

# Republican Wave Could Get Even Bigger

BY LESLEY CLARK

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Republican victory wave might end up even larger by the time all the votes are counted.

Already Wednesday, Republicans seized control of the U.S. Senate with a minimum of 52 seats, added to their majority in the House of Representatives and picked up governorships in deep-blue Democratic states such as Illinois, Maryland and Massachusetts.

And with races in Alaska and Virginia still unsettled and a runoff in Louisiana in December, all seats now held by Democrats, Republicans could add to their new majority in the Senate.

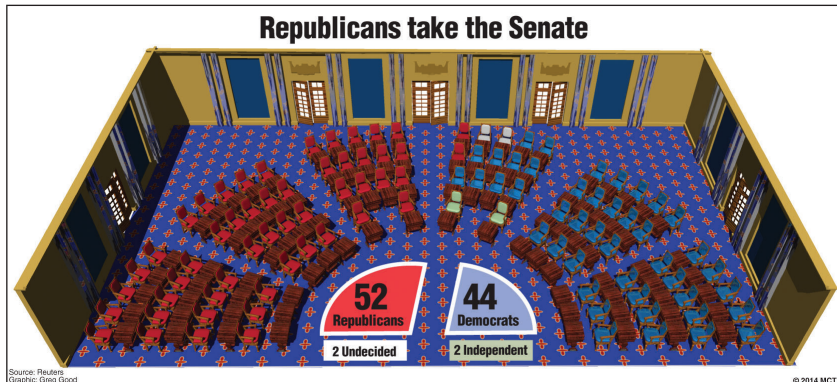
"The Republican Party is back with youth, with diversity, with women, and we've got a long way to go," said Rep. Greg Walden of Oregon, the House Republican campaign chairman, who called the gains "historic" and a referendum on President Barack Obama. "We're back to a majority as big as any of us have seen in our lifetime."

Republicans held all of their own Senate seats Tuesday night and swept Democratic-held Senate seats in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia, enough to gain the majority for the first time since 2007.

In Alaska, Republican Senate candidate Dan Sullivan by Wednesday had a sizable lead over incumbent Democratic Sen. Mark Begich. But with votes yet to be counted, Sullivan hadn't declared victory.

In Louisiana, Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu won a plurality of the vote in a multi-candidate field but fell short of the majority needed to win outright under that state's election rules. Now she faces Republican Rep. Bill Cassidy in a two-person runoff on Dec. 6, where polls suggest the Republican votes will coalesce and she will lose.

And in Virginia, the Senate contest remained undecided on Wednesday, with Democratic incumbent Sen. Mark Warner leading Republican Ed Gillespie, a former Republican National Committee chairman, by fewer than 14,000



votes out of more than 2 million cast. Gillespie had not yet conceded.

"There's no doubt it was a very rough night for Democrats," Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., told CNN. "Clearly, the country is frustrated with the gridlock in Congress. ... And yet somehow that obstruction on popular issues ricocheted onto the president, and we saw the results last night."

Democratic efforts to offset the Republican momentum with gains of their own failed. In the most visible contest, Sen. Mitch McConnell easily beat Democrat Alison Lundergan Grimes in Kentucky and will now become Senate majority leader.

Democrats had one bright spot: holding New Hampshire, where Sen. Jeanne Shaheen turned back a strong challenge from former Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown.

Republicans expanded their majority in the House, gaining at least 10 seats and looking for their biggest majority in nearly a century.

Democratic incumbents fell, including Reps. Nick Rahall of West Virginia and Joe Garcia of Florida.

In California, Carl DeMaio, one of two openly gay Republicans running competitive races for the House, had a narrow lead over Democratic Rep. Scott Peters.

And in Utah, Mia Love became the first Haitian-American and black woman to win a congressional seat for the Republicans.

Democrats gained just one seat from the Republicans, with Gwen Graham,

the daughter of former Sen. Bob Graham, ousting Republican Rep. Steve Southerland in a north Florida district.

Although there were still undecided contests, Republicans were on track to have their largest majority since they held 270 seats in the 71st Congress, between 1929 and 1930, House Speaker John Boehner's office said.

In gubernatorial races, Republicans captured Democratic-held governor's mansions in Arkansas, where Rep. Asa Hutchinson beat out Blue Dog Democrat Rep. Mike Ross; in Maryland, where Republican businessman Larry Hogan upset Democratic Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown; and in Massachusetts, where Republican Charlie Baker won against state Attorney General Martha Coakley, becoming the first Republican governor in Massachusetts since Mitt Romney held the job.

