

KAROUB ASSOCIATES

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Michigan's Midterm Election Reshapes Lansing

Michigan voters elected a new Governor, chose representatives for state and federal offices, and decided two statewide ballot proposals Tuesday in an election that will bring significant changes to leadership in Lansing and Washington.

Democrats won the Governor's race, regained control of the Michigan House and retained their majority in the state Senate. The party also won Michigan's open U.S. Senate seat and gained ground in the state's Congressional delegation. Voters rejected a proposal to call a constitutional convention and approved new campaign finance restrictions affecting certain utilities, government contractors and political communications.

The results will return Michigan to unified Democratic control of state government in January, following two years in which Republicans held the House and Democrats controlled the Senate and Governor's office. For organizations that work with state government, the transition will bring changes in legislative leadership, committee assignments and the processes through which policy and budget decisions are made.

Governor's race

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson defeated U.S. Rep. John James in the race to succeed Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who is completing her second and final term. Unofficial results showed Benson receiving approximately 54% of the vote to James' 44%.

Benson's running mate, Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks of Grand Rapids, will become Lieutenant Governor. Her departure from the Legislature will require Senate Democrats to select a new caucus leader.

The Governor's race included an independent candidacy by former Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, who withdrew in May. Benson and James subsequently competed in a two-candidate general election, with both campaigns addressing economic conditions, the cost of living and the direction of state policy.

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***Election results remain unofficial pending certification.**

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U.S. Senate and Congressional races

Former Wayne County health director Abdul El-Sayed defeated former U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers in the race for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Gary Peters. Unofficial returns showed El-Sayed leading by approximately seven percentage points.

El-Sayed, who won the Democratic primary against U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, will become the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Senate. Rogers previously represented Michigan's 8th Congressional District and was the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate in 2024.

Michigan's U.S. House delegation will also see changes following several competitive elections.

- In the 4th Congressional District, state Sen. Sean McCann of Kalamazoo defeated Republican incumbent Bill Huizenga, with unofficial returns showing a margin of approximately two percentage points.
- In the 10th District, Democrat Christina Hines defeated Republican Michael Bouchard Jr. for the open seat previously held by James.
- In the 7th District, Democrat William Lawrence defeated Republican incumbent Tom Barrett.

Republicans entered the election holding seven of Michigan's 13 Congressional seats, compared with six held by Democrats. Depending on certification of the remaining results, the new delegation could include nine Democrats and four Republicans.

The changes will also affect Michigan's representation on Congressional committees, with assignments to be determined when the new Congress organizes in January.

Michigan Legislature

The election will change control of the Michigan House, where Republicans entered Tuesday with a 58-52 majority. As of this writing unofficial results have the Democrats with a stunning 63-47 majority.



Among the notable contests was the 86th House District in Holland, where Democrat Joseph McClusky defeated Republican incumbent Nancy DeBoer. The district was one of several competitive seats that contributed to the change in House control.

House Minority Leader Ranjeev Puri of Canton is considered a leading candidate to become Speaker when the new Legislature convenes. Current House Speaker Matt Hall of Richland Township will continue leading the House through the remainder of the current term.

In the Senate, Democrats retained their majority and appeared positioned to increase their number of seats. All 38 Senate districts were on the ballot, and the unofficial results show a 23-15 Democrat majority, a net gain of four for that party.

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Brinks' election as Lieutenant Governor will require a leadership transition within the Senate Democratic caucus. The caucus will select a new Majority Leader to oversee its legislative agenda and internal operations. The current leading candidate is Sen. Darrin Camilleri of Trenton.

Beginning in January, Democrats will control the Governor's office and both legislative chambers. Michigan previously operated under unified Democratic control during the 2023-24 legislative session, before Republicans regained the House in the 2024 election.

For those working with the Legislature, the transition will mean new House committee chairs, changes in committee membership and leadership, and a different process for negotiating legislation between the chambers.

The Governor and Legislature will also begin work on the FY2028 state budget during the first months of the new term.

Attorney General, Secretary of State and Supreme Court Democrats also won the races for Attorney General and Secretary of State.

Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit defeated Eaton County Prosecutor Doug Lloyd in the Attorney General's race. Savit will succeed Dana Nessel, who is leaving office after serving the maximum two terms.

Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist defeated Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini in the race for secretary of state. Gilchrist will succeed Benson, who has held the office since 2019.

On the Michigan Supreme Court, Chief Justice Megan Cavanagh and Justice Noah Hood won full eight-year terms. Both justices were nominated by the Democratic Party, although judicial elections in Michigan are nonpartisan. Their victories preserve the Court's current composition of six Democratic-nominated justices and one Republican-nominated justice.

The Supreme Court will continue hearing cases involving state law, constitutional questions and other matters within its jurisdiction.

Statewide ballot proposals

Michigan voters considered two statewide proposals, both of which received substantial majorities.

Proposal 1: Constitutional convention

Proposal 1 asked voters whether Michigan should call a constitutional convention to consider revisions to the state's Constitution.

The question appears automatically on the ballot every 16 years under the 1963 Michigan Constitution.

Approximately 74% of voters rejected the proposal. As a result, no constitutional convention will be called, and the question will next appear on the ballot in 2042.

Proposal 2: Campaign finance restrictions

Proposal 2 was approved with approximately 81% support.

The initiated law establishes new restrictions on certain political contributions involving regulated electric and gas utilities, entities with state contracts exceeding $250,000 annually, and individuals or organizations with specified connections to those entities.

The measure also expands disclosure requirements for certain political communications, including internet advertising that identifies candidates or ballot questions without expressly advocating a particular vote.

The provisions may affect organizations that hold state contracts, participate in regulated industries or engage in political fundraising and communications.

Implementation will require attention to the specific statutory definitions, applicable effective dates and guidance from the Michigan Bureau of Elections.

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Organizations potentially covered by the law should review the requirements with appropriate legal or compliance advisers before making contributions or authorizing political communications. Legal challenges have already been initiated by opponents of Proposal 2 and we anticipate a lengthy court challenge as to the legality of the proposal.

At this time it remains uncertain if there will be a lame-duck session. Leadership elections for all legislative caucuses will take place on Thursday, November 5 and we will update you on the results of those elections. Please be reminded that all of these election results will not be official until certified by the Board of State Canvassers.