



**BGR** | GROUP

BGR GROUP

# 2023 STATE ELECTIONS **RECAP**

---

NOVEMBER 2023

\*AS OF NOVEMBER 8, 2023

## BGR's State and Local Team



PRACTICE HEAD  
**LOREN MONROE**  
lmonroe@bgrdc.com



PRINCIPAL  
**WILLIAM CROZER**  
wcrozer@bgrdc.com

Our State Team is ready and available to answer any questions you may have about election results.

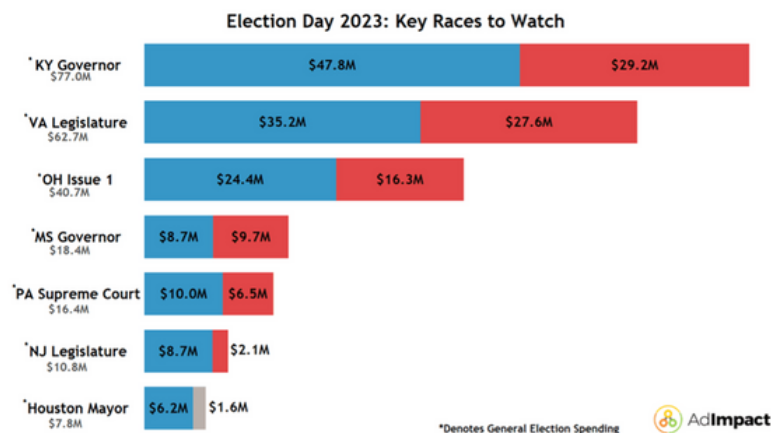
See BGR's full State and Local Practice [Here](#).

## OVERVIEW & TAKEAWAYS

- Last night's election results offer one of the broadest gauges of public sentiment a year before voters will decide on the presidency, Congress, and state and local elections across the country.
- State and local Democrats built on their recent victories in special elections and overcame President Biden's unpopularity to win most of the off-year elections. Despite 67 percent of Americans thinking the country is on the wrong track, Tuesday's races provide further evidence that the Democratic party's message of potential threats to abortion access turns out more votes than the GOP message of lowering taxes, supporting parental involvement in schools, and improving public safety.
- In **Kentucky**, popular incumbent Democratic Governor Andy Beshear defeated Republican Attorney General and Trump-endorsed challenger Daniel Cameron in a state that backed Trump by 26 percentage points in 2020. Beshear enjoyed high approval ratings going into the contest and hammered Cameron with hard-hitting ads, including on abortion.
- In **Virginia**, Democrats in competitive legislature races campaigned and won on protecting women's abortion access and retook control of the state's General Assembly while holding onto the Senate. **Virginia** GOP Governor Glenn Youngkin had called for a ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, rather than the state's current limit after 26 weeks. He and national anti-abortion leaders had hoped Tuesday's contests would show that Youngkin's proposal, which they are promoting as a compromise position, would appeal to moderate voters.

## OVERVIEW & TAKEAWAYS

- As results continue to roll in, Democrats showed surprising strength given the public's souring mood on President Biden and the direction of the country. Abortion access continued to be a driving force of Democratic success, with strong victories on the issue in the traditionally red states of Ohio and Kentucky. While Democrats continue to turn out in record numbers, President Biden did not feature in many of the important campaigns and is trailing former President Trump in the latest [CNN poll](#), 49% to 45%.
- In deep red **Ohio**, a ballot measure codifying abortion access in the state constitution passed by a large margin. Ohio also voted to become the 24th state to legalize recreational marijuana.
- The GOP did have some notable victories. As expected, **Mississippi's** seven statewide Republicans, including Governor Tate Reeves, won reelection and the GOP retained supermajorities in the legislature. Republicans also swept other statewide races on the ballot - Attorney General and Secretary of State - in Kentucky. In October, Republican Attorney General Jeff Landry won **Louisiana's** open gubernatorial contest outright after clearing 50 percent in the state's jungle primary, avoiding a runoff.
- In large part, Democratic campaigns continue to outraise and outspend Republican campaigns.



- For Republicans, the results offer worrying signals for 2024. A handful of potential swing states, including Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, and Pennsylvania could have abortion access measures on their ballots alongside the presidential candidates next year.
- Other notable results include Democrats winning a hotly contested seat on **Pennsylvania's** supreme court. With the victory, Democrats will maintain a 5-2 majority on the court heading into court battles over mail-voting and election certification next year. **Philadelphia** also elected a woman mayor for the first time, elevating City Councilwoman Cherelle Parker. Parker focused on crime and increasing police and patrol in the area.
- Key battleground states in 2024 that both parties will target include narrowly divided state legislatures in Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.

