

America votes; Republicans gain decisive majority

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Staff Writer

Electoral victory has given President George W. Bush four more years to fight the War on Terror, and pursue a conservative, tax-cutting agenda. He may also have the opportunity to appoint one or more new justices to the Supreme Court, and will preside over Republican majorities in the House and Senate.

Bush failed to earn the popular vote in the contested 2000 presidential election. With 99 percent of precincts reporting nationwide by nightfall this Nov. 2, however, the president had earned 58.7 million votes, or 51 percent of the popular vote. Sen. John Kerry (D - Mass.) won 55.1 million votes, 48 percent of the popular vote.

Well into the early morning hours of Nov. 3, the swing state of Ohio had hung in the balance, leaving the election too close to call. Eventually, newscasters called the Buckeye State for Bush. According to the Web site of the Ohio Secretary of State, Bush won 51.01 percent of the votes in Ohio, while 48.52 percent went for Kerry.

CBS News and The Associated Press reported Nov. 5 that Bush had added another feather to the Republicans' cap by winning Iowa, another swing state. Iowa county officials had continued to tabulate absentee and provisional ballots days after the election. Their totals eventually showed Bush leading Kerry 745,980 votes to 732,764. The state officially turned red when the number of votes left to be counted became too small to change the outcome of the election.

Iowa's seven electoral votes would not have affected Bush, anyway. Seizing victory in Ohio had given him the 270 electoral votes he needed to win. Bush finished with 286 electoral votes; Kerry, with 252.

Kerry bows out, Bush revs up

Kerry did not deliver his concession speech until he believed victory in Ohio, which would have swung the election to him, was a statistical improbability. Kerry and his running mate,

Sen. John Edwards (D - N.C.), spoke to supporters Nov. 3 at Faneuil Hall in Boston.

"In an American election, there are no losers," Kerry said. "Because whether or not our candidates are successful, the next morning, we all wake up as Americans. And that - that is the greatest privilege and the most remarkable good fortune that can come to us on earth."

At a White House press conference Nov. 4, Bush discussed his priorities for the next four years.

He said he wanted to move swiftly toward an "ownership society," and pledged to simplify the tax code and pursue major structural changes in Social Security that would allow younger U.S. workers to invest part of their Social Security benefits in the stock market. Bush repeated his intent to enact legislation that would reduce medical malpractice awards.

Bush said he does not anticipate the need for any tax increases, despite looming budget deficits. The president did urge lawmakers to exercise discipline on spending bills, and to enact an intelligence reform bill when they return later this month.

Bush portrayed himself as resolute in his beliefs, and said he will work with Democrats if they are receptive to his ideas, and leave them behind if they are not.

"I'll reach out to everyone who shares our goals," he said, though he vowed to try to win over those who had voted for Kerry just 24 hours prior.

The president refused to say how much the war in Iraq would eventually cost, or whether he planned to increase or cut the number of troops deployed to Iraq. "I have yet to hear from our commanders on the ground that they need more troops," he said.

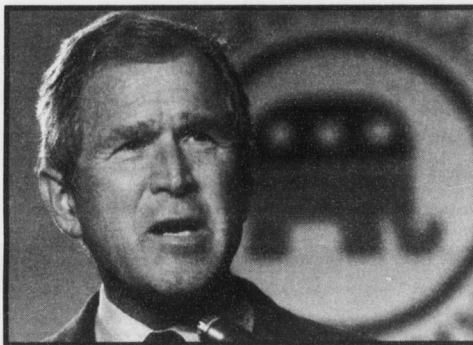
A spokesman from the White House said that Bush is expected to ask for up to \$75 billion for Iraq, Afghanistan, and other operations in the War on Terror early next year.

"Values voters"

According to *The New York Times*, exit polls from around the country showed that voters frequently used words like "faith," "integrity," "trust," and "family" to describe their reasons for voting for Bush. Jamie Radney, a senior CCE student at the college, echoed those attitudes.

"I may have a different perspective because I am a mother," Radney, who is expecting her second child in late December, said. "I felt that he represented more of my values."

