

The National Mood and the Seats in Play: Understanding the 2016 Gubernatorial Elections

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With a national anti-establishment mood and 12 gubernatorial elections—eight in states with a Democrat as sitting governor—the Republicans were optimistic that they would strengthen their hand as they headed into the November elections. Republicans already held 31 governorships to the Democrats’ 18—Alaska Gov. Bill Walker is an Independent—and with about half the gubernatorial elections considered competitive, Republicans had the potential to increase their control to 36 governors’ mansions. For their part, Democrats had a realistic chance to convert only a couple of Republican governorships to their party. Given the party’s win-loss potential, Republicans were optimistic, in a good position.

The Safe Races

Races in Delaware, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah and Washington were widely considered safe for the incumbent party.

Delaware

Popular Democratic incumbent Jack Markell was term-limited after fulfilling his second term in office. Former Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden, eldest son of former Vice President Joe Biden, was once considered a shoo-in to succeed Markell before a 2014 recurrence of brain cancer led him to stay out of the race. (Beau Biden died in May of 2015.)

U.S. Representative John Carney, a former Delaware lieutenant governor, ran unopposed in the Democratic gubernatorial primary campaign. Carney, a former aide to Joe Biden when Biden served in the U.S. Senate, had lost to Markell in a tight race in the 2008 Democratic primary for governor.

State Sen. Colin Bonini handily won nearly 70 percent of the vote in the Republican primary race against Lacey Lafferty, a retired state trooper who did not have electoral experience. Bonini recognized that he would have an uphill battle to beat Carney, but stated that he believed that “Delawar- eans deserve an election, not a coronation.”¹ Carney had a far easier time raising funds in a state where 60 percent of registered voters are Democrats, and had not had a Republican governor since Mike Castle served from 1985–1992. Carney was criticized for not staking out specific policy positions for much of the campaign, a tactic he could afford given his front-runner status.² Carney won the general election with 58 percent of the vote to Bonini’s 39 percent. The Libertarian and Green Party candidates each received under 2 percent of the vote.

North Dakota

Republican incumbent Jack Dalrymple announced he would not run for another term as governor, opening the seat up for a competitive Republican primary. North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem received his party’s endorsement at the Republican Party convention, but multimillionaire Doug Burgum challenged Stenehjem in the primary despite losing the party endorsement. Lifelong North Dakota resident Burgum had founded a software company, Great Plains Software, that was eventually purchased by Microsoft four years after it went public; Burgum subsequently worked as a Microsoft executive until 2007. Burgum was well known for his efforts to revitalize downtown Fargo as well as his ventures with several technology firms. Burgum and Stenehjem both spent over \$1 million in the primary campaign, but Burgum supplemented his campaign with his own contributions.³ An early supporter of Donald Trump, Burgum attacked Stenehjem as being a supporter of the Affordable Care Act and used his own and his donors’ campaign contributions to dominate the media. Burgum defeated Stenehjem in the Republican primary by a margin of 59 to 38 percent. Burgum received nearly \$1.6 million in contributions between declaring for governor in January 2016 and the general election in November.⁴

Republicans have held the governorship in North Dakota since 1993, and Republicans have held the governorship and both houses of the Legislature since 1995. After winning the Republican primary, Burgum had an easy road to a general election win over Democrat Marvin Nelson, a state representative who was unopposed for his party’s nomination.

Table A: Gubernatorial Elections: 1970–2016

Year	Number of races	Number of incumbent governors													
		Democratic winner		Eligible to run				Actually ran				Won		Lost	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	In primary	In general election
1970	35	22	63%	29	83%	24	83%	16	64%	8	36%	1 (a)	7 (b)		
1971	3	3	100	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1972	18	11	61	15	83	11	73	7	64	4	36	2 (c)	2 (d)		
1973	2	1	50	1	50	1	100	...	...	1	100	1 (e)	...
1974	35	27 (f)	77	29	83	22	76	17	77	5	24	1 (g)	4 (h)		
1975	3	3	100	2	66	2	100	2	100	...	...	...	...
1976	14	9	64	12	86	8	67	5	63	3	33	1 (i)	2 (j)		
1977	2	1	50	1	50	1	100	1	100	...	...	...	...
1978	36	21	58	29	81	23	79	16	70	7	30	2 (k)	5 (l)		
1979	3	2	67	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1980	13	6	46	12	92	12	100	7	58	5	42	2 (m)	3 (n)		
1981	2	1	50	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1982	36	27	75	33	92	25	76	19	76	6	24	1 (o)	5 (p)		
1983	3	3	100	1	33	1	100	...	...	1	100	1 (q)	...
1984	13	5	38	9	69	6	67	4	67	2	33	...	2 (r)		
1985	2	1	50	1	50	1	100	1	100	...	...	...	...
1986	36	19	53	24	67	18	75	15	83	3	18	1 (s)	2 (t)		
1987	3	3	100	2	67	1	50	...	...	1	100	1 (u)	...
1988	12	5	42	9	75	9	100	8	89	1	11	...	1 (v)		
1989	2	2	100	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1990	36	19 (w)	53	33	92	23	70	17	74	6	26	...	6 (x)		
1991	3	2	67	2	67	2	100	...	...	2	100	1 (y)	1 (z)
1992	12	8	67	9	75	4	44	4	100	...	...	...	...
1993	2	0	0	1	50	1	100	...	...	1	100	...	1 (aa)
1994	36	11 (bb)	31	30	83	23	77	17	74	6	26	2 (cc)	4 (dd)		
1995	3	1	33	2	67	1	50	1	100	...	...	...	...
1996	11	7	64	9	82	7	78	7	100	...	...	...	...
1997	2	0	0	1	50	1	100	1	100	...	...	...	...
1998	36	11 (ee)	31	27	75	25	93	23	92	2	8	...	2 (ff)		
1999	3	2	67	2	67	2	100	2	100	...	...	...	...
2000	11	8	73	7	88	6	86	5	83	1	17	...	1 (gg)		
2001	2	2	100	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2002	36	14	39	22	61	16	73	12	75	4	25	...	4 (hh)		
2003	4 (ii)	1	25	2	50	2	100	...	...	2	100	...	2 (jj)
2004	11	6	55	11	100	8	73	4	50	4	50	2 (kk)	2 (ll)		
2005	2	2	100	1	50	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2006	36	20	56	31	86	27	87	25	93	2	7	1 (mm)	1 (nn)		
2007	3	1	33	3	100	2	67	1	50	1	50	...	1 (oo)		
2008	11	7	64	9	82	8	89	8	100	...	...	...	...
2009	2	0	0	1	50	1	100	...	...	1	100	...	1 (pp)
2010	37	13	35	22	60	14	64	11	79	3	21	1 (qq)	2 (rr)		
2011	4	2	50	3	75	3	100	3	100	0	0	0	0		
2012	12	7	58	8	67	7	88	7	100	...	...	...	...
2013	2	1	50	1	50	1	50	1	100	0	0	0	0		
2014	36	13	36	31	86	29	81	25	86	4	14	1 (ss)	3 (tt)		
2015	3	1	33	1	33	1	33	1	33	0	0	0	0		
2016	12	6	50	9	75	5 (uu)	56	4	80	1	20	0	1 (uu)		
Totals	637	337		487		384		297		87		22	64		

