

## ***BGR Election Deep Dives: Michigan and Maryland***

By all historic measures, voters should have handed President Biden and the Democratic party a massive rebuke in the states. Despite President Biden's approval at 42%, 75% of voters saying country is on 'wrong track' and concerns about inflation/economy, incumbent Democratic Governors defended every state except Nevada, held open races in Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Hawaii, and Democrats went on offense and managed to flip Maryland, Massachusetts, and Arizona from Republican to Democratic control. To read BGR's comprehensive election recap, please click [here](#).

As BGR looks ahead to 2023, two rising national stars to watch are Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Governor-elect Wes Moore in Maryland.

### **MICHIGAN: Governor Gretchen Whitmer**



By [Patrick Dolan](#), Senior Director of State Affairs  
November 21, 2022

Governor Whitmer was first elected in 2018 as part of a Democratic wave in the midterm elections under President Trump which saw seven gubernatorial seats flip from Republican to Democratic control, including key electoral states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Nevada. Once viewed as potentially vulnerable in the midterm elections under President Biden, the impact of Governor Whitmer's 11-point victory to secure re-election in a key presidential swing state cannot be overstated.

Michigan saw record-breaking turnout for the 2022 midterm election, and when the data is unpacked, it is evident that Governor Whitmer has built a dynamic, broad-based political coalition that transcends age, race, income, and region. For example, Whitmer won 95% of the vote in [Detroit](#), carried the famous Reagan-Obama-Trump swing [Macomb County](#) by 5 points just two years after Trump won it by 8 points. In [Oakland County](#), the state's second-largest county located just outside of Detroit, Governor Whitmer won over 60% of the vote, and in [Washtenaw County](#) – home to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor – Governor Whitmer beat Dixon by over 51 points. Here are three key takeaways from Governor Whitmer's victory.

1. **Quality Candidates Matter:** Governor Whitmer traversed the state with an affirmative agenda: continue building on Whitmer's historic progress investing in public education, strengthening infrastructure, fixing the damn roads, growing an equitable economy, and defending reproductive freedom. Governor Whitmer – or Big Gretch – is a refreshingly sincere and approachable Governor who goes to football tailgates and uses accessible language where you feel like you're talking to a good friend, not a stiff politician regurgitating poll-tested talking points. From my time on the ground in Michigan before the election, it was evident that Governor Whitmer has built a unique, transformational political coalition that I personally have not experienced since I worked on President Obama's 2008 campaign.

2. **Abortion:** Governor Whitmer is a mother of two teenage daughters, and the threat of Michigan's 1931 law that would make it a felony to have an abortion in the state which Republicans pushed to reinstate after Roe was overturned earlier this year was an issue that Governor Whitmer was able to effectively message as a mother in clear contrast to Tudor Dixon who opposed abortion even in cases of rape and incest. Whitmer hit the airwaves early with ads that effectively defined Dixon as too extreme on the central issue of abortion rights, while Dixon unsuccessfully tried to shift the cultural debate to education and books. Even 16% of Tudor Dixon supporters indicated they were Dissatisfied/Angry about Roe v. Wade being overturned. Furthermore, Michigan became the first state in the country to pass an affirmative constitutional amendment that guarantees the right to abortion with the [passage](#) of Proposal 3, which passed with 57% of the vote. The amendment helped drive large turnout in the polls which, in addition to re-electing Governor Whitmer to a second term, helped Democrats win control of the state House of Representatives and state Senate, securing a statewide trifecta for the first time since 1984.
3. **Strength of Coordinated Michigan Democratic Party:** The Michigan Democratic Party should be recognized for this monumental political shift. With financial support from the Democratic Governors Association, the Michigan Democratic Party built a sophisticated, coordinated ground operation that enabled the party to strategically reach and persuade key voters. Campaign literature was coordinated and county-specific so anyone who knocked on doors for a candidate helped to elect the entire Democratic ticket. Radio ads from Governor Whitmer encouraged voters to visit MichiganDems.com, not the Governor's personal website. This is not always the case, as some Governors dealt with a fractured state party and a bifurcated ground operation that was expensive and ineffective.

