The 2013 legislative sessions in the Midwest will begin soon with hundreds of new lawmakers taking office, but with a balance of power between the two major political parties that remains largely unchanged.

In 10 of the region’s 11 states, partisan control is the same as it was following the 2010 elections, with the lone exception being Minnesota, where Democrats picked up 21 legislative seats and majorities in the House and Senate.

Minnesota and Illinois are the only Midwestern states where Democrats have full partisan control of government. For the most part, the GOP was able to hold on to its big election gains of 2010, when the party had a net seat gain in legislative seats of nearly 200 (see line graph). And it even built on those gains in Indiana, a state where, only a few years ago, the 100-member House was a near partisan split. Now, Republicans hold a 28-seat edge.

Overall, 15 of the 20 partisan legislative chambers in this region are controlled by Republicans. One consequence of the 2010 wave election was that the GOP controlled the redistricting process in most of the Midwest, a lever of power that political analysts say helped the party maintain its hefty partisan seat advantage by protecting vulnerable seats and incumbents.

This year’s election results in Kansas and Minnesota provide another example of the power of redistricting. In those two states, judges, rather than legislators, drew the new political boundaries. The result: New political maps that did not protect incumbents, that threw many current legislators into races against one another, and that ultimately contributed to a high rate of legislative turnover.

Kansas will have more new legislators in the upcoming year than any other Midwestern state (see table). A panel of federal judges drew the political maps in Kansas due to the Legislature’s inability to finalize a redistricting plan. Of the 125 districts in the state House, 23 had more than one incumbent and 25 seats were vacant, The Wichita Eagle reports.

In Minnesota, a five-member panel of state judges drew the new districts after the Republican-led Legislature and Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton could not agree on a redistricting plan. That state’s new map paired nearly 50 incumbents against one another.

Legislative turnover in Kansas and Minnesota will be 41.8 percent and 32.3 percent, respectively. Across the Midwest, about one in four state legislators in 2013 will be new to the position.
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