Source: The Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States*, 2016 (Lexington, KY: The Council of State Governments, 2016), 148–149, updated.

Key:

- (a) Albert Brewer, D-Alabama.
- (b) Keith Miller, R-Alaska; Winthrop Rockefeller, R-Ark.; Claude Kirk, R-Fla.; Don Samuelson, R-Idaho; Norbert Tieman, R-Neb.; Dewey Bartlett, R-Okla.; Frank Farrar, R-S.D.
- (c) Walter Peterson, R-N.H.; Preston Smith, D-Texas.
- (d) Russell Peterson, R-Del.; Richard Ogilvie, R-Ill.
- (e) William Cahill, R-N.J.
- (f) One independent candidate won: James Longley of Maine.
- (g) David Hall, D-Okla.
- (h) John Vanderhoof, R-Colo.; Francis Sargent, R-Mass.; Malcolm Wilson, R-N.Y.; John Gilligan, D-Ohio.

- (i) Dan Walker, D-Ill.
- (j) Sherman Tribbitt, D-Del.; Christopher ‘Kit’ Bond, R-Mo.
- (k) Michael Dukakis, D-Mass.; Dolph Briscoe, D-Texas.
- (l) Robert F. Bennett, R-Kan.; Rudolph G. Perpich, D-Minn.; Meldrim Thompson, R-N.H.; Robert Straub, D-Ore.; Martin J. Schreiber, D-Wis.
- (m) Thomas L. Judge, D-Mont.; Dixy Lee Ray, D-Wash.
- (n) Bill Clinton, D-Ark.; Joseph P. Teasdale, D-Mo.; Arthur A. Link, D-N.D.
- (o) Edward J. King, D-Mass.
- (p) Frank D. White, R-Ark.; Charles Thone, R-Neb.; Robert F. List, R-Nev.; Hugh J. Gallen, D-N.H.; William P. Clements, R-Texas.
- (q) David Trean, R-La.

Footnotes are continued on the next page.

Table A: Gubernatorial Elections: 1970–2016, Footnotes Continued

- (r) Allen I. Olson, R-N.D.; John D. Spellman, R-Wash.
 (s) Bill Sheffield, D-Alaska.
 (t) Mark White, D-Texas; Anthony S. Earl, D-Wis.
 (u) Edwin Edwards, D-La.
 (v) Arch A. Moore, R-W. Va.
 (w) Two Independent candidates won: Walter Hickel (Alaska) and Lowell Weiker (Conn.). Both were former statewide Republican office holders.
 (x) Bob Martinez, R-Fla.; Mike Hayden, R-Kan.; James Blanchard, D-Mich.; Rudy Perpich, DFL-Minn.; Kay Orr, R-Neb.; Edward DiPrete, R-R.I.
 (y) Buddy Roemer, R-La.
 (z) Ray Mabus, D-Miss.
 (aa) James Florio, D-N.J.
 (bb) One Independent candidate won: Angus King of Maine.
 (cc) Bruce Sundlun, D-R.I.; Walter Dean Miller, R-S.D.
 (dd) James E. Folsom Jr., D-Ala.; Bruce King, D-N.M.; Mario Cuomo, D-N.Y.; Ann Richards, D-Texas.
 (ee) Two Independent candidates won: Angus King of Maine and Jesse Ventura of Minnesota.
 (ff) Fob James, R-Ala.; David Beasley, R-S.C.
 (gg) Cecil Underwood, R-W.Va.
 (hh) Don Siegelman, D-Ala.; Roy Barnes, D-Ga.; Jim Hodges, D-S.C.; and Scott McCallum, R-Wis.
 (ii) The California recall election and replacement vote of 2003 is included in the 2003 election totals and as a general election for the last column.
 (jj) Gray Davis, D-Calif.; Ronnie Musgrove, D-Miss.
 (kk) Bob Holden, D-Mo.; Olene Walker, R-Utah, lost in the primary convention.
 (ll) Joe Kernan, D-Ind.; Craig Benson, R-N.H.
 (mm) Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska.
 (nn) Robert Ehrlich, R-Md.
 (oo) Ernie Fletcher, R-Ky.
 (pp) Jon Corzine, D-N.J.
 (qq) Jim Gibbons, R-Nev.
 (rr) Chet Culver, D-Iowa; Ted Strickland, D-Ohio.
 (ss) Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii.
 (tt) Sean Parnell, R-Alaska; Pat Quinn, D-Illinois; Tom Corbett, R-Pennsylvania.
 (uu) Indiana governor Mike Pence, who withdrew from the gubernatorial race to run for vice president, is not counted as running.
 (vv) Pat McCrory, R-North Carolina.

