Michigan Governor Rick Snyder Defeats Challenger Mark Schauer To Win Re-Election

The Huffington Post | By Kate Abbey-Lambertz

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder (R) defeated Democratic challenger Mark Schauer in Tuesday's competitive gubernatorial race.

Snyder, a successful entrepreneur who had not previously held political office when he became governor, was first elected in 2010 by a large margin of 18 percent. Running in one of the states hit hardest by the 2008 recession, he downplayed his positions on social issues and instead highlighted his business acumen.

As he campaigned for re-election in 2014, Snyder had several accomplishments to tout. Michigan's economy has improved and the state's unemployment rate has gone down drastically, from 12.2 percent while he was running for office in fall of 2010 to 7.2 percent this September. Recently, and with considerable national attention, he'splayed a key role in the process of steering Detroit through bankruptcy, working with local leaders and pledging state funds.

In his victory speech Tuesday, Snyder praised the state legislature.

"We have been reinventing Michigan," he said. "More important than any law or regulation is what you're starting to see happen in Michigan. We can work together ... we can lay aside blame."

Now, he said, lawmakers and others have been able to put aside differences and work on implementing solutions for Michigan people.

One of the most contentious issues this campaign season has been education: Schauer, who represented Michigan's 7th District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2009 to 2011, repeatedly attacked Snyder for cutting $1 billionfrom K-12 education budgets, a claim Snyder has disputed. Schauer also condemned the expansion of charter schools under Snyder's watch.

With a middle-of-the-road approach to his first term, Snyder managed to alienate members of his own party and further irk Democrats. Some Republicans see him as not conservative enough, as he implemented an expansion of Medicaid and called for a gasoline tax to fund fixes for the state's roads. But his surprise approval of anti-union right-to-work legislation, passage of restrictive abortion laws and refusal to take a stance on same-sex marriage -- even after a federal judge struck down Michigan's ban -- played poorly with Democrats.

Schauer holds staunchly progressive ideals, supporting gay marriage, environmental conservation and protections for workers, a belief that got him pepper-sprayed at a right-to-work protest in 2012. He cemented his pro-choice stance when he chose as his running mate Lisa Brown, a former state lawmaker who made a name for herself with her lively arguments against anti-abortion legislation, including holding a reading of "The Vagina Monologues" on the Statehouse steps.

Throughout his campaign, Schauer focused on changes to the tax system, job creation, restoring the middle class and education. However, he was often faulted for a lack of details on how he would -- and could afford to -- implement his plans.

The HuffPost Pollster model showed Snyder with more than a 7-point lead earlier in the campaign. Schauer tightened the gap in later months, heading into election day just 2 points behind.

By late last month, Snyder had spent $12.2 million on his campaign, while Schauer had spent $4.3 million, according to the Detroit Free Press.