joel Sheltroun (D-West Branch) to pass up a Senate campaign after flirting with a Congressional run. This moved the 36<sup>th</sup> district to the safe Republican column. Tragically, the most recent blow came with the death of Representative Bob Jones (D-Kalamazoo). Representative Jones was locked in a tight race against Representative Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton) in the 20<sup>th</sup> District.

The combination of the above cited developments along with the strong Republican tilt expected next Tuesday will leave Senate Republicans disappointed if they don't add to their majority. The remaining "battleground" districts include four seats currently held by Democrats:

10<sup>th</sup> - Former Democratic Representative Paul Gielegem is in a tough battle with Representative Tory Rocca (R-Sterling Heights). Are the former "Reagan Democrats" now the "Tea Party" voters? If so, advantage: Rocca.

26<sup>th</sup> - Former Democratic Representative Paula Zelenko and former Republican Representative Dave Robertson are battling for the seat being vacated by Senator Deb Cherry (D-Burton). The edge goes to Robertson, who is a tenacious campaigner.

31<sup>st</sup> - Representative Jeff Mayes (D-Bay City) was expecting an easy win for the seat being vacated by Senator Jim Barcia (D-Bay City). A strong challenge by former Representative Mike Green and a strong GOP year may be the difference.

38<sup>th</sup> - Two popular U.P. Lawmakers, Former Republican Representative Tom Casperson and Representative Mike Lahti (D-Hancock) are seeking the seat being vacated by Senator Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming). In a normal year, this is an easy Democratic win. But this is not a "normal" year and this race is seeing a lot of resources from both sides.

Three seats, currently held by Republicans, are also being hotly contested:

7<sup>th</sup> - This western Wayne County seat being vacated by Senator Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) has former Democratic Representative Kathleen Law facing Tea Party backed Patrick Colbeck. A potential spoiler in this race is former Republican Representative John Stewart, who running as an Independent. This race is probably the Democrats' best chance to pick up a seat and stem their losses.

29<sup>th</sup> - Representative Dave Hildenbrand (R-Lowell) is facing a tough challenge from ex-Grand Rapids city commissioner and small businessman Dave LaGrand. LaGrand's Grand Rapids base and moderate profile makes this a real race.

34<sup>th</sup> - Representative Geoff Hansen (R-Hart) appears to have the edge against Representative Mary Valentine (D-Muskegon).

## STATE HOUSE

The Democrats began this session with a massive 67-43 majority in the Michigan House of Representatives. A few months ago, few saw a scenario where that majority could be in jeopardy. On the eve of the election, the biggest question in Lansing is: can Republicans pull it off?

While the Democratic Majority is huge, Republicans began the decade with a 63-47 majority themselves. In fact, the last reapportionment was drawn by Republicans to "ensure" GOP control of the House. Unfortunately for them, a series of devastating election cycles, culminating with the 2008 Presidential Election, made a mockery of the GOP plan to "guarantee control." There are 25 seats that are considered toss-up seats. Five of them are held by Republicans and only one of these is considered a possible

Democratic pick up that is the 97<sup>th</sup>. This Clair and Gladwin County based district was a surprise pick-up by Republicans in 2004 with Representative Tim Moore (R-Farwell). They are fighting to keep it with Joel Johnson taking on Democrat Mark Lightfoot.

There are 20 seats currently held by Democrats that are considered toss-up; of these, 12 are open due to term-limits. There are eight more seats with Democratic incumbents. Some are former Republican seats won during the last few cycles.

Seven Democratic incumbents won their elections in the Obama landslide of 2008. They represent seats previously held by Republicans. The political make-up in these districts favor Republicans, and of course, the year favors Republicans:

1<sup>st</sup> - Tim Bledsoe (D-Grosse Pointe) won with 57% in '08. District has a 52% GOP base.

21<sup>st</sup> - Dian Slavens (D-Canton Twp) won with 52% in '08. District has a 50% GOP base.

24<sup>th</sup> - Sarah Roberts (D-St.Clair Shores) won with 49% in '08. District has a 49% GOP base.

32<sup>nd</sup> - Jennifer Haase (D-Richmond) won with 50% in '08. District has a 54% GOP base.

70<sup>th</sup> - Mike Huckleberry (D-Greenville) won with 54% in '08. District has a 57% GOP base.

101<sup>st</sup> - Dan Scripps (D-Leland) won with 60% in '08. District has a 56% GOP base.

108<sup>th</sup> - Judy Nerat (D-Wallace) won with 48% in '08. District has a 56% GOP base.

The above incumbent seats and the 12 open seats cited below are the battleground districts for control of the House of Representatives.

<u>District</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>GOP Base</u>
20	Kurt Heise	Joan Wadsworth	Dearborn	56 %
52	Mark Ouimet	Christine Green	Chelsea	50%
55	Rick Olson	Mike Smith	Dundee	49%
57	Nancy Jenkins	Harvey Schmidt	Franklin Twp.	53%
65	Mike Shirkey	Janet Rochefort	Jackson	54%
75	Bing Goei	Brandon Dillon	Grand Rapids	50%
83	Paul Muxlow	Alan Lewandowski	Croswell	55%
91	Holly Hughes	Ben Gillette	Muskegon	50%
103	Bruce Rendon	Van Sheltrown	West Branch	53%
106	Peter Pettalia	Casey Viegelaahn	Alpena	51%
107	Frank Foster	Richard Timmer	Rudyard	57%
110	Matt Huuki	Scott Dianda	Hancock	46%

ATTORNEY GENERAL / SECRETARY OF STATE

While Democrats are looking for a firewall at the top of the ticket, the latest polling indicates that is unlikely. Republicans Bill Schuette and Ruth Johnson have comfortable leads over Democrats David Leyton and Jocelyn Benson for Attorney General and Secretary of State, respectively.

Karoub Associates will provide a detailed election result report to you on the morning of Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you have any questions or comments on this analysis or if you would like further polling data, please do not hesitate to contact our office.