



TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Justin Richards, RSLC Vice President, Political Affairs and Communications  
DATE: Friday, December 8, 2017  
RE: Jubilant Democrats Aren't Winning State-Level Elections that They Should

Lost in the Democrat catharsis of November 7 statewide wins in New Jersey and Virginia and its aftermath have been several notable Republican state-level wins.

With state legislative Republicans at all-time highs after the 2016 elections, the political goalposts have moved so far to the right, there should be plenty of opportunities for Democrats to proclaim momentum.

Instead, most recently it's Republicans flipping blue seats to red – two of them in the bluest states in the country.

In New Jersey, Republican Senator-Elect Chris Brown flipped a seat Democrats have held since before Obama's 2008 election. Obama won the district by more than 21 percent in 2012 and Hillary won it by double digits last year. In 2017, Brown over-performed the Republican candidate for Governor by more than 15 percent on the same ballot to win comfortably.

In Mississippi, conservative Neil Whaley flipped the seat of the former Democrat Minority Leader in a runoff election less than two weeks ago to expand the Republican supermajority.

Just this week, Republican Senator-Elect Dean Tran, flipped a seat in Massachusetts that had been Democrat-held since 1974. In fact, Democrats' narrowest margin of victory during that time was 18 percent. Both President Obama and Hillary Clinton carried the district in recent presidential elections. Tran will become the only Vietnamese-American in the Massachusetts legislature and marks the eleventh newly elected Republican state legislator this year identified through either the RSLC's Future Majority Project, which supports candidates from diverse communities like Tran, or our Right Women, Right Now initiative that supports new female Republican candidates for office.

And a final note on the Virginia House of Delegates, while Democrats gained seats, certified results have Republicans still holding the majority in a state Republicans have won one statewide office in since Obama's first inauguration. Even after at least \$13 million in liberal interest spending, three times what Democrat-affiliated groups collectively spent in the last gubernatorial cycle, Republicans hold three state legislative districts won by Hillary Clinton while Democrats hold only one district won by President Trump. Better candidates and better state legislative campaigns in districts won by Democrats at the top of the ticket are why Republicans still hold this blue state majority.

It's a competitive political environment, with millions in new liberal spending focused on the state level. Democrats could be winning these races comfortably, but lost in the celebration of winning statewide races in Hillary states are more historic Republican state legislative successes in districts that should be held by Democrats.