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GOP Gov. Rick Snyder Defeats Democrat Mark Schauer in Michigan

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Gov. Rick Snyder speaks at a election night party in Detroit Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2014.

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Michigan Republican Gov. **Rick Snyder**, who acknowledged voters' discontent with the state's economy recovery, locked up his re-election Tuesday on a promise to help place workers in better-paying jobs.

The Associated Press projected that Mr. Snyder would win. With 88% of precincts reporting, he led Democrat **Mark Schauer**, 51.3% to 46.4%.

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Mr. Snyder's return for another four years comes after the state lost an estimated 860,000 jobs between 2000 and 2010 before he took office. During the depths of the recession, Michigan faced double-digit unemployment that led the nation. Detroit, the state's biggest city, was in free fall and the Big Three car makers were still reeling from a sales slump.

The former technology company chief executive pushed through a sweeping tax cut for businesses, boosted the state's rainy day fund, streamlined regulations to attract companies and shored up teacher pension funds. He was also seen as a moderate in the GOP for his support for Medicaid expansion and increased transportation spending.

But his budgeting to plug deficits also left higher taxes for some pension holders and lower-income residents and millions of dollars fewer for cities and their school districts that the governor's opponent said he wanted to reverse.

Since then, the auto industry has rebounded, Detroit is close to emerging from bankruptcy and state unemployment hit a four-year low of 7.2% in September. "We are coming back from a long way back," Mr. Snyder said in a recent interview. Still, the state's employment rate is worse than the national average.

He said his focus over the next four years will be on improving workers' job skills to match them up better to available jobs and passing a road-improvement measure that had stalled out with state legislators.

Still, Mr. Snyder was caught in a tight race with Mr. Schauer, a former Democratic congressman, who stresses education funding and tax fairness. Mr. Schauer had some advantages in a state home to the United Auto Workers union and that President**Barack Obama** won twice, including by almost 10 points in 2012. The former nonprofit executive and state legislator said Mr. Snyder has made tough choices that are "tough on the wrong people."

But Mr. Schauer did not appear to be able to capitalize on one of the governor's most controversial moves: the state's controversial right-to-work law that allows workers to opt out of union dues. He also failed to secure the endorsement of a single major newspaper in the state, a sign within the political establishment that many believe Mr. Snyder has the state on the right track.

Months of polls showed the race neck and neck. Mr. Snyder led in most, but one of the latest public polls revealed a slight, edge to Mr. Schauer driven by more ideologically moderate and women voters turning to the challenger while a larger number of independent voters support the incumbent.

Even with Mr. Snyder's return for another four years, economists generally warn larger forces that those who sit in the state capital in Lansing could shape Michigan's ability to thrive.

"A governor can make a difference but only a very modest difference to the macro economy," said Charles Ballard, an economics professor at Michigan State University who has called Michigan's performance "Comeback Lite."