Oregon

Oregon held a special election in 2016 to determine who would complete the last two years of former Gov. John Kitzhaber (D). Kitzhaber resigned in February 2015, shortly after beginning his fourth, and second consecutive term, following allegations of influence peddling tied to his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes. Kitzhaber's lieutenant governor, Kate Brown, became governor when Kitzhaber stepped down. By April 2016, she had raised more money for her 2016 campaign—over \$1.6 million—than any other candidate running for governor.⁵ Brown defeated five other candidates in the Democratic primary, winning nearly 84 percent of the vote. The next biggest vote getter in that primary was Julian Bell, a physician who took 7 percent of the vote. Bell had framed Brown as weak on environmental and climate change issues.⁶ As governor, Brown had signaled that she would consider repealing a recently passed clean fuels law as part of a deal to pass a transportation budget.⁷ Brown subsequently beat oncologist Bud Pearce in the general election with 50.6 percent of the vote. Pearce had defeated four other candidates in the Republican primary. Democrats have held the governorship in Oregon since 1983.

Utah

Gary Herbert, Utah's popular incumbent governor, had a surprise loss to Overstock.com chairman Jonathan Johnson at the Republican state party convention. Johnson's 55 to 45 percent win over Herbert was short of the 60 percent threshold he

needed to win the nomination, but it forced Herbert into a primary. Johnson attacked Herbert for raising taxes and supporting Utah's adoption of the Common Core education standards.⁸ Johnson also said he would sue the federal government for control of federal lands located in Utah. This libertarian orientation worked well with Republican delegates to the convention, who tend to be conservative Republican primary voters.⁹ In the primary, however, Herbert trounced Johnson, winning 72 to 28 percent.

The Democrats did not have a party primary for governor, as businessman Mike Weinholtz, beat former state Democratic party chair Vaughan Cook at the state party convention. Weinholtz is the former CEO of CHG Healthcare, the nation's largest physician staffing company, and largely self-funded his campaign.¹⁰ Though he had never run for public office, Weinholtz had served on the boards of the United Way of Salt Lake, the Salt Lake Chamber, the Women's Institute of Utah, and the Utah chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Herbert beat Weinholtz in the general election by 38 points. The last Democrat to serve as governor of Utah was Scott Matheson, who served from 1977–1985.

Washington

The state of Washington holds a single primary election for the office of governor. The top two vote getters in the primary—which since 2011 has been conducted entirely by mail—face off in the gen-

Table B: Total Cost of Gubernatorial Elections: 1977–2016 (in thousands of dollars)

Year	Number of races	Total campaign costs		Average cost per state (2016\$)
		Real \$	2016\$ (a)	
1977	2	\$12,312	\$48,749	\$24,374
1978	36 (a)	102,342	376,492	10,458
1979	3	32,744	108,274	36,091
1980	13	35,634	103,814	7,986
1981	2	24,648	65,056	32,528
1982	36	181,832	452,089	12,558
1983	3	39,996	96,396	32,132
1984	13	47,156	108,896	8,377
1985	2	18,859	42,066	21,033
1986	36	270,605	592,093	16,447
1987	3	40,212	84,946	28,315
1988	12 (b)	52,208	105,943	8,829
1989	2	47,902	92,761	46,380
1990	36	345,493	634,648	17,629
1991	3	34,564	60,923	20,308
1992	12	60,278	103,111	8,593
1993	2	36,195	60,129	30,065
1994	36	417,873	676,631	18,795
1995	3	35,693	56,218	18,739
1996	11 (c)	68,610	104,981	9,544
1997	2	44,823	67,017	33,509
1998	36	470,326	692,499	19,236
1999	3	16,276	23,450	7,817
2000	11	97,098	135,340	12,304
2001	3	70,400	95,439	31,813
2002	36	841,427	1,122,779	31,188
2003	4 (d)	69,939	91,229	22,807
2004	11	112,625	143,091	13,008
2005	2	131,996	162,241	81,121
2006	36	727,552	866,350	24,065
2007	3	93,803	108,581	36,194
2008	11	118,912	132,588	12,053
2009	2	92,911	103,929	51,965
2010	37 (e)	920,735	1,013,342	27,388
2011	4 (f)	45,934	49,015	12,254
2012 (g)	12 (h)	144,044	150,584	12,549
2013	2	84,746	87,315	43,657
2014	36	704,300	714,137	19,837
2015	3	48,764	49,386	16,462
2016 (g)	12	218,016	218,017	18,168

Sources: Thad Beyle, Jennifer M. Jensen and The Council of State Governments.

Key:

(a) The 1978 expenditure data are a particular problem as the two sources compiling data on this year's elections did so in differing ways that excluded some candidates. The result is that the numbers for 1978 under-represent the actual costs of these elections by some unknown amount. The sources are: Rhodes Cook and Stacy West, "1978 Advantage," *CQ Weekly Report*, (1979): 1757–1758, and *The Great Louisiana Spendathon* (Baton Rouge: Public Affairs Research Council, March 1980).

(b) As of the 1986 election, Arkansas switched to a four-year term for the governor, hence the drop from 13 to 12 for this off-year.

(c) As of the 1994 election, Rhode Island switched to a four-year term for the governor, hence the drop from 12 to 11 for this off-year.

(d) In 2003, there was a special recall and replacement election held in California in which voters elected to recall incumbent Gov. Gray Davis (D) from office and replace him with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R), hence the fourth election in this off-year instead of the normal three.

(e) In 2010, Utah held a special election to elect Gov. Gary Herbert (R) to the position which he had been appointed to in 2009. In 2009, then Lt. Gov. Herbert succeeded to the office of governor after Jon Huntsman (R) left to become U.S. ambassador to China. Under Utah law, voters must agree that a succeeding governor can hold the role until the next regularly scheduled election.

(f) In 2011, West Virginia held a special election to elect Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D) to the position he had been appointed to in 2010. Tomblin was appointed governor upon the resignation of Gov. Joe Manchin (D), who won a seat in the U.S. Senate. West Virginia law requires a special election must be held in the case of a gubernatorial succession.

(g) Does not include spending in the North Dakota election. The state requires candidate to report campaign contributions rather than expenditures.

(h) In 2012, Wisconsin held a special recall and replacement election focused on Gov. Scott Walker (R). Walker received 53 percent of the vote and was not recalled.

eral election, which is also conducted exclusively by mail. The primary ballot had 11 candidates, including four Democrats and three Republicans. The only candidates to crack four percent of the vote were Democrat Jay Inslee, the incumbent, and Republican Bill Bryant, who took 49 percent and 38 percent of the primary vote, respectively.

