



## **Community Bankers Association of Kansas**

### **2020 General Election Report**

**November 5, 2020**

#### Introduction

While there are still some races to be resolved and some potential for recount and final certification, we currently know the following. In the Kansas House of Representatives, Republicans will at a minimum hold their supermajority and may gain seats from the Democrats after some recounts in several races. The Kansas Senate will have no change in the partisan division between the Democrats and the Republican majority. Speculation that Democrats would gain one seat in the House and three seats in the Senate to weaken the Republican majority ability to override any Governor's vetoes did not happen.

In general, following the primary, the scale of movement within the Republican party that occurred during the 2016 elections has now been reversed. Moderate Republican gains in 2016, following the 2018 elections and 2020 primaries, are gone and conservative Republicans are reaffirming their control of their party as well as the House and Senate.

See the attached spreadsheet for specific races and the latest on statewide election data can be found at the Kansas Secretary of State's website:  
<https://sos.ks.gov/elections/elections.html>

These comments are pending final certification of election results and there may be some minor changes. Three House races are separated by a total of seventeen votes, so incoming absentee and mail-in ballots could result in some changes.

#### Composition of the Legislature

##### House

- During the 2020 session, the division of the Kansas House was 84 Republicans and 41 Democrats. Following the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election, that division will be 87 Republicans and 38 Democrats, barring any changes to the current count.
- Several incumbent moderate Republicans lost their August primary elections to conservative Republican candidates. The defeated included Representatives Kessinger, Karleskint, Dierks, and Moore. Moderate Republicans who gained big in 2016 and reversed Brownback tax cuts, funded schools in the face of the *Gannon* lawsuit, and supported Medicaid expansion have in the 2018 and 2020 primaries been almost eliminated.
- On November 3, House Democrats failed to secure enough votes to block Republican supermajority action. The Republican caucus will retain an enhanced majority. The Republican caucus will be more conservative, have fewer members willing to make coalitions with Democrats, and will consolidate their strong conservative caucus for the next two years of the Kelly administration.

## Senate

- During the 2020 legislative session there were 29 Republicans and 11 Democrats in the Kansas Senate. Following the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election, there will be 29 Republicans and 11 Democrats in the Senate, barring any changes to the current count.
- The Senate primary election resulted in a significant defeat of six moderate Republicans who were elected in 2016. These Senators included Senators Skubal, Givens, Taylor, Hardy, Goddard, and Berger. Like their House colleagues, these moderates reversed the Brownback tax cuts and supported school funding and Medicaid expansion.

## Transitions and Surprises

### House

- Moderate Republicans were thinned considerably during the 2020 primary cycle. The general election battles focused on some rural moderate Republicans and Democrats facing well-funded incumbents.
- Several significant changes:
  - Democratic anticipated gains in House races did not materialize.
  - Two Democrats (Hoye and Poskin) picked up previously Republican seats (Cox and Kessinger).
  - Republican gains include Kessler over Yeager (I) in Wichita; Proctor over Griswold in Leavenworth; Anderson over Hodge (I) in Newton; and Smith over Murnan (I) in Pittsburg.
  - Republicans held some strongly contested seats in southern and western Johnson County.
- Some of the significant incumbents defeated Tuesday night include Monica Murnan and Tim Hodge, but the larger picture confirms a strong electoral trend in the western and south-central regions with substantial Republican winning margins.

### Senate

- There was some significant expectation that Democrats would win several close races, but the final outcome proved surprising: Democrats won only two races while losing two.
- Several significant changes:
  - Democratic gains: In Johnson County Holscher defeated Todd and in Leavenworth Pittman defeated Braun (I)—the only Democratic defeat of an incumbent Republican senator.
  - Republicans held strongly contested seats in Shawnee where Thompson (I) beat Constance. In Olathe Olson (I) beat Budetti. In Wichita Peterson (I) beat Ward. In Wichita Erickson beat Gregory. Republican Kristen O’Shea in Topeka won back Governor Kelly’s former seat.
  - Significant incumbent defeats: Republican Rick Kloos in the Shawnee/Douglas County area defeated Senator Anthony Hensley, the longest serving legislator in Kansas history, serving 42 years. He served as Senate Minority Leader for twenty-five years.
- Four conservative Republicans Claeys (Saline), Peck (Montgomery), Fagg (Butler), and Straub (Barton) who defeated incumbent moderate Republicans in the primary election had no Democratic opponent and they will strengthen the conservative Republican majority in the Senate.
- The leadership of the Senate is firmly in the hands of the Republican caucus that is more conservative than it was before Tuesday night.

