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Republicans capture Senate, Rendell wins governor race

What happens now?

by Scott Soltis
sports editor

On Tuesday, anything but a routine mid-term election occurred. It was a day of change for both the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

All of the U.S. and Pennsylvania House seats were up for grabs, as well as many Senate seats in both governing bodies. Although there was no presidential election, there was a gubernatorial race in Pennsylvania pitting former Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell, the Democratic candidate, against State Attorney General Mike Fisher, Republican.

Mere minutes after the polls closed in Pennsylvania at 8 p.m.; Rendell was projected by Fox News Channel and many others as the winner. These projections were true, with Governor-elect Rendell winning approximately 1.9 million votes, more than 300,000 ahead of Fisher and miles ahead of the Libertarian and Green party candidates.

Rendell, however, has a tough road ahead of him. A source inside the Pennsylvania Department of State says that it is very likely the Republicans will control both the House and Senate in the Pennsylvania General Assembly once everything becomes official. This would make it very difficult for Rendell to get much legislation through.

On the national scene, the Republicans will gain between four and six seats in the House, increasing their majority. In the Senate, there will be a shift in power. Going into Tuesday, the Democrats were the majority party with 50 seats and one Independent. After Tuesday the Republicans will take over the majority of seats in the Senate with either 51 or 52 seats. It is not sure what the final count in the House and Senate will be due to some special elections that will occur and various other reasons.

Now comes the crucial question: What does all of this mean to the students of Penn State Erie? Ron Ridgley, chair of the College Republicans of Penn State Erie, is excited and also concerned over the results of the election. On the state level, Ridgley was only "slightly disappointed" with the way the gubernatorial race turned out. He was "enthusiastic about Fisher winning Erie County." Ridgley and the rest of the College Republicans worked on the Fisher and Phil English campaigns.

Ridgley expressed concerns that Governor-elect Rendell might send a great deal of state funding to Philadelphia. There are many colleges in that area, and if a massive amount of funding goes there, then

that means less would come here.

On the national level, Ridgley is more optimistic that with a Republican-controlled Congress, President Bush can turn the economy around.

"Bush is more likely to be able to pass a solid tax cut to spur economic growth," he said. This would mean more jobs for recent and future college graduates.

From the viewpoint of a Democrat, it is nearly a diametrically opposite situation. Ashley Hurst, president of the Young Democrats of Penn State Erie, was excited that Rendell won the election. Hurst worked on the Rendell campaign and says Rendell is "honest and upfront" and that he's not a politician who will "just go with the flow." Hurst feels that Rendell will be "a governor who will genuinely make an effort to gradually bring tuition down to reasonable levels."

In addition to lowering tuition, Hurst feels that Rendell will also be able to bring more jobs to Pennsylvania for college graduates. However, she is quick to point out that a great deal of what Rendell is able to do depends on what happens at the national level.

Hurst was disappointed that there was no mid-term effect in this year's national elections. The mid-term effect is a phenomenon which has happened in only two of the last 34 elections that occurred two years after the presidential election. The mid-term effect causes the sitting president's party to lose seats in the House and Senate. Just the opposite happened this year, and Hurst (and most Democrats) were not very pleased.

Hurst worries that with a Republican-controlled Congress, President Bush will be able to pass more tax-cuts that lower government money available for programs including higher education.

Hurst and Ridgley both have overall concerns that appear very true about college students and this election. "There are enormous amounts of ignorance towards government throughout our country," said Hurst. This rings true when polls show that fewer and fewer people have adequate knowledge about government.

Another major problem is apathy. Until this changes and college students begin voting, we are "not going to see a whole lot of direct effect on college students," said Ridgley.

Once students begin to vote there will be some major changes. Until that day, if it ever comes, college students will be forced to silently deal with the after-effects of what our state and national government decides.



KRT PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL PEREZ/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
Despite a Republican sweep in the Congress, the Democrats acquired several governorships in the recent elections, including Pennsylvania Governor-elect Ed Rendell from Philadelphia.

