



Sayonara Santorum

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By Bob Roehr

A tide of blue swept through the voting booths as Democrats rolled up one victory after another on Election Day. It was enough to give them control of the U.S. House of Representatives, but the Senate hangs in the balance, waiting for the tally of absentee ballots and possible recounts in Virginia and Montana.

Democratic control of the House came as no surprise; polls had already predicted they would prevail there. Democrats picked up at least 28 seats. But the swing is not as great as in 1994 when Republicans picked up 54 seats and installed Newt Gingrich as Speaker.

At press time, Democrats also were on the verge of taking control of the Senate. Republicans have 49 seats and Democrats have 50, with races in Virginia and Montana that are still under scrutiny.

In Pennsylvania, challenger Bob Casey Jr. beat out Sen. Rick Santorum following major grassroots initiatives by local and national groups. Santorum, the darling of social conservatives and number three in the Republican leadership of the Senate had become the prime target of politically active gays.

Renee Gilinger, co-chair of Liberty PA, is excited about the victory, both of Casey and of the Democrats in the House.

"With Democratic leadership, we're not going to have to worry about the gay marriage ban, which is very exciting," she told PGN. "This victory over Santorum proves that having an anti-GLBT agenda is not the way to win an election. If you want to win an election, pro-GLBT is the way to go."

She added, "We're very grateful to everyone who came out to vote."

Another grassroots organizer, Ray Murphy, executive director of Philadelphians Against Santorum, echoed Gilinger's sentiment.

"I'm elated. I think it's really exciting," he said. "Our challenge now is to hold Bob Casey accountable. My hope is that the anti-gay issue will be taken off the table as a wedge issue for voters. We have a lot of questions for Democrats about how they will be defending us and giving us equal rights."

The Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights organization, raised more than \$375,000 for Casey, dispatched four college youth staffers and organized more than 200 volunteers over Election Day weekend to get out the vote in Pennsylvania.

"We are thrilled, ecstatic, and overjoyed that Rick Santorum has been thrashed at the polls. His extreme and gratuitous homophobia will no longer pollute the Senate. Good

ridance,” said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Another ousted conservative was Rep. John Hostettler (R-Ind.). He supported banning gay marriage, introduced a bill to strip courts of the authority to even hear the issue and pushed an amendment that would not let the District of Columbia enforce a ruling that the Boy Scouts discriminated against gays. Some of his campaign ads even featured him crusading against “the gay agenda.”

However, also among the losers were Republicans who strongly supported gay issues.

Topping that list was Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R.I.), one of the few elected officials of either party to support same-sex marriage. HRC rated him at 100 for the last Congress and worked hard for his reelection. But Chafee lost to his Democratic challenger.

“Democrats didn’t win because of anything they stood for, they won because of Republican mistakes,” said Patrick Sammon, executive vice president of Log Cabin Republicans. “The social extremists have taken our party off track. They’re largely to blame for what happened in this election.”

“Americans have rejected the failed politics that divided our families in the past in favor of new leaders with new priorities. Our members labored with Democrats in precincts across the country to achieve success tonight at the ballot box. We must now use the political victories won today to secure concrete results tomorrow,” said Jo Wyrick, executive director of National Stonewall Democrats.

Also at stake in this election were eight bans on same-sex marriage.

Of those, seven were successful: Arizona became the first in the nation to reject a state constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, by 51 percent of over 1 million votes.

Log Cabin’s Sammon called the victory in Arizona “an important milestone in the fight for equality. Citizens of a conservative red state voted in favor of basic fairness and common decency.”

Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin all voted to ban same-sex marriage, though some by lesser margins than expected.

“It’s clear that fear-mongering around same-sex marriage by the GOP and the extreme Christian right is fizzling out,” said Foreman. “It doesn’t have the juice it had just two years ago — people are getting sick of it.”

With additional reporting by PGN Editorial Associate Casey Bell.