

## Republicans sweep statewide races in Arizona

by Jeremy Duda

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Nationally, Democrats suffered disaster in the general election. In Arizona, it was even worse.

For the first time since 1994, Republicans swept Arizona's statewide offices. Even the Attorney General's Office, which has been in Democratic hands for the past 12 years, couldn't withstand the Republican tsunami.

When the polls opened, Republicans held five of the six statewide executive offices. Attorney General Terry Goddard, whom Republican incumbent Jan Brewer trounced in the gubernatorial race, was the lone Democrat carrying his party's banner.

From a governing standpoint, the GOP's sweep will change very little, said Republican consultant Chris Baker. Republicans already controlled both chambers of the Legislature and have held the Governor's Office since Democrat Janet Napolitano resigned in

January 2009.

But politically, the sweep leaves Democrats without a leg to stand on, Baker said. Democrats traditionally have kept their foot in the door with the Attorney General's Office, which provided them with their last two gubernatorial candidates. But even that door is now closed.

"In many ways, it has provided them the opportunity to have some semblance of a bench," Baker said. "I think Republicans, in the political sense, have slammed that door shut. The Democrat bench is very, very thin right now."

Just before the election, Democratic consultant Mario Diaz said Rotellini was the Democratic Party's best chance of putting up a viable candidate for governor in 2014.

"Rotellini is the best opportunity to have some balance in the political party system in Arizona," Diaz said. "This election is bigger than attorney general."

Most of the races were unequivocal blowouts that never gave Democrats even a glimmer of hope.

By 9:15 p.m., the Republicans' statewide slate took the stage at the Arizona GOP's election night party at the downtown Hyatt to rousing cheers. At the same time, attorney general hopeful Felecia Rotellini was the only statewide Democratic candidate still walking around at the Democrats' party at the Wyndham.

The attorney general's race was the most competitive of the bunch, with Republican Tom Horne holding a 5-point lead on Rotellini. Rotellini stayed positive, but by the end of the night, Horne was on the verge of declaring victory and was waiting only for an official pronouncement that the race was over.

"I think maybe I'll do it in the morning," Horne said.

Horne's win dashed many Democrats' best hope for winning statewide office and would give Republicans control of the only statewide office currently held by a Democrat.

The governor's race was the first to officially end. By 9 p.m., news stations were calling the race for Brewer, and Goddard's concession followed shortly. Goddard, who was on his third bid for governor, lost by 14 percent.

Further down the ballot, things didn't get any better for the Democrats.

Some expected a spirited fight in the treasurer's race, where Republican Doug Ducey and Democrat Andrei Cherny each spent a record amount of money on the normally low-key race. Despite a \$600,000 war chest and an opponent weighed down by allegations of dishonest business practices, Cherny lost by about 150,000 votes.

Republican Sen. John Huppenthal won the race for superintendent of public instruction by a similar margin, ending the night with a 12-point lead over former Arizona Education Association President Penny Kotterman. Republican Mine Inspector Joe Hart made short work of Manuel Cruz as well, topping his Democratic challenger by nearly 200,000 votes.

And the Secretary of State's race provided a stunning example for why some of Democratic Rep. Chris Deschene's supporters urged him to keep his seat in the House instead of embarking on a suicide mission against Republican incumbent Ken Bennett. Some viewed Deschene, the first Navajo to win a major party's nomination for statewide office in Arizona, as a prime candidate for a future congressional run.

Instead, he opted out of a reelection bid for the Legislature and jumped into the Secretary of State's race, which he lost by 180,000 votes.

While the Democrats must figure out how to restock their bench, Baker sounded optimistic about the GOP statewide team's future.

"You look at the statewide ticket – this was a ticket comprised of, frankly, fairly mainstream Republicans across the board, from top to bottom. That's something that we haven't had a tremendous amount of success accomplishing in previous elections, perhaps," he said. "In other words, we didn't shoot ourselves in the foot."

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