Inslee, a former congressman, had relatively low approval ratings for much of his term. He had won

his first gubernatorial election for an open seat in 2012 by a very close margin. Washington has had a Democratic governor ever since Booth Gardner took office in 1985, and as the 2016 campaign moved forward, Inslee secured a fairly consistent lead over Bryant, an international-trade consultant who had been elected Seattle port commissioner in 2007. Inslee beat Bryant in the general election 54 percent to 46 percent.

The Competitive Races

A year prior to the election, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Vermont and West Virginia had governors' races that were expected to be competitive. Two weeks before the election, *Governing* magazine labeled six of the 12 gubernatorial races toss-ups, with the seventh—Missouri—leaning Democratic.

Indiana

Incumbent governor Mike Pence, a Republican first elected in 2012, was expected to have a tough rematch against his 2012 Democratic opponent, former Indiana Speaker of the House John Gregg. Pence and Gregg were both endorsed as their party's candidate at their respective state political conventions, and each ran unopposed in the subsequent primary election, setting up this rematch for the general election. Pence's signing of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, seen by some as a law created to allow business owners to discriminate against gay and lesbian customers, drew anger from moderate and liberal voters as well as the business community.¹¹ His flip-flop to first support and then oppose a state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage—already illegal by Indiana statute—hurt him with social conservatives.¹² By focusing on conservative social issues, Pence left himself open to Gregg's claims that Pence was ignoring the real issues critical to Indiana voters, such as jobs and the economy. The race was tight when Pence was selected by Donald Trump as his vice-presidential running mate.

The Republican state committee selected Indiana Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb over two other candidates to replace Pence on the ballot for governor. Lieutenant governor only since March 2016, Holcomb had previously served on the staffs of prominent Hoosier officeholders, and had served as chair of the state Republican Party.¹³ He was running to succeed Dan Coats in the U.S. Senate, which would have been his first electoral win, when the slot to replace Pence as the Republican gubernatorial candidate became open. Though polls consistently showed Gregg with a modest lead over Holcomb, this traditionally Republican state gave Holcomb a 51-45 percent victory over Gregg.¹⁴

Missouri

A red state comfortable with electing Democrats to statewide office, and a state with an 80 percent white population still reeling from fallout of the 2014 Ferguson police shooting of an unarmed black

man, Michael Brown, Missouri saw an especially bitter gubernatorial race in 2016. Governor Jay Nixon was term-limited, leaving an open seat. As expected, Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster had no serious competition in the Democratic primary, where he far outspent his opponents. Early 2015 polls showed Koster with more support than two of the likely possibilities for the Republican nominee, state Auditor Tom Schweich and former Speaker of the House Catherine Hanaway.¹⁵ Schweich committed suicide in February 2015, and political newcomer and former Navy SEAL Eric Greitens beat Hanaway, businessman John Brunner and Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder in a divisive Republican primary filled with attack ads.

Koster, a conservative Democrat who until 2007 was a Republican, had 20 years of experience in public office and received a large number of political endorsements from newspapers and advocacy groups, including some accustomed to endorsing Republicans.¹⁶ Greitens, a combat veteran and former Rhodes Scholar—and a Democrat until shortly before the campaign—drew on his considerable media recognition as the founder of a charity to help veterans and author of several best-selling books that highlighted his background as a Navy SEAL. Both campaigns spent heavily in the primary and general elections, and the Republican Governors Association put substantial funding behind Greitens in the final weeks before the election. Greitens' Trump-like outsider status played well in Missouri, and in the days before the election, polls showed him edging past Koster. He took the governorship with a healthier margin than anyone expected, 51-46 percent, mirroring Donald Trump's surge.

Montana

Gov. Steve Bullock, a Democrat with strong approval ratings, had a tough re-election, as even popular Democrats have challenging races in a state that typically elects Republicans to statewide office. In the end Bullock pulled out a win with 50.25% of the vote.

Bullock and his Republican challenger, businessman Greg Gianforte, each had an opponent in the primary election, and each won his primary handily. The fact that one Democrat, a former state representative, and one Republican, the head of a county planning office, entered the gubernatorial primaries in March—very late entries to a campaign—can be explained by Montana election law.¹⁷ If a candidate runs unopposed in a primary, he or she must return