Looking ahead, Michigan's racial, geographic, and economic diversity serves as a better political barometer to select a president than Iowa, New Hampshire, or Nevada. To this end, the Democratic National Convention (DNC) should seriously consider a [proposal](#) from the Michigan congressional delegation to make Michigan the first, or one of the first five presidential primary states in 2024.

### **MARYLAND: Governor-elect Wes Moore**



By [Keiffer Mitchell](#), Vice President, State and Local Advocacy  
November 21, 2022

“A rising star...telegenic...dynamic...the future for democrat politics.” These superlatives are often used to describe Wes Moore, who will become the 63<sup>rd</sup> Governor of Maryland and only the 3<sup>rd</sup> African American Governor to be elected in the history of the United States. There is little doubt our national political landscape needs fresh new faces and ideas in the hyper partisan political landscape. Wes Moore, 44 years old, fits that role with a background straight out of central casting for a political leader – Rhodes Scholar, Army veteran serving two tours of duty in Afghanistan, Wall Street investment banker, best-selling author, and CEO of a national anti-poverty organization. Governor-Elect Moore and I have been friends for 15 years. All the superlatives are true and I can attest personally to him being a passionate, sincere, and committed human being. When he says “Leave no one behind” - he means it.

Moore was overwhelmingly elected on election night with 60% of the vote. His opponent Delegate Dan Cox was characterized as conservative extremist and was endorsed by former President Donald Trump. Former President Trump lost Maryland to President Biden by 30+ points in the 2020 election. In addition, Cox espoused ‘Q-Anon conspiracy theories, called Vice President Pence “a traitor” for not overturning the 2020

election, and launched a failed effort to impeach the popular Republican Governor Larry Hogan accusing him of malfeasance in office.

### **Moore the Governor**

Now the hard part for any newly elected chief executive begins – assembling a cabinet, managing a 40,000-employee state government and governing. During the campaign, Moore stressed tackling social issues – increased funding for education, addressing mental and behavioral health, tackling racial and economic disparities, and closing the digital divide by expansion of broadband. Moore’s campaign theme was “Leave No One Behind.” Unlike past Governors who came into office with budget deficits, Moore will inherit a \$1 Billion surplus. He will also be working with a legislature that will be a democratic ‘super-majority.’ However, look to Moore to govern left of center.

On the day after Moore is sworn into office, he will submit his first budget. All eyes will be on his funding priorities and how much of the \$1 Billion surplus will be drawn down. There will be traditional democratic constituencies who will be at the door lined up to get their fair share of state dollars – environmentalists, education advocates, and unions. In addition, the legislature will have their own set of priorities. Moore biggest test will be learning to say ‘no’ to some of these groups during the budget process. However, make no mistake, Moore will enjoy a long “honeymoon.”

### **Moore the ‘Rising Star’**

It is clear Moore is now a rising star in democratic politics and he represents a new generation in political leadership. In fact, CNN declared Moore “A Rising Star for the Democrats.” On election night, as soon as the polls closed, there was already talk by national pundits placing him in conversations as a candidate for president in 2024. The day after the election and over the weekend, he did the national talk show circuit. It’s tempting and “seductive” to be caught up in the national political conversations – especially if you are new to politics and never held political office. However, Moore is being encouraged to temper all the national talk and focus on Maryland and his priorities during the first term. After all, he ran against a person characterized by incumbent Governor Republican Larry Hogan as a “Q-Anon whack job” - hardly a formidable opponent most general elections candidates encounter.

Tackling climate issues and cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay, expanding broadband, fulling implementing Maryland’s Blueprint for the Future – a once in a generation education initiative, and addressing the Baltimore region’s transportation issues during his first term will position Moore as the ‘rising star’ for any national office.

###