

Democrats profit from midterm elections

Democrats wrested governorships from the GOP in Texas, Florida and four other states on Tuesday in midterm elections that sealed a season of Republican disappointment. Democrats also expanded their dominion of Congress in returns that heavily favored the incumbents despite widespread voter discontent.

North Carolina GOP Sen. Jesse Helms won re-election in the most closely watched Senate race of 34 on the ballot.

Upsets were few and far between, despite stirrings of voter discontent. House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich was in a Georgia deadlock and Democratic Sen. Bill Bradley was pressed before winning a dramatic reelection in New Jersey.

Democrats elected Ann Richards as governor of Texas and Lawton Chiles in Florida, giving them the last word in redistricting that will add House seats to both Sunbelt states for the next decade.

Republicans looked to Pete Wilson to hold the California governorship in his race against Dianne Feinstein.

Democrats easily renewed their majority in the Senate, and in the House as well, where they aimed to improve their 259-176 majority.

The GOP got good news in Ohio, where George Voinovich won a Democratic governorship, and in Connecticut where Gary Franks became the first black House Republican since 1935.

Sen. Lowell Weicker vexed the GOP again, this time as an outsider, with an independent

victory for governor of Connecticut. Republican Gov. Kay Orr was trailing, barely, in Nebraska.

Vermont sent Socialist Bernie Sanders to the House — in place of a Republican. But former GOP Gov. Richard Snelling won his old job back, and with it, the statehouse for his party.

Hours after the polls closed, there was no shortage of close statehouse races:

- John Engler led Democratic Gov. James Blanchard in a Michigan surprise.

- Republican William Weld moved to a small lead over John Silber as Massachusetts picked a successor to Michael Dukakis.

- GOP Gov. John McKernan clung to a lead over former Gov. Joseph Brennan in Maine.

- Illinois GOP Secretary of State Jim Edgar led Neil Hartigan narrowly in Illinois.

- Democrat Rudy Perpich trailed Arne Carlson in a tough Minnesota race marked by Republican turmoil. Carlson was on the ballot only because Jon Grunseth dropped out in late October over allegations of sexual improprieties.

Helms bested Harvey Gantt in his marquee race for reelection in a contest that pitted one of the nation's best known conservatives against a former black mayor.

"I'm sorry I'm so late," he told supporters, "but I've been home watching the grieving face of Dan Rafter . . . The liberal politicians and editors and commentators and columnists have struck out again."

"I couldn't feel better. Both Republicans and Democrats ran against Bush."

Brown Democratic national chairman

Democrats took aim at Rudy Boschwitz in Minnesota in hopes of padding their current 55-45 majority. Paul Wellstone held a small lead.

Appointed Democratic Sen. Dan Akaka won re-election in Hawaii, dashing Republican hopes of a takeover.

Bob Smith in New Hampshire, Hank Brown in Colorado and Larry Craig held open Senate seats for the GOP.

Alabama GOP Gov. Guy Hunt won a close race for re-election.

The polls were still open in half the nation when the Democrats proclaimed victory and pointed the voters toward the 1992 presidential race.

"I couldn't feel better," said Ron Brown, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. "Both Republicans and Democrats ran against George Bush."

Spokesman Charles Black put the best face forward for the Republican National Committee, telling reporters, "It appears to be more of an anti-incumbent trend than a partisan trend." He called the midterm results "an anti-Congress trend rather than an anti-president trend,"

even though incumbent members were being re-elected at a substantial rate.

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo won in a possible prelude to a 1992 Democratic presidential campaign. Besides Bradley of New Jersey, two other potential challengers to President Bush won easy Senate re-election — Al Gore in Tennessee, Sam Nunn in Georgia.

Bush voted in his home state of Texas after an energetic yet awkward campaign for GOP candidates, then left for the White House to read the returns. Bush sparked a Republican rebellion when he broke his memorable 1988 campaign pledge and embraced an October deficit-reduction plan that raised tax rates.

All in all, the first election of the 1990s came at a time of extraordinary volatility — with the nation on the verge of recession and on the edge of war in the Persian Gulf. Other issues emerged in scattered races — abortion, crime, the savings and loan crisis and ethics scandals among them.

The pollsters agreed the voters were unhappy with the government and pessimistic about the economy, but that failed to translate into widespread anti-incumbency.

GULF update

Baghdad pledges to release Japanese, European 'guests'

Iraq on Tuesday promised to free 108 hostages, none of them American, and insisted anew its foreign "guests" are well-treated, while Secretary of State James A. Baker III pressed U.S. allies about their willingness to go to war.

The Baghdad government was keeping an eye on Tuesday's midterm elections in the United States. It claimed any slippage in Republican support would reflect a lack of public support for President Bush's Persian Gulf policies.

"The American people will . . . ask him why he is sending their sons to be killed in the Arab desert, and he will reap the fruits of his mistake," said Iraqi Information Minister Latif Jassim.

In the latest hostage releases, Iraq's official news agency said 77 Japanese nationals would be freed in response to an appeal from former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone. It also said 20 Italians, five Swedes, two Germans, two Portuguese and two Australians would be allowed to leave.

It did not say when the captives would be freed, but some had already begun to assemble at a Baghdad hotel.

They were among thousands of foreigners trapped when Iraq invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2. Some had been held at strategic sites as "human shields" against attack.

Iraq has since freed hundreds of captives, but Western governments have expressed growing fears that Iraq's Saddam Hussein is successfully using the hostages to divide the alliance facing him.