Table C: Cost of Gubernatorial Campaigns, Most Recent Elections, 2013–2016

State	Year	Winner	Point margin	Total campaign expenditures				
				All candidates (2016\$)	Cost per vote (2016\$)	Winner		
						Spent (2016\$)	Percent of all expenditures	Vote percent
Alabama.....	2014	R★	+27.26	\$8,101,963	\$6.86	\$6,864,330	84.7	63.6%
Alaska.....	2014	I★★★	+2.22	1,816,062	6.49	859,431	47.3	48.1
Arizona.....	2014	R#	+11.90	20,757,375	13.78	8,020,722	38.6	53.5
Arkansas.....	2014	R#	+12.96	16,173,184	19.05	5,965,327	36.9	55.5
California.....	2014	D★	+20.00	13,965,165	19.08	6,028,691	43.2	60.0
Colorado.....	2014	D★	+3.14	10,767,486	5.27	5,539,372	51.4	49.2
Connecticut.....	2014	D★	+2.82	17,128,066	15.68	6,829,490	39.9	51.4
Delaware.....	2016	D#	+19.15	1,379,300	3.24	1,067,285	77.4	58.3
Florida.....	2014	R★	+1.08	23,191,478	3.89	10,593,891	45.7	48.2
Georgia.....	2014	R★	+7.86	10,889,151	4.27	1,611,021	14.8	52.8
Hawaii.....	2014	D#	+12.30	9,301,434	25.39	2,057,994	22.1	49.0
Idaho.....	2014	R★	+15.35	6,688,053	6.79	2,173,870	32.5	54.9
Illinois.....	2014	R★	+3.92	103,865,334	28.55	66,339,869	63.9	50.3
Indiana.....	2016	R#	+5.95	42,458,412	15.61	14,539,658	34.2	51.4
Iowa.....	2014	R★	+21.80	10,663,721	9.44	8,697,434	81.6	59.0
Kansas.....	2014	R★	+3.70	7,221,127	8.30	2,300,297	31.9	49.8
Kentucky.....	2015	R#	+8.70	25,063,407	25.74	5,832,176	23.3	52.5
Louisiana.....	2015	D#	+12.2	19,868,858	17.24	8,790,047	44.2	56.1
Maine.....	2014	R★	+4.77	8,008,211	13.10	1,932,976	24.1	47.7
Maryland.....	2014	R#	+3.80	24,839,091	14.37	4,998,070	20.1	51.0
Massachusetts.....	2014	R#	+2.88	21,908,617	10.14	6,857,152	31.3	48.5
Michigan.....	2014	R★	+5.74	22,116,972	7.01	14,701,007	66.5	51.7
Minnesota.....	2014	D★	+5.56	5,527,324	2.80	3,082,384	55.8	50.1
Mississippi.....	2015	R★	+34.1	4,453,499	6.20	4,131,772	92.8	66.4
Missouri.....	2016	R#	+5.57	71,077,039	25.36	28,745,371	40.4	51.1
Montana.....	2016	D★	+3.89	11,847,646	23.26	3,275,761	27.6	50.2
Nebraska.....	2014	R#	+17.51	14,966,585	27.73	7,157,849	47.8	57.2
Nevada.....	2014	R★	+46.89	3,668,203	6.70	3,562,628	97.1	70.6
New Hampshire.....	2016	R#	+2.27	5,795,453	7.63	1,170,118	20.2	49.1
New Jersey.....	2013	R★	+22.1	27,859,691	13.14	20,421,221	73.3	60.3
New Mexico.....	2014	R★	+14.44	12,660,596	24.69	8,620,745	68.1	57.2
New York.....	2014	D★	+13.97	60,373,387	15.81	53,399,178	88.4	54.3
North Carolina.....	2016	D★★★	+0.22	39,788,555	8.45	24,289,915	61.0	49.0
North Dakota.....	2016	R#	+57.13	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	76.5
Ohio.....	2014	R★	+30.96	20,448,116	6.69	16,873,352	82.5	63.8
Oklahoma.....	2014	R★	+14.80	6,070,867	7.36	4,378,246	72.1	55.8
Oregon.....	2016	D★	+7.16	8,314,055	4.27	4,358,272	52.4	50.6
Pennsylvania.....	2014	D#	+9.86	76,947,697	22.00	31,802,129	41.3	54.9
Rhode Island.....	2014	D#	+4.50	13,677,396	42.20	6,372,214	46.6	40.7
South Carolina.....	2014	R★	+14.46	15,321,662	12.29	7,997,836	52.2	55.9
South Dakota.....	2014	R★	+45.04	1,883,551	6.79	1,527,068	81.1	70.5
Tennessee.....	2014	R★	+47.73	4,332,082	3.20	4,306,316	99.4	70.7
Texas.....	2014	R#	+20.32	80,086,481	16.97	50,151,561	62.6	59.2
Utah.....	2016	R★	+38.00	7,534,547	6.70	3,124,004	41.5	66.7
Vermont.....	2016	R#	+8.74	7,400,814	23.50	1,633,936	22.1	51.1
Virginia.....	2013	D#	+2.52	62,183,035	27.75	33,400,016	53.7	47.8
Washington.....	2016	D★	+8.76	13,890,465	4.28	9,949,579	71.6	54.4
West Virginia.....	2016	D#	+6.79	8,610,044	12.06	5,129,917	59.6	49.1
Wisconsin.....	2014	R★	+5.74	46,984,045	19.49	30,088,163	64.0	52.9
Wyoming.....	2014	R★	+31.52	4,175,783	24.87	635,460	15.2	52.5

Sources: Thad Beyle, Jennifer M. Jensen, Aaron Luedtke, Kelly Mayid and The Council of State Governments.

Key:

D — Democrat I — Independent R — Republican

— Open seat

★ — Incumbent ran and won.

★★ — Incumbent ran and lost in party primary.

★★★ — Incumbent ran and lost in general election.

(a) Data unavailable. North Dakota requires candidates to report campaign contributions of \$200 or more, rather than expenditures.

all funds raised for the primary campaign. Since contributors routinely donate the maximum allowed for both the primary and the general campaign, running unopposed leads to the return of substantial funds. For example, if Bullock had run unopposed, he would have had to return hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions.¹⁸

Gianforte, a Bozeman software entrepreneur who sold his company to Oracle, focused on jobs and the economy, and framed himself as a political reformer, while framing Bullock as a political insider—an attractive approach in a year with Donald Trump surging on the Republican presidential ticket. The race was a toss-up until the end.

New Hampshire

Gov. Maggie Hassan chose to run for the U.S. Senate rather than for a third term as governor, leaving an open seat for the 2016 election. Both the Democrats and the Republicans had competitive primary races for their party's gubernatorial nomination. In the Republican primary, state Rep. Frank Edelblut and Executive Councilor Chris Sununu won the lion's share of the vote among five contenders. The vote was close enough to qualify for a recount under New Hampshire law, but Edelblut—a businessman and relative newcomer to electoral politics who contributed \$750,000 to his campaign, though ultimately he did not spend that sum, conceded to Sununu, son of former governor and White House chief of staff John Sununu.¹⁹ In the Democratic primary, New Hampshire Executive Councilor Colin Van Ostern handily beat four other contenders.

The general election was a tight race throughout the campaign season. Though Sununu led most polls in the early stages of the general election campaign, Van Ostern maintained a small lead in most polls in October; he spent heavily on the race, ultimately outspending Sununu.²⁰ In the final days before the election, however, Sununu regained his lead, and won the election by a two percent margin. Aside from the typical election issues such as the economy, more state-specific issues such as the proposed Northern Pass project to run electricity transmission lines from Canada, the possibility of commuter rail from Boston to Nashua, and the opioid crisis—which hit New Hampshire particularly hard—dominated the election.²¹

North Carolina

North Carolina saw a bitter race between Gov. Pat McCrory, the Republican incumbent, and state Attorney General Roy Cooper, the Democrat.