Behrend students skip Election Day

by Almee Pogson
staff writer

An estimated 20 percent of Behrend students voted in Tuesday's election, according to Dr. John Gamble, a professor of political science at Behrend. He also estimated 30 to 40 percent will claim to have voted because they feel guilty, and voters age 18-24 will continue to comprise the electoral group with the lowest voter turnout.

Why are these numbers so low? Gamble explained that many students think voting is not worth the hassle. By living on campus, away from their hometowns, some students are not sure when and how to register, or even if they are allowed to vote in the Erie area.

Another reason for low student voting may be that students do not feel connected enough to their community to vote, said Gamble. This can be especially true for someone living on campus away from home. Usually older people have been a part of their community longer. They have more connections to their

town and tend to be more involved in the decision-making process. Economics also plays an important role in voter turnout, explained Gamble. Most people vote primarily because of the economic issues that concern them. Some citizens worry about social security and Medicare. College students do not have these worries.

For these reasons college students do not vote in large numbers. But the rest of the country doesn't vote in large numbers either. Naturally, some elections have greater voter turnout than others. The Presidential election is the biggest, followed by the State Representative and Senate elections. Even though it is the biggest, the Presidential election only averages a 55 percent voter turnout. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the latest presidential election, voters age 18-24 made up 7 percent of the total vote, the lowest voter turnout of any age group.

According to Gamble, some reasons for this include long, drawn out and usually negative campaigns, the frequency of

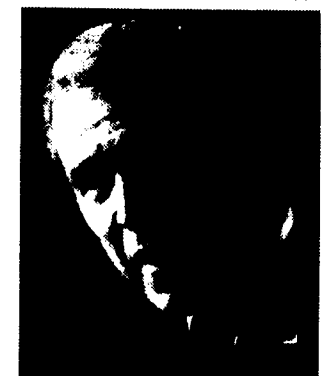
elections, and the number of things to vote for. People get tired of listening to long campaigns. By the time Election Day arrives, they have lost interest. Frequent elections and the number of candidates that have to be voted for often discourage elections. Low voter turnout can also indicate that people are happy with the current situation.

To combat a lack of voter interest, at least with college students, Gamble suggested that more students take political science courses so that they become aware of how the government works. The college Republican and Democrats could also become more actively involved and the school could do a better job of explaining why participation is important.

For students who wanted to vote, but were confused, applications for absentee ballots can be found at local libraries and post offices. Students can also apply online at eriecounty.gov.com. It is also possible to register to vote in the Erie area, but students must cancel their registration in their hometown first.

Winners:

George W. Bush



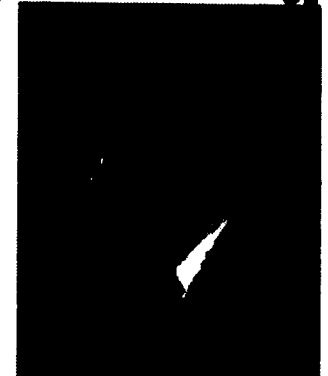
Bush will now have a Republican dominated Congress behind him, enabling him to push his agenda.

Dennis Hastert



U.S. Rep. Hastert (R), Speaker of the House, won re-election and widened the gap in the House.

Trent Lott



U.S. Senator Lott (R) will again be majority leader in the Senate.

Losers:

Tom Daschle



U.S. Senator Daschle (D) saved face with a party win in his home state, but will no longer be majority leader in the Senate.

Dick Gephardt



Minority leader, U.S. Rep. Gephardt (D), was so embarrassed by his inability to gain seats in the House, he stepped down from the position.

Terry McAuliffe



Democratic party chair McAuliffe was unable to lead Democrats to much success across the board.

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Contact Us

NEWSROOM: 898-6488
FAX: 898-6019

E-MAIL:
behrcoll5@aol.com

Offices are located
downstairs in the
Reed Union Building