

## 2024 NC Election Update

*November 6, 2024*

As one of the principal political battlegrounds in the United States, North Carolina is no stranger to divisive campaigns, competitive races, and partisan tension. Presidential nominees visited the state several times throughout the campaign season, attempting to muster excitement from loyal supporters and win the favor of undecided voters. Additionally, North Carolina was the venue for some of the most intense state races in the country, including a \$96 million-plus gubernatorial race and a heated effort to sustain the Republican supermajority in both General Assembly chambers.

As background, state lawmakers approved new legislative and congressional district maps in October of last year, not surprisingly prompting four different lawsuits. However, no courts have halted the use of these maps.

Hurricane Helene and the flooding that ensued impacted the electoral infrastructure of much of Western North Carolina (WNC). In response, legislators included a provision in the Disaster Recovery Act of 2024 (House Bill 149) that granted county boards of elections certain flexibility to administer elections. This legislation allotted \$5 million to the State Board of Elections for voter assistance measures, allowing elections officials to designate alternative polling places and provide absentee ballot accommodations. The legislature also approved a local elections bill (Senate Bill 132) applicable to thirteen WNC counties to ensure that enough early voting sites would be available to voters in the impacted areas. Despite concerns that voter turnout would be low in counties impacted by the hurricane, early turnout in WNC was about two percent higher than the statewide average.

North Carolina voters continued the trend of choosing to cast their ballots prior to election day via in-person early voting or absentee ballots. The increase in the number of voters avoiding the polls on election day is attributable to several factors, including ease, voter enthusiasm, and additional hours for early voting that makes casting votes more accessible. More than 4.45 million North Carolinians cast their ballots prior to election day, far surpassing the previous early-voting record set in 2020. A total of 353,166 voters cast their ballots on October 17<sup>th</sup>, the first day of in-person early voting, setting another voter turnout record. Over 4.2 million people voted via in-person early voting and an additional 243,464 voted absentee. Combined, that's nearly 57% of the state's 7.8 million registered voters. In total, 5,667,689 North Carolinians cast ballots.

Another electoral trend is the rise of North Carolinians choosing to register as unaffiliated. Almost three million of the 7.8 million registered voters are unaffiliated voters, making independents the largest voter classification. The increase of voters registering as unaffiliated is likely due to partisan frustration, desire for anonymity, and political disinterest. The number of unaffiliated voters in North Carolina makes it particularly difficult to predict the outcome of state elections.

The 2024 election cycle has been the most expensive in North Carolina's history. In the race for Governor, Democratic candidate Josh Stein far outraised his opponent in the third quarter, with most of the money coming from Democratic party campaign contributions. Stein spent almost \$60 million from July to October, while Republican candidate Mark Robinson spent only \$9.9 million during the same period. Over the course of the election, Stein's campaign raised more than \$77 million, while Robinson raised roughly \$20 million, making it the most expensive

gubernatorial race in NC history. The race for Lieutenant Governor was also historically expensive with Democrat Rachel Hunt bringing in over \$3.4 million, the most a candidate for NC Lt. Governor has ever raised. Her Republican opponent Hal Weatherman raised less than half of that, bringing in about \$1.6 million. In another noteworthy race, Mo Green, the Democratic candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction, outraised Republican candidate Michele Morrow ten to one. The candidates for Attorney General raised almost \$25 million combined, with Democrat Jeff Jackson outraising Republican Dan Bishop by \$6 million. While Democrats had a fundraising advantage in major races, Republicans outraised their Democratic opponents by large margins in most Council of State races, including the race for State Auditor, Treasurer, and Commissioner of Agriculture.

A couple of key points about the results discussed in this newsletter. Election night results are always unofficial. Over the 10-day canvass period after election day, bipartisan election officials in all 100 counties audit the results and meet to consider additional eligible absentee ballots and provisional ballots. Any additional votes will be added to the dashboard over the 10-day canvass period. For local contests, the county boards of elections will certify results on November 15th. For all other contests, the State Board of Elections will certify final results on November 26th. The State Board anticipates that the unofficial results reported on election night will include about 98 percent of all ballots cast in the election.