# STATE & LOCAL ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS

---

## Governors:

- Republicans will control 27 governorships to Democrats' 23 in 2024. Republicans flipped the Louisiana governorship, which was an open race won by Republican Attorney General Jeff Landry, and held the governorship in Mississippi, where incumbent Republican Tate Reeves was victorious. Democrats held the governorship in Kentucky with incumbent Andy Beshear's victory.

## State Legislatures:

- Democrats picked up a legislative chamber in Virginia, flipping control of the state's House of Delegates. Republicans will still maintain their dominance in state legislatures nationwide, now controlling 57 of the country's 99 legislative chambers to 42 for Democrats. These figures assume Republican de facto control of Nebraska's unicameral legislature, where members are elected on a non-partisan basis.
- Trifectas: Republican Jeff Landry avoided a runoff by securing an outright win in the Louisiana gubernatorial primary, creating a new GOP trifecta after two-term incumbent Governor John Bel Edwards' (D) term ends on January 8, 2024. A state is deemed as having a trifecta when one party controls the governorship and both chambers of the state legislature. With Louisiana, there are 23 Republican trifecta states and 17 Democratic trifecta states.

## State Referendums / Ballot Measures:

- Abortion access campaigns continue to win after successes on all six state ballot measures in 2022, including Michigan, Kansas, Kentucky and Montana. Ohio is now the latest red state to vote to enshrine abortion access into the state's constitution. And like most of the others, at 57% - 43%, it was not close.

## Mayors:

- In the top 100 most populous cities, Democrats will maintain their political dominance. Democrats won or will win races in Houston, TX, Philadelphia, PA, Columbus, OH, Indianapolis, IN, and Orlando, FL, among others. Earlier this year, Democrat Donna Deegan flipped the open Jacksonville, FL mayorship. One bright spot for the GOP, in Dallas, Eric Johnson switched party affiliations from Democrat to Republican after winning re-election in May. Of the 100, 63 are Democrats, 25 are Republicans, 4 are independents, and 6 are nonpartisan.

# GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION & OTHER STATEWIDE RACES

**Mississippi: Incumbent Tate Reeves (R) (51.8%)** v. Brandon Presley (D) (46.9%)  
**Kentucky: Incumbent Andy Beshear (D) (53.4%)** v. Daniel Cameron (R) (46.6%)  
**Louisiana: Incumbent Jeff Landry (R)** (won outright)



- Popular incumbent Democratic Governor Andy Beshear easily defeated Republican Attorney General David Cameron, in a state former President Trump carried by 26% in 2020. Beshear distanced himself from President Biden and other national Democrats, instead focusing on local issues and supporting abortion access. Beshear went into election day with a 60 percent approval rating, including 43 percent among GOP voters.
- Republicans, however, easily carried the other stateside races on the ballot – Russell Coleman will replace Daniel Cameron as Attorney General and Michael Adams was re-elected as Secretary of State. Cameron was the only statewide elected official endorsed by the former President.



- Mississippi's seven statewide Republicans down-ticket from governor coasted to reelection. Incumbent Governor Tate Reeves was expected to have the edge in the deep red state, although Democratic candidate Brandon Presley was a strong opponent and put up what many considered a surprisingly competitive fight to try and flip the seat. Reeves, who struggled with low approval ratings, consistently tied Presley to President Biden and other national Democrats.

# STATE LEGISLATURES

**Virginia:** Despite unprecedented and well-funded turnout efforts by popular GOP Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, Democrats won control of the Virginia House of Delegates, ending the GOP majority, and held onto the Senate, giving them control of both chambers. Tuesday's results in Virginia are a sharp reversal from Youngkin's own election in 2021, when Republicans also won control of the House of Delegates. With a full statehouse majority, Democrats will have even greater leeway to thwart Youngkin's policy agenda, though they will have to work with him to advance their own.

- Republican Tara Durant won SD-27, located in the northern Shenandoah Valley. Durant overperformed the GOP's 2022 election day results in virtually every precinct.
- Incumbent Republican State Senator Siobhan Dunnavant lost to Democratic State Delegate Schuler VanValkenburg in SD-12, located in the northern Richmond suburbs.
- In open SD-31, located in Northern Virginia, Democrat Russet Perry defeated Republican Juan Pablo Segura. Perry previously worked as a CIA officer and prosecutor with the Loudoun Commonwealth's Attorney's Office until 2021. This result will likely decide control of the chamber.

**New Jersey:** Many races are still early to call, but Democrats flipped a seat in New Jersey's General Assembly in a deep-red district that has not elected a Democratic legislator in three decades. Democrats have picked up at least five state house seats, with several races still to be called. The state Senate will maintain a large Democratic majority and the General Assembly is expected to as well.

**Mississippi:** Both chambers in Mississippi easily maintain large Republican majorities. Many candidates ran uncontested and there were hardly any competitive races.