Each had won his party's primary handily; Cooper ran against two candidates for the primary, winning well over 40 percent of the vote needed to avoid a runoff primary to earn the Democratic spot in the general election.

Though North Carolina tends to send Republicans to Congress, only three Republicans have been elected governor since 1901. The race between McCrory and Roy Cooper was heated. Considered one of the most hotly contested seats in the 2016 election, the race also took the national spotlight because of the visibility of the so-called “bathroom bill” issue that dominated the race. As governor, McCrory had signed legislation that prohibited localities from extending legal protections to cover sexual identity and gender identity, and that mandated transgender persons using public facilities must use the bathroom or locker room that matches the gender assigned to them at birth. The law drew national criticism and led to several boycotts of the state from major national associations. The National Basketball Association, National Collegiate Athletic Association, and Atlantic Coast Conference all moved tournaments out of the state following passage of the law.²²

The race remained neck-and-neck to the end, and became the most expensive gubernatorial contest in the state's history, with more than \$39.5 million spent by the two major party candidates. In addition, the Republican Governors Association, Democratic Governors Association, independent 527 groups, and others spent heavily on the race.²³ With fewer than 8,000 votes separating McCrory and Cooper on Nov 22, McCrory exercised his right to a recount.²⁴ McCrory conceded the race to Cooper on Dec. 5, when the recount was nearly completed and Cooper still maintained his lead.

Vermont

Democratic Gov. Peter Shumlin's decision not to run for a fourth two-year term left a seat open for a competitive race in a state that has elected both Democrats and Republicans to the governorship in recent years. Lt. Gov. Phil Scott, a former five-term state senator, beat Bruce Lismann, a political newcomer and former principal at Bear Stearns, in the Republican primary. Scott had been an early frontrunner in the Republican race; more than a year before the election, polling data showed that three-quarters of Vermonters had heard of Scott, and 70 percent of that group had favorable impressions of him.²⁵ Sue Minter, a former state representative and former head of the state trans-

Table D: Women Governors in the States

Governor	State	Year elected or succeeded to office	How woman became governor	Tenure of service	Previous offices held	Last elected position held before governorship
Phase I—From initial statehood to adoption of the 19th Amendment to U.S. Constitution (1920)						
No women elected or served as governor						
Phase II—Wives of former governors elected governor, 1924–1966						
Nellie Tayloe Ross (D)	Wyoming	1924	E	1/1925–1/1927	F	...
Miriam "Ma" Ferguson (D)	Texas	1924	E	1/1925–1/1927	F	...
				1/1933–1/1935		
Lurleen Wallace (D)	Alabama	1966	E	1/1967–5/1968	F	...
Phase III—Women who became governor on their own merit, 1970 to date						
Ella Grasso (D)	Connecticut	1974	E	1/1975–12/1980	SH, SOS, (a)	(a)
Dixy Lee Ray (D)	Washington	1976	E	1/1977–1/1981	(b)	...
Vesta M. Roy (R)	New Hampshire	1982	S (c)	12/1982–1/1983	(d)	(d)
Martha Layne Collins (D)	Kentucky	1983	E	12/1983–12/1987	(e), LG	LG
Madeleine M. Kunin (D)	Vermont	1984	E	1/1985–1/1991	SH, LG	LG
Kay A. Orr (R)	Nebraska	1986	E	1/1987–1/1991	T	T
Rose Mofford (D)	Arizona	1988	S (f)	4/1988–1/1991	SOS	SOS
Joan Finney (D)	Kansas	1990	E	1/1991–1/1995	T	T
Barbara Roberts (D)	Oregon	1990	E	1/1991–1/1995	(g), C, SH, SOS	SOS
Ann Richards (D)	Texas	1990	E	1/1991–1/1995	C, T	T
Christy Whitman (R)	New Jersey	1993	E	1/1994–1/2001	(h)	(h)
Jeanne Shaheen (D)	New Hampshire	1996	E	1/1997–1/2003	(d)	(d)
Jane Dee Hull (R)	Arizona	1997	S (i)	9/1997–1/2003	(j), SOS	SOS
Nancy P. Hollister (R)	Ohio	1998	S (k)	12/1998–1/1999	LG	LG
Ruth Ann Minner (D)	Delaware	2000	E	1/2001–1/2009	SH, SS, LG	LG
Judy Martz (R)	Montana	2000	E	1/2001–1/2005	LG	LG
Sila Calderón (Pop D)	Puerto Rico	2000	E	1/2001–1/2005	M	M
Jane Swift (R)	Massachusetts	2001	S (l)	4/2001–1/2003	SS, LG	LG
Janet Napolitano (D)	Arizona	2002	E	1/2003–1/2009	(m), AG	AG
Linda Lingle (R)	Hawaii	2002	E	12/2002–12/2010	C, M (n)	M
Kathleen Sebelius (D)	Kansas	2002	E	1/2003–4/2009	SH, (o)	(o)
Jennifer Granholm (D)	Michigan	2002	E	1/2003–1/2011	(p), AG	AG
Olene Walker (R)	Utah	2003	S (q)	11/2003–1/2005	SH, LG	LG
Kathleen Blanco (D)	Louisiana	2003	E	1/2004–1/2008	SH, LG	LG
M. Jodi Rell (R)	Connecticut	2004	S (r)	7/2004–1/2011	SH, LG	LG
Christine Gregoire (D)	Washington	2004	E	1/2005–1/2013	AG	AG
Sarah Palin (R)	Alaska	2006	E	1/2007–7/2009	M (s)	M
Beverly Perdue (D)	North Carolina	2008	E	1/2009–1/2013	SH, SS, LG	LG
Jan Brewer (R)	Arizona	2009	S (t)	1/2009–12/2014	C, SH, SS, SOS	SOS
Susana Martínez (R)	New Mexico	2010	E	1/2011–	(u)	(u)
Mary Fallin (R)	Oklahoma	2010	E	1/2011–	(a)	(a)
Nikki Haley (R)	South Carolina	2010	E	1/2011–1/2017	SH	SH
Maggie Wood Hassan (D)	New Hampshire	2012	E	1/2013–1/2017	SS	SS
Gina Raimondo (D)	Rhode Island	2014	E	1/2015–	ST	ST
Kate Brown (D)	Oregon	2015	S (v)	2/2015–	SH, SS, SOS	SOS
Kim Reynolds (R)	Iowa	2017	S	5/2017–	LG, SS	LG

Sources: National Governors Association website, www.nga.org, and individual state government websites.

