



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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WESTERN GOVERNORS

Elections

Fourteen of the eighteen WSWC member states had governors' races to be decided this year, with Montana, North Dakota, Utah and Wyoming governors not up for re-election until 2024.

In Alaska, incumbent Republican Governor Mike Dunleavy was way ahead of his challengers Democrat Les Gara, a former state legislator, and former Governor Bill Walker, an independent. With over 52% of the vote, with 80% of precincts reporting, Dunleavy holds a large lead over Gara (23%) and Walker (20%). It's unclear how long it will take to finish counting votes.

In Arizona, Democrat Katie Hobbs, Secretary of State, leads Republican Kari Lake, a former news anchor, by about 1% in a race yet to be called with 93% of the votes counted.

California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) was well ahead (58%) of Republican State Senator Brian Dahle (42%) with about 63% of the votes counted.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) garnered 58% of the vote over Republican Heidi Ganahl with 40%. She is a businesswoman, entrepreneur, author, and member of the University of Colorado Board of Regents.

Idaho Governor Brad Little (R) received over 60% of the vote, easily defeating Democrat Stephen Heidt, an English as a second language teacher who worked for the Idaho Department of Correction (20%), and independent Ammon Bundy (17%), an anti-government activist that promised to repeal the State's personal property tax and individual income tax.

In Kansas, incumbent Democrat Governor Laura Kelly bested Republican Attorney General Derek Schmidt by 2%, with a little less than 50% of the vote and strong support around Kansas City, Topeka and Wichita.

In Nebraska, Republican Jim Pillen defeated Democrat Jill Blood with nearly 60% of the vote, compared to 36%. Pillen is a veterinarian and a member

of the Nebraska State Board of Regents. Blood, a state legislator, won two counties, including the cities of Omaha and Lincoln.

Incumbent Nevada Governor Pete Sisolak (D) fell to Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo (R) in a tight race (49%-47%), with Lombardo winning all but Clark and Washoe Counties (Las Vegas and Reno).

New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham was re-elected with 52% of the vote, over Republican Mark Rochetti, a meteorologist with 45.6%.

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt took 55% of the vote, defeating Democrat Joy Lynn Hofmeister, an educator and Superintendent of Public Instruction with 42%.

In Oregon, Democrat Tina Kotek, a longtime Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, defeated fellow State Representative Christine Drazan by a 47%-44% margin, fending off the strongest Republican bid in a decade to lead the State.

Republican South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem was re-elected with 62% of the vote over rival State House Minority Leader Jim Smith (D) with 35%.

Republican Governor Greg Abbott got nearly 55% of the vote in Texas, besting Democratic challenger Robert Francis "Beto" O'Rourke, a former U.S. Representative with 44%. O'Rourke won counties that included Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio, as well as a number of counties in South Texas.

Wyoming was solid red with Republican Governor Mark Gordon taking over 74% of the vote, compared to 16% for Democrat Theresa (Terry) Livingston, an Air Force veteran and former Bureau of Land Management employee and special education worker.

CONGRESS

Elections/House

With political control of the House still undecided, a number of incumbent western House Democrats and Republicans lost their seats either on November 8, or in

the primaries leading up to the election. According to Politico, that list includes the following Representatives: Arizona – Tom O’Halloran (D); Oregon – Kurt Schrader (D); Texas – Mayra Flores (R) and Van Taylor (R); Washington – Jamie Herrera Beutler (R); and Wyoming – Liz Cheney (R). The turnover will leave open seats on the Agriculture, Appropriations, and Energy and Commerce Committees.

Those still awaiting final election results include: Arizona – David Schweikert (R); California – Ken Calvert (R), Mike Levin (D), Katie Porter (D) and David Valadao (R); and Colorado – Lauren Boebert (R) with seats on the Appropriations, Budget, Natural Resources, Oversight and Reform, and Ways and Means Committees. If Republicans take the majority, current Committee leadership will also change, with senior western members in line to possibly chair the Appropriations, Energy and Commerce, Natural Resources, Rules, Science, and Ways and Means Committees.

Elections/Senate

Alaska’s Incumbent Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski trails fellow Republican Kelly Tshibaka, an attorney and former inspector general in several federal offices (48.2%-44.8%) in a crowded ranked choice contest that appears headed to a count of 2nd choice votes with neither candidate reaching a 50% threshold.

Arizona Senator Mark Kelly (D) appears to have successfully defended his seat (52%-46%) over challenger Blake Masters, a venture capitalist. With 94% of precincts reporting, Masters has declined to concede until all the votes are counted.

California Senator Alex Padilla (D) lead Republican Mark Meuser, an attorney, entrepreneur and restauranter (60%-40%) with 62% of the vote counted.

Colorado Senator Michael Bennet (D) defeated Republican Joe O’Dea, a construction company chief executive officer (55%-42%).

Idaho Senator Mike Crapo (R) easily defeated challenger David Roth, Executive Director of the Bonneville Youth Development Council in Idaho Falls (61%-29%).

Kansas Senator Jerry Moran (R) bested Democrat Mark Holland, a pastor, community leader and former mayor of Kansas City (60%-37%).

Nevada Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D) was headed towards re-election in a close contest over former Republican Attorney General Adam Laxalt

(48.8%-48.1%) with 98% of the votes counted. Laxalt carried all but populous Clark and Washoe Counties (Las Vegas and Reno), where Masto had a 2-1 advantage.

North Dakota Senator John Hoeven (R) easily won re-election with 56.4% of the vote, over Democrat Katrina Christiansen, a Jamestown University engineering professor (25%), and Republican State Representative and plastic surgeon Rick Becker (18.5%), who lost in the primaries and ran as an independent.

In Oklahoma, Senator James Lankford (R) easily defeated Democrat Madison Horn, a Cherokee Nation citizen and advocate for rural communities (64%-32%).

Oregon Senator Ron Wyden (D) easily bested Republican Jo Rae Perkins, a perennial candidate and self-proclaimed “Main Stream American” (56%-41%) with 92% of votes counted.

South Dakota Senator John Thune (R) cruised to a 70%-26% victory over Democrat Brian Bengs, a U.S. Navy and Air Force veteran who has also taught at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

In Utah, Republican Senator Mike Lee ran against unaffiliated independent Evan McMullin, who had the backing of Democrats, with Lee prevailing 55% to 42%. McMullin, a former CIA operative, carried Salt Lake, Summit (Park City), and Grand Counties (Moab). He made a brief 2016 run for President as an independent.

Lastly, Washington Senator Patty Murray (D) garnered 57% of the vote, almost entirely due to her support in King County (Seattle), compared to 42% for Republican Tiffany Smiley. Smiley, a mother of three whose veteran husband was blinded in Iraq, campaigned on care for veterans and against Washington, D.C. bureaucrats.

WATER RESOURCES

Washington/Infrastructure Financing

On November 4, the Washington Public Works Board (PWB) approved \$118M in loans for community infrastructure construction and pre-construction activities, including domestic water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste, and transportation. The Washington Legislature created the PWB in 1985 to work with municipalities and districts on meeting infrastructure needs, and provides a dedicated pool of funding for low-interest financing in a revolving loan program, which is managed by a citizen’s board of infrastructure representatives. The PWB has approved over \$3.1B in loans since its inception for nearly 2,000 projects. <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/uncategorized/public-works-board-approves-over-118-million-in-pre-construction-and-construction-loans/>

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.