

Following last Tuesday's election here in Maine and across the nation, more developments continue to unfold in the Pine Tree State. Control of the Blaine House (where the Governor resides) and state legislative chambers was decided late Election Night, and a few lone races were called the following day. However, it took until Thursday's final tabulation of ranked-choice ballots in Maine's 2nd Congressional District for State House Majority Whip Jared Golden (D-Lewiston) to be named the victor over incumbent Republican Congressman Bruce Poliquin. In addition, today's House Democratic caucus finalizes the list of those legislators who will formally lead their caucuses in the 129th Maine Legislature.

Golden's win comes more than a week after Election Day and follows a district-wide ranked-choice recount, as well as a court challenge by Poliquin questioning the legitimacy of such balloting. This is the first general election application of RCV since it was passed by citizen's initiative in 2016 and again in June of 2018. When the initial count was made, the two major party nominees were neck and neck with Poliquin taking a 2000+ vote lead while both men hovered around 46% of the vote. Ultimately, Golden prevailed this afternoon by 3000+ votes when the combined first place ballots of unenrolled candidates Tiffany Bond and Will Hoar were redistributed.

Earlier this week, Rep. Poliquin made good on his promise to challenge the results of any Golden victory attributable to RCV. Earlier this week, by filing a suit in US District Court, arguing that RCV was an unconstitutional method for determining the race's outcome. Furthermore, the suit requested a temporary restraining order on the recount until a decision was made in the case. Judge Lance Walker said early Wednesday he would issue decisions Thursday morning, though, and counting continued under the Secretary of State's guidance.

Thursday morning, the Bureau of Elections announced it would be ready to announce a final tabulation at noon, and Walker issued his decision to not grant the temporary restraining order, paving the way for the RCV results' acceptance. Soon after, the Secretary of State ran the final tabulation to live streaming audiences and announced Golden's 50.5% to 49.5% victory.

While Democrats celebrate their first win in the 2nd Congressional District since Mike Michaud last ran there in 2012, they also elected leadership in the large majorities they scored last week. While the State Senate flipped to Democrats after four years of GOP control, House Democrats were also able to expand their majority.

The State Senate's Democratic Caucus met November 8th to formally nominate an uncontested

leadership slate. Rural populist Senator Troy Jackson (D-Aroostook) will assume the Presidency of the 129th Maine State Senate on December 5 when the new Legislature is sworn in. The leadership team in the legislature's upper-body will be geographically balanced, with Sen. Nate Libby (D-Androscoggin) as Majority Leader and Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D-Sagadahoc) as Assistant Majority Leader.

Senate Republicans also met on the 8th and selected their new leadership team. Senators Dana Dow (R-Lincoln) and Jeff Timberlake (R-Androscoggin) were chosen to serve as Senate Minority Leader and Assistant Minority Leader, respectively. While the well-respected Dow is new to leadership he has a long legislative career, having served stints in both the House and Senate prior to a 2016 return to Maine politics. Meanwhile, Timberlake recently termed-out of the House after four terms and was a major presence on the all-important Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee.

House Republicans met earlier this week and joined their Senate counterparts in selecting an entirely new leadership team. A three-way contest between Oxford County-area Republicans resulted in Rep. Kathleen Dillingham (R-Oxford) assuming command of the caucus. As for the House GOP's Assistant Minority Leader, Rep. Trey Stewart (R-Presque Isle) was tapped for the post.

Finally, House Democrats completed the selection of their leaders early Friday afternoon. Speaker Sara Gideon (D-Freeport) will continue to preside over the House of Representatives during the 129th Maine Legislature. A race for House Majority Leader resulted in former Judiciary Committee Chair Rep. Matt Moonen's (D-Portland) election, and former Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development Committee Chair Rep. Ryan Fecteau (D-Biddeford) was elected Assistant Majority Leader (the "Whip").

House Democrats have expanded their prior plurality in the chamber to an outright majority and won 89 seats last week. Their Republican colleagues won in 57 races, and 5 unenrolled members of the House will decide which caucus, if any, they might be a better fit with. On balance, most will likely caucus with the Democrats.

These post-Election Day tidbits of course come after Janet Mills was elected Maine's first female governor by a 37,000+ vote margin over Republican Shawn Moody. Her victory represents the first time since 2012 there has been one-party control in Augusta, as well as the first time since 2008 Democrats have won it. Late Wednesday evening, Mills' transition team announced Jeremy Kennedy

had been selected to serve as Chief of Staff in the new gubernatorial administration. Kennedy managed the governor-elects campaign during its final months and previously worked for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England as its Advocacy Director in Maine.

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