Republicans also took Obama's home state of Illinois, where Obama had campaigned in the waning days for Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, who lost to Republican Bruce Rauner.

Obama also campaigned for Wisconsin Democrat Mary Burke, who came up short against Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who won a second term in office.

In Colorado and Connecticut, Democratic gubernatorial incumbents John Hickenlooper and Dannel Malloy declared victory on Wednesday after close contests. Obama had campaigned for Malloy and called into a Hartford radio station on Tuesday to urge voters to turn out.

## Gay Marriage Ruling Means High Court Review Likely

BY DAN SEWELL

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The rush toward gay marriage across the U.S. hit a roadblock Thursday when a federal appeals court upheld laws against the practice in four states, creating a split in the legal system that increases the chances the Supreme Court will step in to decide the issue once and for all.

The cases decided were from Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Breaking ranks with other federal courts around the country, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 that states have the right to set rules for marriage and that changing a definition that dates to "the earliest days of human history" is better done through the political process, not the courts.

"Surely the people should receive some deference in deciding when the time is ripe to move from one picture of marriage to another," said Circuit Judge Jeffrey Sutton, writing for himself and a fellow George W. Bush appointee, while a Bill Clinton appointee dissented.

The ruling ran counter to a remarkably rapid string of victories for the gay rights movement over the past few months that have now made same-sex marriage legal in at least 30 states.

In fact, four other U.S. appeals courts in other regions of the country ruled in recent months that states cannot ban gay matrimony.

Cincinnati attorney Al

Gerhardstein, who represented gay plaintiffs in two of the cases, said he was disappointed and will appeal to the nation's highest court.

The president of pro-gay marriage group Freedom to Marry, Evan Wolfson, blasted the ruling as being "on the wrong side of history" and out of step with the courts and the majority of Americans.

"This anomalous ruling won't stand the test of time or appeal," he said in a statement.

In its ruling, the appeals court rejected one of the main arguments leveled against gay marriage, saying that same-sex couples are just as capable as heterosexual ones of effectively raising children.

Sutton also suggested that the same argument that says there is a constitutional right to gay marriage could be used in support of polygamy or some other combination.

"If it is constitutionally irrational to stand by the man-woman definition of marriage, it must be constitutionally irrational to stand by the monogamous definition of marriage," he wrote.

Attorneys could seek a review of the panel's decision by the full 6th Circuit. But because it is made up mostly of Republican-appointed judges, they will probably try to move the case straight to the Supreme Court, for a definitive ruling on whether gays have a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution to marry.

The dissenting judge

suggested that might have been the goal of Sutton and Judge Deborah Cook in their ruling.

"Because the correct result is so obvious, one is tempted to speculate that the majority has purposefully taken the contrary position to create the circuit split," Judge Martha Craig Daugherty wrote.

She said getting the case to the Supreme Court would put "an end to the uncertainty of status and the interstate chaos that the current discrepancy in state laws threaten."

In October, the Supreme Court surprisingly turned away appeals from five states seeking to uphold their same-sex marriage bans. The ruling had the effect of expanding gay marriage across the U.S.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg later explained that the lack of a split in the appeals courts made Supreme Court review of the issue unnecessary.

Thursday's ruling out of Cincinnati changes that dynamic.

The big question now is whether an appeal can be ready for the justices in time for consideration this term. Generally, the court would have to decide by mid-January whether to hear the case in time for a decision in June.

Otherwise, the case would be pushed back to the following term and probably not decided until June 2016.

The ruling followed more than 20 court victories for supporters of same-sex

marriage since the Supreme Court struck down part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act last year.

Michigan's and Kentucky's cases stemmed from rulings striking down each state's gay marriage ban. Ohio's two cases focused on the state's refusal to recognize out-of-state gay marriages because of its own ban, while Tennessee's was narrowly focused on the rights of three same-sex couples.

Greg Bourke, one of the Kentucky plaintiffs, called the ruling the "ultimate disappointment."

"We're definitely going to fight this, one way or the other," said Bourke, who married his partner, Michael DeLeon, in Canada.

Other plaintiffs include a Cincinnati man who wants his late husband listed as married on his death certificate so they can be buried next to each other in a family-only plot and a Tennessee couple who want to be listed on their newborn daughter's birth certificate.

