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Voters give Snyder 4 more years to lead Michigan

By Chris Gautz



Gov. Rick Snyder

Voters are giving Gov. Rick Snyder four more years to continue his plan to reinvent Michigan, a plan Snyder said Tuesday night is meant to build a strong foundation for the state for generations to come.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting at of 5 a.m. Wednesday, Snyder led his opponent, former Democratic Congressman Mark Schauer, 51 percent to 47 percent.

In his victory speech, Snyder attributed the victory to making tough decisions, such as the work on the grand bargain for Detroit's bankruptcy case; the city is expected to emerge from bankruptcy this week.

Said Snyder: "When you see anyone in this country, do not wait ... just look them in the eyes and say: 'Isn't it great what's happening in Detroit?'"

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Another highlight of Snyder's remarks was the state's success in growing jobs during the last four years, and positive projections for the years ahead –particularly for skilled trades jobs.

"It's time to accelerate and go even faster and get more done, and reinvent our state," he said.

At the conclusion of his speech, Snyder said he wants state residents and his supporters to hold on to the "passion, the fire, the excitement, the conviction to do the reinvention ... I want to have it on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and for the next four years. Let's go! Let's reinvent Michigan."

At the **Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center**, Republican elected officials and supporters cheered as state Republican Party Chairman Bobby Schostak took to the stage to fire up the troops earlier in the night as returns started to trickle in. Other GOP victories Tuesday included re-election for Attorney General Bill Schuette and Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, plus the GOP-maintained control over the state House and Senate.

"Michigan Republicans are kicking butt right now," Schostak said.

Eric Foster, senior consultant and chief strategist for West Bloomfield Township-based Democratic leaning management and political consulting firm **LB3 Management & Associates**, said Schauer lost a key battle when he couldn't carry six Democratic stronghold counties: Wayne, Washtenaw, Saginaw, Genesee, Muskegon and Ingham.

"In the roadmap for a Democrat to win, you have to win all six by significant margins," he said.

Schauer was stationed a few miles away at the **MGM Grand Detroit** with Democrats from around the state.

Both parties invested heavily in technology to target potential voters and reach out to them. Democrats produced a system making it easier for people to request absentee ballots online, and were banking on increased turnout to propel them to victory in this midterm election, a period which usually favors Republicans.

For more than a year, state Democratic Party Chairman Lon Johnson said they had identified a million Democrats who did not vote in the 2010 gubernatorial race and focused efforts on returning those voters to the polls Tuesday for Schauer.

But Republicans also placed a heavy emphasis on technology and turning out voters. The state party hired a former division at **Compuware Corp.** now called **Lochbridge** to develop a software system called "Dashboard" to help identify voters and volunteers.

As the night wore on and the energy in the room at the GOP's victory party grew, it was clear Republicans were confident their system performed better. Snyder made mention of a deliberate strategy not to run negative ads but instead to focus on progress.

"We didn't spend time talking about what's wrong with someone else," Snyder said. "We spent our time talking about what the problems were, and what the solutions are. That's a message we should be sending to the entire country. We can raise the standard of how politics should operate in this country. You don't have to go to the negative. The positive can win."

How we got here

Overall, Snyder's first term was marked with a series of major accomplishments and controversies.

Likely to be seen as Snyder's greatest accomplishment was his helping to turn around the finances of the city of Detroit by bringing in an emergency manager and taking the city into bankruptcy, from which it is about to emerge.

Snyder also helped to turn around the state's finances by eliminating Michigan's structural deficit and adding to the state's rainy day fund, while also seeing increased private sector job growth and a decrease in the unemployment rate over the past four

years. He also was able to secure passage of Medicaid expansion and increased funding for early childhood education.

But Snyder's first term also included some controversial steps, including his signing of right-to-work legislation, cutting businesses taxes by $1.8 billion and making up much of that revenue by increasing the tax burden on individual taxpayers, which included enacting a tax on some pensions. He also cut higher education funding by 15 percent his first year in office and was criticized for his inability to secure a long-term road funding plan with his fellow Republicans who control the House and Senate.

John Truscott, president of Lansing-based nonpartisan political consulting firm **Truscott Rossman LLC**, said one of Snyder's first priorities will be tackling Michigan's road funding issue. He should also continue talking about the state's economic recovery and "renewing the focus on education," Truscott said.

"I think people rewarded him because he has done a lot of good things for the state. His record is absolutely remarkable. It was about as bad as it can get and the turnaround has been stunning," Truscott said.

Sandy Baruah, president and CEO of the **Detroit Regional Chamber**, and Doug Rothwell, president of**Business Leaders for Michigan**, said road funding is the first issue Snyder needs to address in his next four years in office.

"Before 2014 is out, we need to fund roads at least at the level the governor is proposing, which is $1.2 billion," Rothwell said, adding that corporate tax reform and more research funding for public universities are also key issues that should be on Snyder's plate in his next four years.

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley praised Snyder for his unconventional political style: “He would go to Grand Rapids and talk about Detroit,” Calley said.

That’s because Snyder realized for the state to succeed, there could no longer be an east versus west mentality, or urban versus rural, but think of the state as one big family. And that family would take on the hardest problems and solve them, Calley said.

“He said what he was going to do and he did what he said,” Calley said.

Schauer concedes

Schauer, speaking to supporters at the MGM Grand Detroit, where Democrats gathered Tuesday night, said he was disappointed.

"This was not about a campaign, or not about 2014," Schauer said. "This is a movement about the future of our state. The people of Michigan never give up.

"Despite the onslaught of attacks from his billionaire buddies, we went the distance with Rick Snyder."

Schauer left the stage to Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down."

Schauer, throughout the campaign, keyed in on many of Snyder’s controversial moves, especially the pension tax and his cutting of business taxes. But Schauer spent most of his time hammering Snyder on cutting $1 billion from education, a claim that fact checkers and most every major newspaper has studied and have consistently found to be false.

Yet Schauer continued to make the assertion, despite it being shown to not be true. Snyder’s budgets have actually increased state funding for education by more than $1 billion during his first term, though much of that money went into shoring up teacher pensions and not into classrooms.

Republican supporters of Snyder had been nervous that the governor wasn't being forceful enough in refuting the claims Schauer and Democrats had been making all year, but in recent months the governor's campaign ads began working to chip away at the notion he cut education funding.

Snyder himself began calling the claim a lie, strong language for this governor, who prides himself on staying away from negativity.

Schauer's campaign was often criticized for its lack of specificity and details on how he would pay for his plan of adding more than $1 billion of additional education spending, repealing the pension tax and enacting a middle-class tax cut, among other things. He never explained how he would pay for such a plan that some analysts pegged at costing more than $2 billion annually.

That lack of specificity was often noted in editorials in newspapers around the state, which overwhelmingly backed Snyder's bid for re-election.

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