### **Presidential**

Poll numbers depicted a nearly fifty-fifty race just days before the general election, but former President Trump was able to secure a win in North Carolina, taking the state 50.95% to 47.56% over Vice President Harris.

### **U.S. House**

Election results for North Carolina's U.S. House races are below with winners in the column on the left.

NC-1	<b>Don Davis (D)*</b>	Laurie Buckhout (R)
NC-2	<b>Deborah Ross (D)*</b>	Alan Swain (R)
NC-3	<b>Greg Murphy (R)*</b>	Gheorghe Cormos (LIB)
NC-4	<b>Valerie P. Foushee (D)*</b>	Eric Blankenburg (R)
NC-5	<b>Virginia Foxx (R)*</b>	Chuck Hubbard (D)
NC-6	<b>Addison McDowell (R)</b>	N/A
NC-7	<b>David Rouzer (R)*</b>	Marlando D. Pridgen (D)
NC-8	<b>Mark Harris (R)</b>	Justin E. Dues (D)
NC-9	<b>Richard Hudson (R)*</b>	Nigel William Bristow (D)
NC-10	<b>Pat Harrigan (R)</b>	Ralph R. Scott, JR. (D)
NC-11	<b>Chuck Edwards (R)*</b>	Caleb Rudow (D)
NC-12	<b>Alma S. Adams (D)*</b>	Addul Ali (R)
NC-13	<b>Brad Knott (R)</b>	Frank Pierce (D)
NC-14	<b>Tim Moore (R)</b>	Pam Genant (D)

\*Incumbent

The State of North Carolina is designated 14 seats in the US House of Representatives, which are now comprised of ten Republicans and four Democrats. In the only competitive Congressional race in North Carolina, incumbent candidate Don Davis, a Democrat from Snow Hill, bested the Republican candidate, Laurie Buckhout (49.5% - 47.9%) for the State's First Congressional District. Congressman Don Davis is an Air Force veteran, an educator, and a

minister. Davis began his political career as the Mayor of Snow Hill before serving six terms in the North Carolina State Senate. Davis was first elected to the US House of Representatives in 2022. Buckhout is a retired Army Colonel and founder of Covus Consulting, an electronic warfare strategic consulting group.

Five new members were elected to serve on Capitol Hill: Tim Moore, Addison McDowell, Mark Harris, Pat Harrigan and Brad Knott. Tim Moore, a Republican from Kings Mountain, has served eleven terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives, the last five of which he has presided as Speaker of the House. First-time candidate Addison McDowell is a health insurance lobbyist from Davidson County. Mark Harris is a minister from Winston-Salem who previously served in the US House. Pat Harrigan is an Afghanistan Special Forces veteran and co-founder of ZRO Delta, a combat weapons manufacturing company based in Western NC. Lastly, Brad Knott is a Raleigh native who formerly worked as a federal prosecutor before deciding to run for Congress. Each of the new members received an endorsement from Republican President Donald Trump prior to the election.

### **Gubernatorial**

Attorney General Josh Stein, a Chapel Hill native and former State Senator, was the landslide winner in yesterday's Gubernatorial race (54.8 % – 40.2%). Due to term limits, current Democratic Governor Roy Cooper was ineligible to run for an additional term thus creating an open seat. Stein received the Democratic Party nomination in the primary election earlier this year. Stein faced Republican Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson, a former factory worker who gained media attention in 2018 for a speech he made to the Greensboro City Council in support of gun rights. He was elected Lieutenant Governor in 2020. Robinson attracted a storm of controversy after CNN linked him to a batch of distasteful comments made in an online chat room. Robinson refused to step out of the race despite other North Carolina Republicans urging him to bow out.

### **Lieutenant Governor**

Democrat Rachel Hunt defeated Republican Hal Weatherman in the race for Lieutenant Governor (49.4% - 47.8%). The Lieutenant Governor presides over the state Senate, chairs several state commissions, and is generally seen as a presumptive candidate for higher office in the future. Rachel Hunt is a current state Senator and the daughter of Jim Hunt, a former four-term Governor. Hal Weatherman serves as the President of the Electoral Education Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing election integrity. Additionally, he served as the Chief of Staff to former Lt. Governor Dan Forest as well as former US Representative Sue Myrick.

