

Local Majority and the Michigan Elections of 2018

Overview

Since 2011 Michigan has been under a Republican trifecta with a Republican Governor and Republican majorities in the state House and state Senate. In the November 2018 midterm election, Democrats not only broke the GOP trifecta with the victory of Democratic Governor-elect Gretchen Whitmer, they also gained two seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, maintained their U.S. Senate seats, and made significant inroads into the state legislature. Democrats gained 6 seats each in the state House and state Senate. The Republicans went into the contest with a 63-46 majority in the state House, now whittled down to a 58-52 margin. In the state Senate, Democrats improved their margin from 27-10 to 22-16, thereby depriving Republicans of their supermajority. These Democratic gains in the US House, state house, and state senate were all the more impressive given Michigan's extreme gerrymandering. Reflecting the record-breaking voter turnout across the country, Michigan's voter turnout was the highest for midterm elections in nearly 50 years.

Good news continued to rock the state for Democrats as they also dismantled the Republican triplex, flipping *all three* executive leadership spots for Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. These Democratic wins are especially important because those officials will be overseeing the state's redistricting process following the upcoming 2020 census. Complementing the electoral results, Michigan voters ushered in by margins of nearly 70 percent significant new laws to ensure fair redistricting processes and protect voting rights across the state.

How Local Majority Assisted Democratic Candidates

Local Majority worked with the Michigan House Democratic Caucus and House Minority Floor Leader in targeted races by providing a variety of resources, including topical issue papers, in-depth opposition research, and a GOP Legislative Summary highlighting key votes and Republican voting patterns to illustrate the partisan divide between elected officials and their electorate. Issue paper topics included healthcare, education funding, teacher pension erosion, charter schools/lack of accountability, reproductive rights, environmental crises, equitable pay, ALEC preemption laws and GOP-driven partisan legislation. Twenty-one Democratic candidates received the issue papers and the GOP Legislative Summary. Twelve of those candidates also received a customized opposition research report with specific information about her/his Republican opponent.

The Candidates

Initially Local Majority focused on ten candidates at the request of the House Democratic Caucus. The selection criteria by the House Caucus appeared to be a desire to throw whatever resources happened to be available at statistically long-shot GOP incumbent seats, perhaps with the theory that they had nothing to lose. Rising to the challenge, Local Majority provided in-depth, customized opposition research reports for those candidates, including legislative analysis and information about their Republican opponents. Those ten candidates also received the GOP Legislative Summary report and copies of all the issue papers. Later in the campaign cycle the House Minority Floor Leader identified more candidates for Local Majority to assist. Local Majority sent the GOP Legislative Summary and the issue papers to an additional eleven Democratic candidates and produced opposition research reports for two of them.

The Results

The Michigan State House gained 6 Democratic seats, six seats flipped from Republican to Democrat; one seat flipped Democrat to Republican; and 1 previously Democratic vacancy was won again by a Democrat. Before the election there were 46 Democrats, 63 Republicans, and 1 vacancy. Now there are 52 Democrats and 58 Republicans. Local Majority provided support to a total of 21 Democratic House candidates; 4 of those candidates won their races. Out of those 21 candidates, we provided full opposition research reports (as well as issue papers and the legislative summary) to 12 candidates, several of whom were truly "long shots," but 3 of them won and 2 others were very close. Local Majority did not work with the state Senate in this election cycle.

The wins and the two marginal losses in House districts that Local Majority supported are shown in the table below.

District	Democrat Who Won	% of Vote	Outcome
19	Laurie Pohutsky	50.24%	Flipped
20	Matt Koleszar	51%	Flipped
40	Mari Manoogian*	57%	Flipped
62	Jim Haadsma	52%	Flipped
38	Kelly Breen	48.14%	lost by 591 votes
104	Dan O'Neil	49.63%	lost by 349 votes

*Received Legislative Summary and issue papers, no custom opposition research

Candidates who received Local Majority's research but who did not win were: Michelle LaVoy (17), Laura Winn (24), John Spica (30), Jennifer Suidan (39), Ernie Whiteside (56), Amber Pedersen (57), Alberta Griffin (61), Dan Seibert (66), Joey Andrews (79), Erin Sabin (85), Kristen Brown (99), Kathy Wiejaczka (101), Lora Greene (105), Joanne Schmidt Galloway (107), Bob Romps (108).

Our Reports

With the exception of the Opposition Research reports which were sent directly to specific state House candidates, most of our reports are available on our website.

“GOP Legislative Summary: Divisive Partisan Politics”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/MI-GOP-Summary-Legislation-2018AUG21jr.kp_FINAL.pdf

“Restoring Reproductive Rights in Michigan”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.ReproductiveRights.2018.10.09.kp_v3.FINAL.pdf

“Republicans Attack, Democrats Attract Teachers”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.TeacherAct.20181008.laj_FINAL.pdf

“Michigan Republicans Fail Teachers With New Retirement System”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.TeacherPensions.2018.10.06.laj_Final.pdf

“Charter School Accountability and Transparency”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.FACTact.20181008.laj_Final_.pdf

“Michigan’s Broken School System”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/MI.BrokenSchoolSystem.2018.0927.LAJ_.kp_FINAL_.pdf

“The DeVos Effect” (Meddling with Michigan)

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/MI.DeVos-Paper.jm_v6.08172018.FINAL_.pdf

“Putting Michiganders at Risk: Lansing’s Delinquent PFAS Contamination Response”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.PFAS_.20181008.PG_Finalv2.pdf

“Equitable Pay: Protection for Michigan Families”

<https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MI.WageGap.20181002final.pdf>

“Michigan’s Preemption Legislation / Who’s in Charge: ALEC & Corporate Interests or Local Communities?”

https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/MI-Preemption-ALEC-1.3_CM.pdf

“GOP-Driven Legislation: Divisive Partisan Politics / ALEC Legislation—State GOP Gets Marching Orders”

<https://localmajority.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ALEC-FINAL-part-of-MI-GOP-Summary-Legislation-2018AUG21.pdf>

Candidate & House Leadership Comments

Chris Greig, MI House Minority Floor Leader: *“Wow! I don’t know where to begin. This information is fantastic, and frankly our entire leadership team should be reading this. We often go stump for our candidates across the state – having your research as background information is invaluable... The [Get Off Your Donkey and Vote] video with Julia [Louis-Dreyfus] is fantastic! Thanks again for all you’re doing. This is amazing work and will help us tremendously in Michigan.”*

Erin Zettle, MI House Democratic Caucus: *“I started this email earlier this morning, but then I started reading through these research docs and got totally caught up—these are perfect! I can’t thank you enough for your help and the help of your group, this makes a huge difference this year. I love these! Thanks again.”*

Kristen Brown’s Campaign Manager, Ross Fisher, District 99: *“Thank you so much for your efforts, we received your research and will definitely be incorporating it into our messaging. We appreciate the time and energy that the volunteers put into this, it will be of great assistance. Thank you”*

Dan O’Neil District 104: *“Wonderful thanks!!”*

Jim Haadsma’s Campaign Manager, Andy Helmboldt, District 62: *“Thank you! Skimming through it, it looks like great stuff.”*



Kelly Breen District 38: *“Thank you for the information. We will look at the materials. I’m sure they will prove to be valuable resources!”*

Kelly Breen District 38: *“This is Kelly Breen from Michigan 38th. . . . And what I have to say is this: thank you. If you’re on Pacific Time, hopefully it’s not too late for you to receive this message. If it is too late I’m sorry. But I’m just so excited. And I’m studying my packet tonight. . . .”*