**Michigan:** Michigan Democrats currently enjoy a narrow trifecta with 56 seats in the state House to Republicans' 54 seats. However, two Democratic state representatives won local mayoral elections and will have to vacate their seats come January. This will temporarily bring the state House to a tie (54-54) until special elections can be held to fill their open seats, pausing the Democratic trifecta in the state for the time being.

**Massachusetts:** State Rep. Peter Durant (R) won a special election to fill a Senate vacancy for Worcester and Hampshire counties, flipping the seat to Republicans. Massachusetts Democrats maintain their trifecta and supermajorities.

**New Hampshire:** Democrat Paige Beauchemin (D) won an open seat in Hillsborough. Democrats now control 197 seats to Republicans' 198, with three independents and two vacancies. Future Republican control of the state House of Representatives will depend on the results of upcoming special elections.

# STATE SUPREME COURT

---

**Pennsylvania:** Democrat Daniel McCaffery defeated Republican Carolyn Carluccio to win a spot on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. With this victory, Democrats have added to their majority on the seven-member court. More than \$17 million was spent on the race, as billionaires, labor unions, and trial lawyers sought to sway the outcome. Like many other races last night, McCaffery's campaign was supported by state and national abortion access groups that spent millions on advertising and grassroots efforts.

# STATE REFERENDUMS / BALLOT MEASURES

---

## Colorado

- Referendum to retain and spend revenue the state received from increased taxes on tobacco and nicotine products and dedicate the revenue to fund preschool programs received approval of two-third of voters.
- Prop HH, a sweeping proposal to overhaul the state's tax system, was decisively rejected by voters. The proposal was widely advertised as a way to cut property taxes, but it also came with significant changes to how the state collects, spends, and refunds general tax money for years to come. The measure's defeat is a blow to state Democrats because it leaves them without an answer to next year's property tax increases.

## Maine

- Voters approved five of the eight ballot measures including one prohibiting foreign governments from spending money to influence elections and another establishing an automotive 'Right to Repair'. Maine is now the second state in the country with an automotive 'Right to Repair' after Massachusetts.
- Voters rejected a controversial measure to create a publicly-owned utility.

## Ohio

- Ohio residents voted to protect abortion access in their constitution and became the 24th state to legalize recreational marijuana use.

## Texas

- Texas voters approved all but one of more than a dozen constitutional amendments, including a massive property tax package and a pension boost for retired teachers. Voters also approved creation of a state broadband infrastructure fund.

## SPOTLIGHT

**Suffolk County, NY:** Ed Romaine became the first Republican to win the Suffolk County Executive seat in 20 years. In this race, Romaine's platform focused on an anti-crime agenda. This race showed Republicans can win former Democratic strongholds by focusing on crime.

## MAYORS

**Philadelphia, PA:** Democrat Cherelle Parker won the open race. She will be the first female chief executive in the city's history.

**Orlando, FL:** Incumbent Democratic Mayor Buddy Dyer was re-elected.

**Columbus, OH:** Democratic incumbent Andrew Ginther was re-elected to a third term. Ginther is slated to become President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2024.

**Charleston, SC:** Incumbent Democratic Mayor John Tecklenburg will go to a runoff in two weeks against former Republican State Representative William Cogswell. Tecklenburg has been mayor since 2016 and twice won in runoff elections.

**Indianapolis, IN:** Democratic incumbent Joe Hogsett was re-elected to a third term. Hogsett is now the first Indianapolis mayor in the past four decades to be reelected to a third term.

**Des Moines, IA:** Connie Boesen will follow Frank Cownie as Des Moines mayor. Cownie is the longest serving mayor of Des Moines.

**Houston, TX:** This closely watched mayoral race is headed to a runoff on December 9. Democratic State Senator John Whitmire will face Democratic Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. The two frontrunners are to succeed Mayor Sylvester Turner. Whitmire was elected to the Texas Senate in 1982 and is its longest-serving member. Jackson Lee has served in the U.S. House since 1995. Polls in the race identified fighting crime as a top priority.

**Manchester, NH:** Republican Jay Ruais flipped the Democratic-held seat in the state's largest city.





# BGR | GROUP

CONTACT US

---

## **WASHINGTON LOCATION**

HOMER BUILDING  
601 13TH ST. NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005  
202.333.4936  
[WWW.BGRDC.COM](http://WWW.BGRDC.COM)

## **AUSTIN LOCATION**

THE SMITH HOUSE  
502 WEST 13TH STREET  
AUSTIN, TX 78701  
512.994.7433  
[WWW.BGRDC.COM](http://WWW.BGRDC.COM)

## **LONDON LOCATION**

126 NEW KING'S RD  
OFFICE S203  
SW6 4LZ FULHAM, LONDON  
[WWW.BGRDC.COM](http://WWW.BGRDC.COM)