### **Attorney General**

In yesterday's race for Attorney General former State Senator Jeff Jackson, who currently represents NC's 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional House District, squared off against Dan Bishop, a former State Representative and State Senator who currently represents NC's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional House District. Jackson, a member of the Army National Guard who gained popularity after he began posting videos explaining government proceedings on the social media app TikTok, prevailed 51.3%– 48.7%. North Carolina's Attorney General is responsible for representing the State's government agencies in legal matters and providing legal opinions to the State legislature.

### **Council of State**

The Council of State is comprised of the ten statewide elected officials and includes the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, Superintendent of Public

Instruction, Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor and Commissioner of Insurance. All ten were on the ballot.

In one of the more controversial races for a Council of State seat, Democrat Mo Green defeated Republican Michele Morrow (51.1% - 48.9%). The Superintendent of Public Instruction is responsible for overseeing public schools in North Carolina, and Morrow defeated incumbent Cathy Truitt in the Republican primary earlier this year. However, despite her proclaimed dedication to fulfilling the duties of the position, Morrow has made several contentious remarks calling for violence against Democrats and referencing conspiratorial sentiments. Mo Green is a Duke Law graduate and has served as the Superintendent of Guilford County Schools for more than seven years.

There were seven open seats on the Council in yesterday's election: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Auditor, State Treasurer, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Attorney General, and Commissioner of Labor.

Election results for North Carolina's Council of State races are below with winners in the column on the left.

Governor	<b>Josh Stein (D)</b>	Mark Robinson (R)
Lieutenant Governor	<b>Rachel Hunt (D)</b>	Hal Weatherman (R)
Secretary of State	<b>Elaine Marshall (D)*</b>	Chad Brown (R)
State Auditor	<b>Dave Boliek (R)</b>	Jessica Holmes (D)
State Treasurer	<b>Brad Briner (R)</b>	Wesley Harris (D)
Superintendent of Public Instruction	<b>Maurice (Mo) Green (D)</b>	Michele Morrow (R)
Attorney General	<b>Jeff Jackson (D)</b>	Dan Bishop (R)
Commissioner of Agriculture	<b>Steve Troxler (R)*</b>	Sarah Taber (D)
Commissioner of Labor	<b>Luke Farley (R)</b>	Braxton Winston II (D)
Commissioner of Insurance	<b>Mike Causey (R)*</b>	Natasha Marcus (D)

\*Incumbent

### **State Senate**

Pending the canvases and potential recounts, Senate Republicans appeared to have won three of the five most competitive races in the upper chamber and in so doing netted a one seat gain to stretch their super majority to 31-19. Incumbent Republican Michael Lee defeated David Hill for the District 7 seat in New Hanover County. Senator Lee is a real estate attorney who has served four terms. Republican State Senator and farmer Lisa Barnes defeated Democrat challenger James Mercer to keep her seat in eastern North Carolina's District 11. Democrat incumbent Lisa Grafstein, a disability rights lawyer from Wake County, bested Republican challenger Scott Lassiter, a public-school vice principal from Apex, for the District 13 seat. The race for the open seat in District 18, comprised of northern Wake County and Granville County, was claimed by Republican Ashlee Adams. She is a Wake Forest native who is a nurse and small business owner. She prevailed by a mere 38 votes over State House member Terence Everitt. Because the margin is below 1% of the total votes cast, Everitt has the right to request a recount. Lastly, Democrat and small business owner Woodson Bradley earned Mecklenburg's open seat in District 42 by narrowly defeating Stacie McGinn by 27 votes. Again, McGinn has the option of requesting a recount.