## Leadership

### Next Steps

Election outcomes, particularly at the conclusion of a biennium, can have an impact on leadership elections, and consequentially committee chairs and committee assignments. The House Republican majority may select new leadership, as may the minority Democratic party. The Senate Republican majority certainly will see a great deal of change. Leadership campaigning among the caucus has been going on for months and will now continue in earnest. The culmination is the first Monday in December, the 7<sup>th</sup> this year, when all legislators meet in Topeka and following a day or two of caucus meetings, they gather in the Statehouse for nominations, speeches, and a secret ballot to select leadership for the next two years. Once leadership is selected, the leadership group begins selecting committee chairs and making committee assignments for all members of the Legislature. Some years the changes are drastic and substantial and other years changes will be minor. New leadership will be known by mid-day on December 7<sup>th</sup> and committee chairs and assignments will become public, usually, before the Christmas break.

### House Leadership

- House majority Republican leadership could stay the same: Speaker of the House Ron Ryckman, Speaker Pro Tem Blaine Finch, and House Majority Leader Dan Hawkins all won re-election and have expressed the intention to retain their current positions, bolstered by more conservative membership. Ryckman will break at least sixty years of tradition if he serves more than two terms as the House Speaker. He may be challenged by more conservative members backing another Speaker candidate. Again, with the loss of several moderate voices in the House, leadership will remain conservative.
- House Democrats, after failing to increase their caucus may consider leadership changes or affirm their leadership; Tom Sawyer (Wichita) Minority Leader and Valdenia Winn (Kansas City) Assistant Minority Leader. There may be significant issues within the caucus.

### Senate Leadership

- Senate leadership battles took shape following the primaries and the General election outcome changed nothing. The current Senate President Susan Wagle and Majority Leader Jim Denning did not seek reelection. Indications are that the Senate President race likely will come down to two: current Senate VP Jeff Longbine from Emporia and Ty Masterson from Andover. Longbine, a moderate, may have been the likely choice prior to the primary election, but with so many incoming conservatives, Masterson may have the better chance. Other prominent names circulating for leadership positions (i.e. Senate Vice President and Majority Leader) include Senators Baumgardner, McGinn, Wilborn, Suellentrop, and Tyson.
- Senate Democrats have elected Anthony Hensley (Topeka) as Minority Leader for two decades, but he will not be back. The entire composition of the Senate Democratic leadership will change for 2021.

## **Potential Policy Implications with the 2021 Legislature on the Horizon**

All these changes (not to mention still being in a pandemic) will undoubtedly make for a starkly different 2021 Session. The Senate leadership election will be especially telling in terms of committee chair and vice chair assignments, as well as legislative priorities. But the election results make several things certain: Tax bills and tax policy that failed to override gubernatorial vetoes in prior years have a better chance of passing. Education funding to conclude the *Gannon* lawsuit may continue, but there will be more support for non-public schools' favorable consideration. The constitutional amendment restricting abortion from 2020 will have little or no

problem passing either chamber and the Governor has no role to stop its passage. Medicaid Expansion will be harder than ever to achieve since the moderate Republican/ Democrat voting majority no longer exists. The State budget, spending, and healthcare issues including eventually a vaccine may be weighed against a significantly more skeptical eye on state spending increases during an economic recession.

We are preparing a full 2021 session preview report as January draws closer that lays out the major policy issues for 2021 as well as leadership election outcomes and committee assignments.

Please let us know if you have questions.

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