

US - Historic Democratic Victory (by Jason Leopold, Truthout)

Wednesday 8 November 2006, posted by [Manuela Garza Ascencio](#)

[Truthouth](#) - Despite widespread problems with electronic voting machines, long lines that stretched several city blocks in some states, hours-long waiting at the polls, and GOP intimidation tactics aimed to drive away predominantly Democratic and minority voters, the public turned out en masse Tuesday and helped shift the balance of power in Washington, DC, to Democrats for the first time in 12 years.

Republican incumbents in hotly contested Senate and Congressional races in Ohio, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Indiana suffered defeat at the hands of their Democratic challengers as voters went to the polls frustrated at the way the Republican-controlled Congress has handled a wide-range of issues, including the ongoing military struggle in Iraq and the numerous corruption scandals that have plagued their party. One of the most notable victories for Democrats came in the state of Pennsylvania, where the Republican incumbent, Senator Rick Santorum, was ousted by challenger Bob Casey.

Tuesday's election will go down in history for its record voter turnout - an unprecedented feat for a midterm election - as well as being one of the nastiest campaigns in modern American politics. By and large voters soured on President Bush and his steadfast refusal to even consider a change to his Iraq policy or hold anyone in his administration accountable for the disastrous war, which has claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 US soldiers - more than 100 last month alone. Voters responded swiftly, handing Republicans who fell into step behind the president over the past couple of years an early retirement.

Senator Charles Schumer, D-NY, responded to early exit poll results Tuesday that showed Democrats taking an early lead.

"We really care about taking our country back, about changing the course in Iraq," said Schumer, speaking to supporters at the Democratic National Committee headquarters.

Nancy Pelosi, the Democrat from San Francisco who will now become the country's first female Speaker of the House, said at a victory speech Tuesday that the "people voted for change and they voted for Democrats who will take our country in a new direction."

Pelosi promised to "restore stability and bipartisanship in Washington, DC." But many of her constituents in ultra-liberal San Francisco expect her to lead the charge to launch an immediate investigation of the Bush administration on issues including the use of pre-war Iraq intelligence and domestic spying.

Election day started out Tuesday with reports that electronic voting machines malfunctioned at tens of dozens of polling precincts throughout the country. The breakdown resulted in a chaotic scene in one state, in Denver County, Colorado, where voters waited as long as three hours to cast their votes. A spokesman for Diebold Elections Systems, the manufacturer of a majority of those electronic voting machines, did not return numerous calls for comment. The company has long maintained that their equipment is reliable despite documented evidence to the contrary.

In other states, reports of voter intimidation by GOP-hired operatives were rampant. The FBI sent undercover agents to Virginia to monitor the situation, according to the state's board of elections. In Tucson, Arizona, three men were reportedly harassing Latino voters as they made their way to the polls. One of the men reportedly had a handgun in a side holster. Nina Perales, a senior poll watcher, said her organization contacted the Department of Justice.

The terrorism card that the Bush administration played in past elections to swing the results in their favor failed this time around, as did a multimillion-dollar media blitz and a campaign that saw President Bush stumping for GOP candidates across the country. According to exit polls, the war in Iraq and corruption that crept through the halls of Congress in recent months was a major concern for voters and factored heavily into their casting a vote for Democrats.

"I think regardless of the results, today is really a referendum on President Bush's handling of the war in Iraq and whether we should bring the troops home," said Senator Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. "You're going to see a movement and a sweep in the outcome. The issue is to what extent."

If the Democrats take control of both Houses, they will have the power to challenge Bush's domestic and foreign policies as well as his conduct related to the war in Iraq.

In an interview Sunday with ABC News, Vice President Dick Cheney said he would ignore any subpoenas he received by Democrats if they gained control of Congress.

Jason Leopold is a former Los Angeles bureau chief for Dow Jones Newswire. He has written over 2,000 stories on the California energy crisis and received the Dow Jones Journalist of the Year Award in 2001 for his coverage on the issue as well as a Project Censored award in 2004. Leopold also reported extensively on Enron's downfall and was the first journalist to land an interview with former Enron president Jeffrey Skilling following Enron's bankruptcy filing in December 2001. Leopold has appeared on CNBC and National Public Radio as an expert on energy policy and has also been the keynote speaker at more than two dozen energy industry conferences around the country.

http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/110806Z.shtml