The 9th Circuit, based in San Francisco, the 10th Circuit in Denver, the 4th Circuit in Richmond, Virginia, and the 7th Circuit in Chicago have all overturned statewide gay marriage bans in the South, the Midwest and the West since the summer.

Associated Press writers Mark Sherman in Washington, Brett Barrouquere in Louisville and Lisa Cornwell contributed.

## ISIS Suffering Setbacks In Iraq, Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — For a force that has built its reputation on an aura of momentum and invincibility, the Islamic State group is now dealing with a series of military setbacks in Iraq and a prolonged stalemate in the small Syrian border town of Kobani.

Gone are the days when IS was able to seize territory in both countries with relative ease. Its newfound problems, including a loss of oil revenue, raise questions about the extent to which it will be able to continue recruiting fighters who want to be with a winner.

"ISIS has run a very effective psychological campaign to intimidate its rivals and attract support and recruits," said Faysal Itani, a resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, using an acronym for the extremists. But now, he said, the need to maintain its reputation is limiting the group's options.

This is particularly true in Kobani, where a pre-emptive IS withdrawal in the face of U.S.-led bombings from the sky and ethnic Kurdish fighters on the ground could prove too costly.

"They have invested a lot in this battle, and people are noticing. They will soon start asking what's going on?" said Ayed, a Turkey-based Syrian activist who travels back and forth to the group's stronghold in the Syrian city of Raqqa. He declined to give his full name.

## Israel Tries To Defuse Jerusalem Tension

JERUSALEM (AP) — In an attempt at diplomatic damage control, Israel's prime minister reassured Jordan's king Thursday that he won't yield to increasing demands by some members of his center-right coalition to allow Jews to pray at a Muslim-run holy site in Jerusalem.

The phone call between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Abdullah II came a day after riot police clashed with Palestinians at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest shrine. Jordan, which is the custodian of the site, recalled its ambassador in protest.

Israeli-Palestinian confrontations have been escalating in Jerusalem, including near-daily clashes between stone-throwing Palestinians and Israeli riot police. Some of the attacks have turned deadly in recent weeks.

Underlying the tensions is long-running frustration among the city's 300,000 Palestinians with what many of them view as oppressive Israeli practices, such as restrictions on building, and a separation wall that cuts through Arab neighborhoods.

The unrest was triggered by Muslim fears of Jewish encroachment at the sacred site, a hilltop plateau known to Muslims as Haram as-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary, and to Jews as the Temple Mount. The complex houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the gold-topped Dome of the Rock. Jews also revere it as the location of their biblical temples and the most important site in Judaism.

## Boehner: Obama Playing With Matches

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a blunt post-election warning, House Speaker John Boehner cautioned President Barack Obama on Thursday against taking sweeping action on immigration without congressional approval, saying "when you play with matches you take the risk of burning yourself."

"And he's going to burn himself if he continues to go down this path," the Ohio Republican said at his first news conference after elections in which Republicans captured control of the Senate that meets in January and emerged with their largest majority in the House in at least 70 years.

Obama has said he intends to reduce deportations of immigrants who are working yet living illegally in the United States.

Boehner made his comments one day before he and the other congressional leaders head to the White House for a lunch meeting with Obama. Even before the new Congress convenes, the outgoing one is scheduled to meet next week to wrap up business left over from the past two years.

Sketching an early agenda for 2015, Boehner said the Congress that convenes in January hopes to pass legislation approving construction of the long-stalled Keystone XL pipeline planned to carry Canadian oil to the United States.

## U.S. Expands Airstrikes In Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — American aircraft bombed al-Qaida-linked militants in Syria on Thursday, and activists said another radical rebel group also was hit — an apparent expansion of the aerial campaign against the Islamic State group to target other extremists deemed a threat to the West.

Initial reports indicated a French militant the U.S. says was a top bomb-maker was hit and possibly killed in the attack.

The airstrikes near Syria's border with Turkey marked the second time the U.S. has targeted the Nusra Front, al-Qaida's Syrian franchise and a major player in the fight against President Bashar Assad.

Missiles also struck a compound of Ahrar al-Sham, one of the most prominent brigades fighting Assad in the country's 3 1/2-year civil war, activists and rebels said. It was the first time a group other than the Islamic State or Syria's al-Qaida affiliate was bombed by the U.S. since its operation began in September.

The strikes risk further alienating many in the opposition who view the two targeted groups as important allies in the fight against the Syrian regime, while leaving Assad untouched. It also could undermine Washington's already shaky plan to work with what it considers moderate rebels against Islamic extremists in Syria.

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