Here is an overview of the most significant races:

Competitive Seats:

Senate District 7

**Michael Lee (R)\* - 52.4%**

David Hill (D) – 43.6%

Senate District 11

**Lisa Stone Barnes (R)\*- 51.35%**

James Mercer (D) – 48.65%

Senate District 13

Scott Lassiter (R) – 46.8%

**Lisa Grafstein (D)\*- 50.3%**

Open Seats:

Senate District 18

**Ashlee Bryan Adams (R) – 48.4%**

Terence Everitt (D) – 48.1%

Senate District 42

Stacie McGinn (R) – 49.99%

**Woodson Bradley (D) – 50.01%**

\*Incumbent

**State House**

With a similar caveat about pending canvases and potential recounts, House Democrats appeared to have netted one seat, which means they have broken the Republicans' super majority in that chamber. Perhaps the most watched race in the House was in District 105, where Republican incumbent Tricia Cotham, a former lobbyist and six-term legislator, beat Democrat Nicole Sidman, an attorney who serves as the Congregational Life Director of a Charlotte-based reform congregation. Representative Cotham, a former Democrat, shook up State politics when she switched parties in 2023, giving Republicans a veto-proof supermajority. Cotham's margin of victory was 275 votes, allowing Sidman to request a recount if she so chooses. Other incumbents were not as fortunate, as Republican Ken Fontenot was defeated by Democrat and Wilson native Dante Pittman in District 24. In District 32, Republican incumbent Frank Sossamon appears to have been unseated by Democrat Bryan Cohn, who serves on the Oxford Board of Commissioners. This race is within the one percent range allowing Sossamon to request a recount. Lastly, Democrat Diamond Staton-Williams was bested by Jonathan Almond, a controller with a management company in Cabarrus County.

Here is an overview of the most significant races:

Competitive Seats:

House District 5

**Bill Ward (R)\*- 55.0%**

Howard Hunter III (D) – 44.95

House District 24

Ken Fontenot (R)\*- 48.95%

**Dante Pittman (D) – 51.05%**

House District 25

**Allen Chesser (R)\* - 48.9%**

Lorenza M. Wilkins (D) – 47.8%

House District 32

Frank Sossamon (R)\* - 48.5%

**Bryan Cohn (D) – 48.9%**

House District 37

**Erin Paré (R)\*- 51.5%**

Safiyah Jackson (D) 45.2%

House District 48

Ralph Carter (R) – 48.15%

**Garland E. Pierce (D)\*- 51.85%**

House District 73

**Jonathan Almond (R) – 53.35%**

Diamond Staton-Williams (D) – 46.65%

House District 105

**Tricia Ann Cotham (R)\*- 50.3%**

Nicole Sidman (D) – 49.74%

House District 115

Ruth Smith (R) – 48.6%

**Lindsey Prather (D)\*- 51.4%**Open Seats:

House District 35

**Mike Schietzelt (R) – 50.4%**

Evonne S. Hopkins (D) - 47%

House District 98

Melinda Bales (R) – 47.9%

**Beth Gardner Helfrich (D) – 52.1%**

\*Incumbent

**Judicial Races**

One seat on the North Carolina Supreme Court and three seats on the North Carolina Court of Appeals were on the ballot yesterday. Republicans appeared to have prevailed in all four races, netting a one seat gain on the Court of Appeals and a one seat gain on the Supreme Court. The NC Court of Appeals will now be made up of twelve Republicans and three Democrats. In the closest judicial race, Democrat incumbent Justice Allison Riggs was trailing Republican Jefferson G. Griffin by just under 10,000 votes. As discussed above, the results won't be official until the canvass is concluded and a possible recount conducted. But if this result stands, the NC Supreme Court will be comprised of six Republicans and one Democrat.



Election results for all of North Carolina's appellate court races are below with the winners in the column on the left.

NC Supreme Court Associate Justice Seat 6	<b>Jefferson G. Griffin (R)</b>	Allison Riggs (D)*
NC Court of Appeals Judge Seat 12	<b>Tom Murray (R)</b>	Carolyn Jennings Thompson (D)*
NC Court of Appeals Judge Seat 14	<b>Valerie Zachary (R)*</b>	Ed Eldred (D)
NC Court of Appeals Judge Seat 15	<b>Chris Freeman (R)</b>	Martin E. Moore (D)

\*Incumbent

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