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**District-level look at presidential results highlights Wisconsin’s political shifts**

*By WisPolitics.com*

Despite winning a narrow plurality in Wisconsin a month ago, Joe Biden won just 37 Assembly districts and 11 in the Senate, according to a WisPolitics.com analysis of certified returns.

The results are one final testament to the advantage GOP legislative candidates have had under the maps Republican lawmakers drew nearly nine years ago.

They also underscore some of the demographic and political shifts in the state over the past decade.

Look at the 14th Assembly District, where Democratic Rep. Robyn Vining, of Wauwatosa, easily won re-election this fall. In 2012, the suburban Milwaukee district was a deep-red seat that Republican Mitt Romney won by 14 percentage points.

A month ago, Biden won it by 15.5 points.

On the flip side, then-President Obama won the 24th Senate District in the Stevens Point area by nearly 6 percentage points in 2012. President Trump took it by more than 12 points a month ago as freshman Sen. Pat Testin, R-Stevens Point, cruised to re-election.

The look at the presidential numbers by legislative district also supports major narratives on the race in Wisconsin: Trump drove up numbers in rural areas and cratered in Milwaukee’s suburbs, while Dane County delivered for Biden in a big way.

Still, the breakdown by district helps illustrate the headwinds that helped doom some candidates — and shows some missed opportunities for both sides.

Wisconsin legislative candidates will run under new maps in the 2022 elections, more than likely with districts drawn by judges. So the look at the final statewide race under the 2011 maps has some limited value in predicting which seats will be top targets in two years. But it still shows that incumbents such as state Sens. Janet Bewley, D-Town of Mason, and Dale Kooyenga, R-Brookfield, could be in for tough re-election campaigns in two years unless their districts become significantly better on the numbers.

Trump won Bewley’s northern Wisconsin district by nearly 9 percentage points, while Biden took Kooyenga’s suburban Milwaukee seat by 8.5 percentage points.

Freshman Sen. Jeff Smith, D-Eau Claire, is the only other state senator up in 2022 in a seat won by the opposite party’s presidential candidate. Trump won his district by 3.3 percentage points.

Smith’s seat was also one of only three in the entire state Senate that was decided by less than 4 percentage points at the top of the ticket this fall. Sen. Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, won re-election by 8.5 percentage points as Trump won her suburban Milwaukee seat by just 167 votes. Meanwhile, the president won GOP Sen. Roger Roth’s Appleton seat by 1.9 percentage points.

Along with Darling and Testin’s races, Senate attention focused on open seats in the Green Bay and La Crosse areas. Trump won the open 30th Senate District in the Green Bay area by 8.1 percentage points, while GOP attorney Eric Wimberger beat Democratic De Pere Ald. Jonathon Hansen by 9.4 points. Meanwhile, Biden won the open 32nd Senate District by 6 points as former Democratic DATCP Secretary Brad Pfaff beat former GOP state Sen. Dan Kapanke by 582 votes, a gap of 0.59 percentage points.

The maps GOP lawmakers drew in 2011 had already proven their durability for Republicans. In 2012, Obama won the state by nearly 7 percentage points, but won just 43 Assembly seats and 16 Senate districts.

So in Biden winning the state by just 0.62 percentage points, it’s no surprise that the Democratic nominee underperformed Obama’s numbers in many areas.

Still, southwestern Wisconsin stands out for its swing toward the Republican presidential candidate compared to eight years ago.

The 17th Senate District, represented by Sen. Howard Marklein, R-Spring Green, and the three Assembly seats in the district have had a reputation for years of voting for Democrats at the top of the ticket, particularly in presidential elections, but sending Republicans to the state Legislature.

If this fall’s results hold, the area has gone through a significant realignment.

Trump didn’t just win all three Assembly districts after Obama took all of them in 2012. It wasn’t even close in two of them. He took Rep. Travis Tranel’s district by a dozen points as the Cuba City Republican won re-election by more than 18 and Rep. Tony Kurtz’s seat by nearly 21 points as the Wonewoc freshman won by nearly 27.

The only close race of the three was Rep. Todd Novak’s seat. The Dodgeville Republican won re-election by 4.1 percentage points as Trump won the district by just three votes.

The numbers also bode well for Marklein if the district largely remains unchanged after the new map is drawn. Some had suggested taking over as Joint Finance co-chair would make his re-election bid in 2022 difficult due to the tough committee votes that can come with the appointment. But Trump won the district by nearly 11 points.

Trump, however, produced significant headwinds in four suburban Milwaukee Assembly seats with only Rep. Dan Knodl, R-Germantown, able to overcome the deficit at the top of the ticket.

Trump lost Rep. Jim Ott’s seat by nearly 14 points as the Mequon Republican lost to Democrat Deb Andraca by 3.3 points. Likewise, the president lost Rep. Rob Hutton’s seat by 9 percentage points as the Brookfield Republican lost re-election by almost 2 points.

Along with losing the Wauwatosa-area 14th Assembly District by 15.5 points, the president lost Knodl’s seat by 4.3 points. But the Germantown Republican won his race by almost 3 points.

Assembly Democrats considered the race a second-tier contest in late summer with their No. 1 priority defending their incumbents.

Democrats also didn’t make much of a play for the 15th Assembly District until late in the campaign season. Trump ended up winning the suburban Milwaukee district by just 226 votes as Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, won re-election by 9.6 percentage points.

Knodl is one of only three Assembly members who won their seats despite the top of the ticket breaking against them. The others are Rep. Steve Doyle, D-Onalaska, who won by 7.2 percentage points even as Trump won his district by 235 votes, and Rep. Beth Meyers. The Bayfield Democrat poured more than $460,000 into TV ads in her race against Republican James Bolen, who didn’t receive any significant financial help from the caucus or outside groups. But she only beat him by 1,044 votes as Trump won her seat by 557.

At the start of the session, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, listed Vining, Doyle, Meyers and Rep. Nick Milroy, D-South Range among his top targets for the 2020 election in his push to reach a veto-proof majority.

Milroy won re-election by 139 votes as Biden won his district by 392 votes.

Of the four, Vining’s opponent Bonnie Lee was the only GOP candidate to get significant financial support from the caucus or outside groups.

The results in the congressional districts also underscore the growing urban-rural divide in Wisconsin politics.

When Republicans drew the map nine years ago, the 2nd Congressional District, dominated by Madison, and the 4th Congressional District, largely comprised of Milwaukee, were strong Democratic seats with western Wisconsin’s 3rd Congressional District having a Democratic lean.

Biden won the 2nd by 40 points and the 4th by 53.4 points. But Trump repeated his win in the 3rd Congressional District, where U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, beat Republican Derrick Van Orden by more than 10,000 votes even as the president took the seat by 4.7 percentage points. That was slightly higher than Trump’s margin of 4.5 points in 2016.

Meanwhile, the president won four of the other five congressional districts by at least 15 points. In the fifth — southeastern Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District — Trump won by 9.2 points.

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