Baker, meanwhile, was seeking to strengthen the anti-Iraq coalition. He is in the Mideast to assess support for stronger steps against Iraq, including a possible military strike.

He met Tuesday in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, but there was no immediate word on the outcome. Egypt has sent thousands of troops to join the multinational force assembled in the gulf.

U.S. troops make up the bulk of the force, which numbers about 300,000. The Pentagon said Tuesday the U.S. troop deployment in the region had reached 230,000 and was still growing.

In a sign of the escalating U.S. military commitment, the Marine Corps said it was calling up more than 600 reservists from eight states for combat roles. Up until now, the more than 34,000 reservists called to active duty have served in support roles.

Marked ballots, pulled levers: Americans show their disgust

Behind the flags and bunting and mechanized curtains, in schools and churches and government buildings, Americans voted Tuesday. Then, time and again, they declared disgust with the government they were electing.

"You have to kind of hold your nose and vote this time," said John Kirley, a semi-retired consultant voting in Dallas. His sentiments were widely shared by voters around the country.

From outward appearances, the election was another page from a civics textbook. Voters streamed into a Mennonite church gymnasium in Fresno, Calif., a recreation center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., a housing project lobby in Minneapolis, a school cafeteria in New York City.

They punched computer cards and pulled old-fashioned cranks. They participated in democracy.

But beneath the surface ran a disturbing streak of cynicism — about

the federal budget, about the U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf and, perhaps most sharply, about the dismal state of political campaigns.

In northern Michigan's rural Benzie County, people filed into the Benzonia Township Hall to cast their ballots, exchange some small talk and sample Township Clerk Pat Mead's orange twists and sticky buns.

Precinct worker Art Fleetwood kept up a running banter about Monday night's snow and this fall's bow hunting season for deer — anything but politics.

But when talk did turn to politics, the people of Benzie County were as disgusted as voters anywhere.

"Kick them all out!" one man said as he walked out the door.

"Start over!" his wife chimed in.

Family physician Bob Camp looked over the sample ballot posted on the wall.

"If there was a place on here for

"No one," I would have voted a straight ticket," he said. "I am thoroughly disgusted. I am more than that. I am one step beyond disgusted."

Turnout was heavy as usual at the Cape Canaveral Recreation Center, where nearly half the voters are retired. Many of the others are employed at the Kennedy Space Center or its offshoots in the aerospace industry.

The common theme: Throw the bums out.

"There's nothing right today, from the banks to the S&Ls to the war to the budget," grumbled real estate agent John Jones, 54. "I'm going to do what I can to change it."

Jones said he voted against the incumbents.

"It's the first time in my life I ever felt so strongly about it," he said.

These are the people who bothered to vote. For every one of them, there was at least one other qualified citizen who abandoned that right.

Militant Rabbi's murder elicits cries of revenge

NEW YORK - The assassination of militant Rabbi Meir Kahane by a gunman reportedly of Arab ancestry drew thousands of mourners to his funeral Tuesday against a backdrop of cries for vengeance and of "never again."

"There will be revenge. We believe in revenge," said Sol Margolis, president of Kach International, the U.S. arm of Kahane's extremist party, which advocates the ouster of Arabs from Israeli-held territory.

Kahane was gunned down Monday night while addressing a Zionist group at a Manhattan hotel. Police said Kahane was taking questions from the crowd when the gunman stopped 4 feet from him and fired a .357-caliber weapon.

The Israeli government appealed for peace as police and army reinforcements spread out in Israel and the occupied territories to head off revenge attacks. The deaths two Arabs on Tuesday were linked to Kahane's slaying.

Tens of thousands of people jammed a synagogue in Brooklyn and spilled onto a four-lane highway for the funeral of the 58-year-old Kahane. His

body was to be flown to Israel for burial today.

"It is possible for the heart to well up and cry for the horrible loss our nation has suffered," Rabbi Moshe Tendler of Yeshiva University said as thousands cheered outside Young Israel of Ocean Parkway Synagogue.

Rabbi Herbert Bomzer, a longtime friend and leader of the synagogue where the service was held, said Kahane was always welcome there. Many synagogues barred Kahane because he sanctioned violence.

"Rabbi Meir Kahane was a friend, a leader, a fighter, a writer, a thinker. He was a spokesman for the defense of Jews all around the world," Bomzer said.

The militant Jewish Defense League, founded by Kahane in 1968, has been linked by the FBI to various acts of violence, including a 1972 firebombing that killed one person and injured 13 others.

The loudest applause came when Bomzer proclaimed that Kahane "was a strident voice calling, 'Never Again,'" the slogan used by Kahane in reference to the Holocaust.

Gorbachev, Yeltsin set up conference

MOSCOW - In a move toward peace on the eve of the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Boris N. Yeltsin said Tuesday he and Mikhail S. Gorbachev have agreed to discuss their differences.

Yeltsin, the Russian president, declined to say who proposed the meeting scheduled for Sunday, but it was the Soviet president who approached Yeltsin to shake his hand after a holiday ceremony in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses.

"We just agreed with Gorbachev to meet on the 11th one-on-one," Yeltsin said. "There will be very many issues and it will be an important meeting," he said, declining to elaborate.

The meeting will be the first between the rival politicians since their attempt at reconciliation over economic reform broke down in late summer. The rift put Yeltsin's Russian Federation, the Soviet Union's largest republic, on a collision course with the central government.

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