Radney admitted that she remains suspicious of Bush's motives for going to war in Iraq,



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President George Bush

and feels more concerned that he has turned his back on troops who were deployed to Afghanistan.

"I worry about not knowing the full truth," she said.

Radney's cousin is currently serving in the U.S. Marine Corps as a helicopter mechanic, and must rotate to the front lines of the war every other month.

"Her husband is also in the Marines, and they have a young child," Radney said. "I'm scared that (when the war is over) they will not be together as a family."

An exit poll conducted by *The New York Times* showed that 22 percent of voters cited "moral values" as the issue that mattered most to them. The economy came in a close second with 20 percent. Terrorism placed third with 19 percent, Iraq trailed at 15 percent, and health care followed at eight percent. Five percent of voters said taxes were the issue most important to them, while another four percent cited education as their top priority.

The New York Times reported that voters in all 11 states with same-sex marriage initiatives on the ballot approved amendments to their state constitutions that will define marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Voters in Montana approved an initiative to legalize medical marijuana, and California voters authorized \$3 billion for stem cell research.

In Florida, voters approved a constitutional amendment requiring parental notification before minors can receive abortion services, and agreed to raise the minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour and impose limits on damage awards or attorney's fees in medical malpractice cases.

Blue donkeys

Democrats were bewildered by losses in the Senate, particularly the defeat of Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D - S.D.), an 18-year veteran. The defeat of Daschle, whose political career has spanned 26 years is a historic one - not since 1952, when Ernest McFarland (D - Ariz.) lost to Republican Barry Goldwater has a Senate leader lost his bid for reelection. Republican Senator-elect John Thune is poised to take Daschle's place.

According to the *Greensboro News & Record*, the Republican sweep is set to reshape the Senate, as more moderate Democrats will be replaced with ardent G.O.P. conservatives. Democrats had vacated seats in North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

Official vote tallies show the Congress, currently with 48 Democrats, 51 Republicans, and one Independent, heading for a sea change, as 44 Democrats, 55 Republicans, and one Independent are set to return in 2005. The House, which had 205 Democrats, 227 Republicans, and three "others" that do not identify with either major party, will now be comprised of 200 Democrats, 231 Republicans, one Independent, and three "others."

When asked if the Democratic Party can recoup in time for the 2008 elections, Ken Gilmore, a

professor of political science at the college, said, "My guess (is that) the liberal wing of the Democratic Party will become even more radical after this loss, which will alienate even more Americans. Worse, there will be even less room in the Democratic Party for moderate politicians, which will push even more talent into the Republican Party."

The bottom line, according to Gilmore, is that "the country is moving to the right."

Tar heels vote on the issues

Kerry supporters turned Guilford County blue, as did 17 other North Carolina counties, but Bush secured the state with 56 percent to 44 percent for Kerry. In the race for Edwards's vacated Senate seat, Richard Burr (N.C. - 05) won, with 52 percent of the vote, compared to 47 percent for his opponent, Democrat Erskine Bowles.

In the early afternoon of Nov. 2, Charlotte-based News 14 Carolina reported that North Carolina voter turnout appeared to be the best since 1992. However, voter turnout failed to meet those high expectations. Late Nov. 3, the state Board of Elections reported that 3,416,784 people had voted in North Carolina - only 61.9 percent of the 5,519,992 people registered to vote.

Gary Bartlett, the executive director of the State Board of Elections, told News 14 Carolina that turnout should reach 63 percent once provisional ballots are calculated. The additions could bring the number of votes cast to just under 3.5 million.

Elephants won the majority of votes at North Carolina polls, but voters once again elected Democrat Mike Easley as governor. The *Greensboro News & Record* reported that Easley will seek more funding for education, expand incentives for businesses to attract economic development, and lead the fight for a statewide lottery.

Republican Howard Coble ('58) will return to D.C. to represent District 6 beside Democrat Mel Watt (N.C. - 12) and Republican Virginia Foxx (N.C. - 05). ☿