Election Analysts Provide Insight into Some of the Factors that Played a Key Role in Determining the Outcomes of Last Week's U.S. Midterms

Over a week after Election Day, all of the races may not be called, but control of the House and Senate have been determined. Last weekend, incumbent U.S. Senator from Nevada Catherine Cortez Masto was projected to defeat GOP challenger Adam Laxalt, giving Democrats 50 Senate seats and allowing them to retain control of the upper chamber of Congress - due to the tie-breaking vote held by U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris. Georgia's runoff race for senator taking place on December 6th will give Democrats the opportunity to earn a 51st member of the Senate. Democrat Raphael Warnock defeated Republican Herschel Walker in a tight race, but failed to gain the majority needed to avoid a runoff. As for the House, slim control of the lower chamber of Congress has been won by Republicans, with the GOP earning the 218+ seats needed for this. The decisive call came last night after Republican Mike Garcia was declared the winner in his re-election bid in California's 27th district over Democratic challenger Christy Smith.

The narrative dominating election coverage is the overall failure of the expected "red wave." In the face of eight percent inflation, a 41 percent Biden approval rating, concerns about crime and immigration, and midterm historical precedent, the most conservative of estimates predicted that Republicans would gain between eight and twenty seats in the House, with hopeful Republicans assuming that they would win more than 20. Instead, Republicans failed to reach or exceed that marker of expectations for House seat pick-ups. Of the 27 seats expected by Politico to "lean Democrat" before the election, Democrats have won 24 of 27, with two uncalled. More importantly, though, Democrats have managed to win 18 of the 26 seats deemed "toss-ups," with three still up in the air.

Naturally, finger pointing is well underway. Republicans have blamed their disappointing cycle on a continued trend of failing to turn out voters. Democrats, on the other hand, are largely attributing their success to an alleged high turnout of young voters energized by the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Most analysts, though, have focused on the effect that former President Donald Trump seemed to have on the results. By and large, candidates affiliated with Trump struggled. Despite significant health issues, Democrat John Fetterman defeated Trump-supported Mehmet Oz for a Pennsylvania senate seat. Even in states in which Republicans generally posted good performances, election deniers and other Trump-backed candidates did poorly. In Georgia, incumbent Governor Brian Kemp soundly defeated Democrat Stacey Abrams, but Trump-backed senate candidate Herschel Walker was forced into a runoff. In New Hampshire, Republican hopeful and election denier Don Bolduc was defeated by Democrat Maggie Hassan despite an easy win for Republican Governor Sununu in the same state. Similar instances were reported nationwide, and notably, Kemp and Sununu have both been heavy critics of Trump in the past.

Additionally, some experts are suggesting that MAGA politics are keeping the Democratic base invested, while others, like Ipsos Senior Vice President Chris Jackson, are similarly suggesting that Republicans would have seen far greater success in this election if they had focused more strongly on the state of the economy, which ranked as the number one most important issue to voters. Jackson also commented that because the economy is still seeing growth and avoiding mass unemployment, the issue may have taken more of a backseat than predicted, and although it is early to say, Political Science Chair Dr. John Taylor at the University of Texas at San Antonio indicates that Democrats are right in believing that abortion and other social issues were larger factors than anticipated.