Key:

S — Succeeded to office upon death, resignation or removal of the incumbent governor.

AG — Attorney general

M — Mayor

C — City council or

SH — State House member

county commission

E — Elected governor

SOS — Secretary of state

F — Former first lady

SS — State Senate member

LG — Lieutenant governor

T — State treasurer

(a) Congresswoman.

(b) Ray served on the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission from 1972 to 1975 and was chair of the AEC from 1973 to 1975.

(c) Roy as state Senate president succeeded to office upon the death of Gov. Hugh Gallen.

(d) State Senate president.

(e) State Supreme Court clerk.

(f) Mofford as secretary of state became acting governor in February 1988 and governor in April 1988 upon the impeachment and removal of Gov. Evan Mecham.

(g) Local school board member.

(h) Whitman was a former state utilities official.

(i) Hull as secretary of state became acting governor when Gov. Fife Symington resigned. Elected to full term in 1998.

(j) Speaker of the state House.

(k) Hollister as lieutenant governor became governor when Gov. George Voinovich stepped down to serve in the U.S. Senate.

(l) Swift as lieutenant governor succeeded Gov. Paul Cellucci who resigned after being appointed ambassador to Canada. Was the first governor to give birth while serving in office.

(m) U.S. attorney.

(n) Lingle was mayor of Maui for two terms, elected in 1990 and 1996.

(o) Insurance commissioner.

(p) Federal prosecutor.

(q) Walker as lieutenant governor succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Gov. Mike Leavitt in 2003.

(r) Rell as lieutenant governor succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Gov. John Rowland in 2004.

(s) Palin was a two-term Mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, and had unsuccessfully sought the lieutenant governor's office in 2002. In 2008, Palin was nominated to be the vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket with U.S. Sen. John McCain.

(t) Brewer as secretary of state succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Gov. Janet Napolitano in January 2009 after her confirmation as head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Brewer then won a full term in the 2010 election.

(u) District Attorney—Dona Ana County, N.M.

(v) Kate Brown as secretary of state succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Gov. John Kitzhaber in February 2015 after allegations of criminal wrongdoing involving the role his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes, held in his office.

Table E: 2013–2016 Governors’ Race Winners by Party and Margin

<i>Democratic winners</i>				<i>Republican winners</i>				<i>Independent winners</i>			
<i>State</i>	<i>Election Year</i>	<i>Percent of win</i>	<i>Point margin</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Election Year</i>	<i>Percent of win</i>	<i>Point margin</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Election Year</i>	<i>Percent of win</i>	<i>Point margin</i>
California	2014	59.8	+19.6	Alabama	2014	64.0	+28.0	Alaska.....	2014	48.1	+2.2
Colorado.....	2014	49.2	+3.4	Arizona.....	2014	53.5	+11.9				
Connecticut	2014	51.0	+3.0	Arkansas.....	2014	55.5	+13.0				
Delaware	2016	58.3	+19.15	Florida	2014	48.1	+1.0				
Hawaii.....	2014	49.0	+12.3	Georgia.....	2014	53.0	+8.0				
Louisiana.....	2015	56.1	+12.2	Idaho.....	2014	53.5	+14.9				
Minnesota.....	2014	49.8	+5.6	Illinois.....	2014	50.3	+3.9				
Montana	2016	50.2	+3.89	Indiana.....	2016	51.4	+5.95				
New York.....	2014	54.3	+14.0	Iowa	2014	59.0	+21.8				
North Carolina...	2016	49.0	+0.22	Kansas	2014	50.0	+4.0				
Oregon.....	2016	50.6	+7.16	Kentucky	2015	52.5	+8.7				
Pennsylvania	2014	54.9	+9.9	Maine.....	2014	48.0	+5.0				
Rhode Island.....	2014	40.7	+4.5	Maryland	2014	51.0	+3.8				
Virginia.....	2013	47.8	+2.5	Massachusetts ...	2014	48.5	+1.9				
Washington.....	2016	54.3	+8.76	Michigan.....	2014	52.2	+5.8				
West Virginia.....	2016	49.1	+6.79	Mississippi	2015	66.6	+34.5				
				Missouri.....	2016	51.1	+5.57				
				Nebraska	2014	57.2	+17.9				
				Nevada.....	2014	70.6	+46.7				
				New Hampshire...	2016	48.8	+2.27				
				New Jersey	2013	60.3	+22.1				
				New Mexico	2014	57.2	+14.5				
				North Dakota.....	2016	76.5	+57.13				
				Ohio	2014	63.6	+30.6				
				Oklahoma.....	2014	55.8	+14.8				
				South Carolina...	2014	55.9	+14.5				
				South Dakota.....	2014	70.5	+45.0				
				Tennessee	2014	70.3	+47.5				
				Texas.....	2014	59.2	+20.3				
				Utah.....	2016	66.7	+38.00				
				Vermont.....	2016	52.9	+8.74				
				Wisconsin	2014	52.3	+5.7				
				Wyoming	2014	62.6	+33.8				

Source: Thad Beyle and Jennifer M. Jensen.

portation agency, bested former Google executive Matt Dunne, former state Sen. Peter Galbraith, and two other minor candidates in the Democratic primary.

