

November 9, 2018

TO: Deans of U.S. Dental Schools
Directors of Advanced Dental Education Programs
Directors of Allied Dental Education Programs
ADEA Board of Directors
ADEA Legislative Advisory Committee

FROM: Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H., ADEA President and CEO
B. Timothy Leeth, CPA, ADEA Chief Advocacy Officer

RE: 2018 Midterm Election Results and Dental Education

Introduction

The 2018 midterm elections will be remembered for two things: first, the number of women elected to the Congress, and second, the record number of voters who turned out for a midterm election. At least 35 new women members of the House of Representatives will join 65 incumbents who were reelected, which will be the largest number of women to ever serve in the House. The Senate will welcome two new women, who will join the 10 women already serving in the body.

Nationwide, 114 million votes were cast in House races, which is the largest number of votes ever cast for House seats in a midterm election, far eclipsing the 83 million votes cast in 2014. Following is a brief summary and perspective on the political landscape following the election and the initial implications for dental education.

U.S. House of Representatives

The current House make up is 235 Republicans, 193 Democrats, and seven vacancies. The Democrats needed to pick up 23 seats to gain the majority for the 116th Congress, which begins in January. Regardless of the outcome of this election, there were already going to be significant changes to the face of the House. Thirty-two Members are retiring at the end of this term (23 are Republicans; seven of whom are committee chairs) and 17 ran for other offices, meaning that before the election even took place, 49 new Members of the House of Representatives were going to be elected.

Since World War II, presidents whose approval rating was below 50% saw their political party lose an average of 37 seats. In the last Gallup poll before the election, President Trump's approval rating stood at 40%. As this is written, the Democrats are projected to pick up 36 seats, giving them a majority of 229 to 206 for the Republicans. So, this outcome is historically about average for this measure. Another predictor for the outcome of congressional elections is the

result of national polling, close to the election, on the “generic ballot” question, where voters are asked which party they plan the vote for in the coming election. The most recent poll before the election gave the Democrats a +7% edge. The actual vote as of this writing shows a Democratic margin of 6.9%, again right on target. Therefore, in aggregate, in this election was exactly what would have been expected.

All four of the dentists who currently serve in the House were reelected by wide margins and they will be joined by one new dentist. Jeff Van Drew, D.M.D., a Democrat, won the open seat in New Jersey’s 2nd Congressional District in the southern part of the state. Dr. Drew is a practicing dentist in Pleasantville and a State Senator.

U.S. Senate

The current party breakdown in the U.S. Senate is 51 Republicans, 47 Democrats, and two Independents who caucus with the Democrats. The Senate is a continuing body, meaning that all of its members are not up for reelection each cycle. Normally, one third of the 100-member body would be on the ballot each cycle. In 2018 there will be 35 seats on the ballot because two appointed senators will be running to fill the unexpired terms of their predecessors—Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) were appointed to seats left vacant by resignations. Both are expected to hold their seats.¹ The degree of change in the party breakdown in the Senate is further complicated by the relatively lopsided nature of the number of seats of the two parties up for reelection in 2018.

Of the 35 seats on the ballot, 26 are held by Democrats and nine are held by Republicans. The simple math favored the Republican party maintaining control of the body, and it did. One Senate race in Arizona is still too close to call, but the Democratic candidate has taken a lead of 9,600 votes for a seat currently held by Sen. Jeff Flake (R), who is retiring. If that race remains unchanged (and it could change), the Republicans will have a 52-48 vote margin in the new Senate starting in January. In all, the Democrats lost three seats—in Indiana, Missouri and North Dakota—and the Republicans lost the Nevada and Arizona seats, for a net Republican gain of one seat.

The Florida Senate race between incumbent Sen. Bill Nelson (D) and Gov. Rick Scott may be headed for a recount. State law requires an automatic recount of a race where the margin of victory is below 0.5%. Gov. Scott currently leads by 0.22%

Governors

Thirty-six states held gubernatorial elections this year. Currently, 33 governors are Republican, 16 are Democrats and one state, Alaska, has an Independent governor going into Tuesday’s election. Twenty-six of the Republican seats were up for election, nine Democratic seats were on the ballot, and four are open, along with the Independent seat in Alaska.

¹ Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) did win her seat. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) was forced into a runoff to be held Nov. 27; she received a plurality of the votes but not a majority, as required by Mississippi law, in the three-way race. Former House member and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy (D) will be her opponent in the runoff; however, Sen. Hyde-Smith will be heavily favored.

The senior editor of the *Cook Political Report* told the ADEA Leadership Institute Fellows in September that because of the imbalance in the numbers, the Republicans had nowhere to go but down in the number of governor's mansions it held. Democrats picked up seven governorships in Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico and Nevada. Only Nevada and Wisconsin were seats occupied by an incumbent Republican seeking reelection. No Democratic seats changed hands, and the Republicans won the open seat in Alaska. On the state legislative front, the Democrats gained control of six state legislative chambers. The November ADEA *State Update* will have more details on the latter subject.

The race for the open Governor's seat in Georgia between the former Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp (R) and former Georgia House Minority Leader Stacy Abrams (D) remains too close to call. Kemp leads with 50.3% to Abrams 48.7%, the margin is 62,720 out of nearly 4 million votes cast. The counting of absentee and provisional ballots continues at this writing. If Mr. Kemp's percentage falls below 50% there will be a runoff on Dec. 4 as required under state law.

In addition, the Florida governor's race between Rep. Ron DeSantis (R) and Mayor Andrew Gillum (D) may be headed for a recount for the same reason that the Senate contest might, as noted above. Rep. DeSantis' lead is currently below the threshold at 0.47%.

Medicaid Expansion Ballot Initiatives

One of the ballot initiatives that voters in four states had to decide was whether to expand Medicaid. In 2016, 59% of Maine voters supported a similar initiative, but the Republican Gov. Paul LePage refused to implement the new law, even after being ordered to do so by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court. The case continues to this day and will probably only be resolved when the current Governor leaves office in January 2019.

Similar initiatives in 2018 appeared on the ballots in Idaho, Nebraska and Utah and each passed. Montana also had a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid but took a different tack that would raise tobacco taxes to pay for the state portion of the cost. The Montana initiative failed 47% to 53%.

Impact on Dental Education

The most immediate effect on ADEA advocacy is we have many new Members of Congress to educate and introduce to dental education issues. In the House, all of the new committee and subcommittee chairs will be Democrats. Once those decisions are made in January, ADEA Advocacy and Government Relations staff will visit them or their staff to discuss ADEA's priorities.

The most immediate next steps are that each party will hold organizational meetings between now and January when the new members take office and the 116th Congress begins. In the meantime, the House and Senate Republicans for the next Congress will meet on Nov. 14 to choose their leadership team for next year. The House Democrats plan to meet for the same purpose on Nov. 29. Senate Democrats have not made public their leadership election schedule, but it may coincide with the House Democrats or be the first week of December.

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Additional legislative and policy developments will be reported in future issues of the ADEA [Washington Update](#) and the ADEA [State Update](#).

If you have additional questions or need additional information please contact Tim Leeth at leetht@adea.org or 202-289-8172 (direct).