

Democrats Wash Out GOP

No surprises locally: anti-growth measures pass, minimum wage increase fails in defense of local businesses

Daniel Zarchy & Allen Young
Staff Reporter & City Editor

After treading political water for 12 years, the Democratic Party rose to the crest of a new wave of American politics Tuesday, taking control of both the House and Senate.

In the much-anticipated November midterm election, Democrats captured 28 seats in the House of Representatives and six in the Senate, as well as six governorships. In total, the Democrats hold the majority in both the House and the Senate, with ratios of 229-196 and 51-49, respectively. In the end, no Congressional Democratic incumbent lost his or her seat, culminating in a night worth toasting at the Democratic National Committee headquarters.

The mounting American death tolls in Iraq and Afghanistan are widely believed to have lent heavily to the Democratic victory, a result in part from the efforts of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who resigned early Wednesday morning in the face of severe criticism.

However, the clash of a Democratic Congress and a conservative president could slow down the legislative process. President Bush, who has only vetoed one piece of legislation to date, may have to exercise his executive power in an effort to hold off the liberal crush he is likely to face in January when the new Congress takes office.

Nevertheless, State Assemblyman John Laird (D-CA), who won reelection with more than 70 percent of the vote in California's 27th district, believes that Bush may not take such extreme actions in his executive role.

"It's a question of how realistic everyone will be," Laird said. "I think that the Democrats took the majority because of what Bush is doing, and if he provokes the deadlocks it will only mean further hurt for his party."

Locally, Measures I and J both

passed, prohibiting the City of Santa Cruz from providing services necessary for university growth until the UC has mitigated negative environmental effects of the Long Range Development Plan.

Said Assemblyman Laird, "This will give the city some leverage with the university in these discussions."

Newly reelected City Councilmember Mike Rotkin hopes to find a diplomatic solution, but anticipates a possible outcome in court.

"I was very pleased to see that the very large majority of the citizens of Santa Cruz would really like the university to take responsibility for the impact of its growth," Rotkin said. "I'm hoping we can solve these problems without having to go to court, but we are certainly prepared to go to court."

"I think that the Democrats took the majority because of what Bush is doing, and if he provokes the deadlocks it will only mean further hurt for his party."

John Laird,
California State Assemblyman

University officials have been preparing for a lawsuit, and plan to challenge the legality of Measures I and J in the months to come.

"These ballot measures will only serve to inhibit the ability of the City and the University to work together," Acting Chancellor George Blumenthal said in an official statement.

He added that the university maintains that the measures breach an existing contract between the city and the university.

Measure G, which would have raised the minimum wage in Santa Cruz to \$9.25 an hour, failed with only 39 percent in favor of the initiative. Rotkin, who did

not take a stance on Measure G, explained that the proponents of the measure tried to push it through without covering all of their bases. He also said that raising the state minimum wage would be more effective than doing it on the local level.

"I think the outcome of G shows that the local community is very concerned with protecting local business," Rotkin said. "But I agree that eight dollars an hour is not enough to live and raise a family in Santa Cruz."

On the state level, Arnold Schwarzenegger beat out Democratic challenger Phil Angelides for the Governor's seat, though many other Democratic state officials won their races.

Assemblyman Laird believes that Gov. Schwarzenegger may have turned a corner and can work with the majority party to pass some much-needed

legislation.

"I think that California is still a blue state," Laird said. "I think that the only way Governor Schwarzenegger won was by embracing the values of the Democratic Party."

However, he mentioned, this may have been a political ploy for reelection and it is impossible to predict if actions will follow words.

"I think that's the million dollar question. Is he going to be the governor that was defeated in the special election last year, or the bipartisan governor from this year?" Laird said. "Which governor will show up to work next year?"



Marissa Carter | CHP

2006 MIDTERM LOCAL ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS

STATEWIDE

OFFICE

GOVERNOR	R—ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
LT. GOVERNOR	D—JOHN GARAMENDI
SENATE	D—DIANNE FEINSTEIN
ATTORNEY GENERAL	D—JERRY BROWN
INSURANCE COMMISSIONER	R—STEVE POIZNER
SECRETARY OF STATE	D—DEBRA BOWEN
STATE CONTROLLER	D—JOHN CHIANG
STATE TREASURER	D—BILL LOCKYER

PROPOSITIONS

1A: TRANSPORTATION FUNDING	YES (76.6%)
1B: HIGHWAY SAFETY	YES (61.2%)
1C: HOUSING SHELTER	YES (57.4%)
1D: SCHOOL REPAIRS	YES (56.4%)
1E: LEVEE REPAIRS	YES (63.9%)
83: SEX OFFENDERS	YES (70.5%)
84: PARKS AND WATER	YES (53.7%)
85: ABORTION NOTIFICATION	NO (54%)
86: CIGARETTE TAX	NO (52.1%)
87: ALTERNATIVE ENERGY	NO (54.7%)
88: EDUCATION FUNDING	NO (76.9%)
89: CAMPAIGN FINANCING	NO (74.5%)
90: EMINENT DOMAIN	NO (52.2%)

LOCAL

OFFICE

CONGRESS- 17 TH DISTRICT	D—SAM FARR
ASSEMBLY- 27 TH DISTRICT	D—JOHN LAIRD
SANTA CRUZ CITY COUNCIL	CYNTHIA MATTHEWS MIKE ROTKIN LYNN ROBINSON

PROPOSITIONS

G: MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE	NO (60.9%)
H: GENERAL FUND SALES TAX	YES (58.1%)
I: LIMIT UCSC GROWTH	YES (76.1%)
J: UTILITY SERVICE EXPANSION	YES (79.9%)
K: RELAX MARIJUANA ENFORCEMENT	YES (63.6%)