The same 2015 poll that captured Phil Scott’s broad name recognition found that only 38 percent of voters recognized Sue Minter’s name, and of those, nearly half did not have an opinion of her.²⁶ Scott and Minter ran neck-and-neck throughout the general election campaign. Campaign spending for the governor’s seat was three times what it was in 2010, the last time Vermont had an open seat gubernatorial election, although this is in part because Lisman and Galbraith spent heavily in their primary campaigns.²⁷ Lisman spent nearly \$2.3 million in his effort to win the Republican

primary. Spending by outside groups also pushed this figure higher. Among other groups, the Democratic Governors Association and Republican Governors Association 527 groups spent roughly \$3 million on the race.²⁸

The poll that mattered—the one on election day—was not close, with Scott taking nearly 53 percent of the vote to Minter’s 44 percent. Turnout was high, but Donald Trump received only 30 percent of the vote on the presidential ballot, so Scott was not riding on presidential coattails. Indeed, Scott had publicly condemned Donald Trump during the campaign.²⁹ For her part, Minter did not benefit from the state’s popular U.S. senator and Democratic presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders. Sanders neither endorsed nor campaigned for

Table F: New Governors Elected Each 4-Year Period, 1970–2016 (a)

Year	Number of gubernatorial elections	New Governors		Incumbents Running		
		Won	Percent	Number	Won	Percent
1970	35	19	54	24	16	66.7
1971	3	3	100	...	...	...
1972	18	11	61	11	7	63.6
1973	2	2	100	1	...	0.0
1974	35	18	51	22	17	77.3
1975	3	1	33	2	2	100.0
1976	14	9	64	8	5	62.5
1977	2	1	50	1	1	...
1978	36	20	56	23	16	69.5
1979	3	3	100	...	...	...
1980	13	6	46	12	7	58.3
1981	2	2	100	...	...	...
1982	36	17	47	25	19	76.0
1983	3	3	100	1	...	0.0
1984	13	9	69	6	4	66.7
1985	2	1	50	1	1	...
1986	36	21	58	18	15	83.3
1987	3	3	100	1	...	0.0
1988	12	4	33	9	8	88.9
1989	2	2	100	...	...	...
1990	36	19	53	23	17	74.0
1991	3	3	100	2	...	0.0
1992	12	8	67	4	4	100.0
1993	2	1	50	1	...	0.0
1994	36	19	53	23	17	74.0
1995	3	2	67	1	1	100.0
1996	11	4	36	7	7	100.0
1997	2	1	50	1	1	100.0
1998	36	13	36	25	23	92.0
1999	3	1	33	2	2	100.0
2000	11	6	55	6	5	83.3
2001	2	2	100	...	...	...
2002	36	24	67	16	12	75.0
2003 (b)	4	4	100	2	...	0.0
2004	11	7	64	8	4	50.0
2005	2	2	100	...	...	...
2006	36	9	25	27	25	92.6
2007	3	2	67	2	1	50.0
2008	11	3	24	8	8	100.0
2009	2	2	100	1	...	0.0
2010	37	26	70	14	11	78.6
2011	4	1	25	3	3	100.0
2012 (c)	12	5	42	7	7	100.0
2013	2	1	50	1	1	100.0
2014	36	10	28	29	26	89.6
2015	3	2	67	1	1	100.0
2016	12	8	67	5	4	80.0
Total	641	340	53	384	298	77.6

Source: Thad Beyle.

Key:

(a) Table A: Gubernatorial Elections: 1970–2010, *The Book of the States, 2011* (Lexington, KY: The Council of State Governments, 2011), 128.

(b) In 2003, there was a recall and replacement election vote in California in which the incumbent Gov. Gray Davis (D) was recalled and Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected as his replacement.

(c) In June 2012, a recall and replacement election was held in Wisconsin. Gov. Scott Walker (R) won 53 percent of the votes cast and was not recalled.

Minter, a moderate Democrat. Minter was also hurt by advertising by outside organizations that linked her with the unpopular outgoing governor. Scott, who supported abortion rights and LGBT rights, including allowing transgender people to use the bathrooms of their choice, picked up most of the votes from political independents and was rewarded with an unexpectedly strong victory.

West Virginia

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin was term-limited, leaving an open seat in a state that has had a Democratic governor, a Democratic Senate and a Democratic House of Delegates for most of the last 25 years. A Republican has served as governor only once since 1992 (Cecil Underwood, a Republican who had served as governor from 1957 to 1961, served again from 1997 to 2001). Both houses of the state's Democratically-controlled Legislature went Republican in the 2014 election, something that had not happened in West Virginia since the 1930s. This turn, coupled with the national mood, led West Virginia's gubernatorial election to be one of the most closely watched statewide races in the country. In the end, Democrat Jim Justice earned a solid win over Republican Bill Cole in the general election. Justice had left the Republican Party shortly before filing for candidacy as a Democrat.³⁰

Cole, an auto dealership owner who had served for four years in the state senate—including two years as president of the senate—was unopposed in the primary. The Democratic primary saw Justice, a coal company executive and Greenbrier Resort owner as well as the state's only billionaire, in a race against 18-year state senate veteran and current Senate Minority Leader Jeff Kessler, and U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin. Goodwin had earned name recognition when he successfully prosecuted the CEO of Massey Energy for safety violations that led to nine deaths in the Upper Big Branch mine explosion in 2010.³¹ Justice argued that his business experience would help him bring jobs to the state, that he was in the best position to fix the state's budget deficit, and that only he could beat Republican Bill Cole in the general election. Justice received more votes in the primary than Kessler and Goodwin together.

Thus, the general election saw two wealthy businessmen with limited or no experience in electoral politics face off. Both candidates were supporters of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in the presidential race, and both were skeptical of any link between human activity and global warming.

A conservative Democrat with an outsized, folksy personality, Justice captured the same support in West Virginia that gave Donald Trump one of his biggest wins in the general election. Justice maintained a solid lead in the polls as the general election neared, and carried that lead to a 49-42 percent victory.

Conclusion

Before the 2016 election, Republicans' modern-day record had been 32 governorships. The 2016 election brought the total number of Republican governors to 33. This sort of lopsidedness isn't unprecedented. Democrats controlled 37 in 1977 and 1978, when one governor was an Independent and only 12 were Republican, but there haven't been this many Republican governors since the 1920s. Republicans converted two of the seats that were up for grabs, capitalizing on a national groundswell that unexpectedly brought Donald Trump to the White House. Like Trump, some new governors were political novices who had made a name in the private sector. Outside money continued to play a major role, as we saw more spending by outside groups than by candidate campaigns in some races. Meanwhile, Democrats have started looking toward 2017 and 2018, when 27 of the 38 governorships up for election are held by Republicans.

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