

2010 GENERAL ELECTION ANALYSIS

	<u>OFFICIAL ELECTION RETURNS</u>	<u>FINAL JOURNAL POLL RESULTS*</u>
Governor		
Susana Martinez (R)	53.3%	53%
Diane Denish (D)	46.5%	43%
Undecided	-	4%

Susana Martinez's ascension in the June Republican Primary election was impressive. At first, she was just one of five candidates in a pack, with Allen Weh holding a lead. Then, in the closing weeks of the race it became a two-way contest as she and Allen Weh broke away from the others. By the eve of the election Martinez had built up an impressive lead by portraying Allen Weh as being soft on illegal immigration issues. Martinez ended up winning the Primary by a very comfortable margin. Republican Primary voters selected a female Hispanic candidate over an Anglo retired Marine Colonel who was also the former state chairman of the Republican Party. This was indeed an historic victory.

In the 2010 gubernatorial General Election Susana Martinez's campaign message was clear. Due to Bill Richardson's low approval rating, Diane Denish was portrayed as being tied to the hip of the "Richardson/Denish Administration." This campaign strategy was very effective. On the one hand Denish supporters could argue that it was intellectually dishonest to closely link Diane Denish to Bill Richardson since she did not have much influence in the administration. However, Martinez supporters could argue that the only way to change Santa Fe was to have a clean sweep of current administrative and political rule. The latter feeling prevailed with the voters.

Historically, Lieutenant Governors have not held much clout or responsibility in their respective gubernatorial administrations. This is partly attributable to the fact that Lieutenant Governors are elected separately by the voters in the June Primary Election. Then the Lieutenant Governor nominee is joined together with the gubernatorial nominee of their political party for the General Election. Thus, they are not hand-picked by the gubernatorial nominee, unlike U.S. Vice Presidents who are selected by the presidential nominee.

In the General Election, Susana Martinez built up an early lead against Diane Denish and never relinquished it throughout the campaign. Susana Martinez won the conservative eastside counties by a tremendous margin (71% to 29%) and at the same time cut into Diane Denish's margin of victory in many rural Hispanic Democrat counties. Martinez also won the Democrat-leaning largest cities, Albuquerque and Las Cruces, by a narrow margin. Diane Denish's banner counties were; Taos (71%) and Santa Fe (67%), which are typically the most loyal Democrat performing counties.

Monday morning quarterbacks will argue whether Diane Denish or her surrogates should have defended the successes of the Richardson administration (i.e. state income tax cuts, elimination of the tax on food and medicine, tough DWI measures, aggressive corporate incentives and recruitment of new industries, etc). Richardson was popular for six of the eight years in office and was reelected with nearly 70% of the vote. But his final two years were a struggle as his popularity plummeted due to pay-for-play allegations and a downturn in the economy that caused large budget deficits and government cutbacks.

Historically speaking, the position of Lieutenant Governor has not been a good political stepping stone to the governor's office. Only one Lieutenant Governor in our state's history has been elected Governor after serving as Lieutenant Governor (in 1916). In recent political history, five Lieutenant Governors have run for Governor and all have lost. Three did not make it out of their Primary (Democrats Robert Ferguson and Casey Luna, and Republican Walter Bradley), one ran as a Green Party candidate (Roberto Mondragon), and finally Diane Denish was defeated in the General Election.

The Attorney General position has been a political stepping stone to higher office in recent New Mexico political history as evidenced by Jeff Bingaman, Tom Udall and Toney Anaya. In a sense, Susana Martinez followed this trend as a crime fighting "attorney general" at the judicial district level. In her case, as a District Attorney, she was able to emulate the political success of attorneys general since they do not have much of a political record other than being tough on crime.

** Includes 1% who were leaning towards Martinez and 1% who were leaning toward Denish as published in the Albuquerque Journal on October 31, 2010.*

	<u>OFFICIAL ELECTION RETURNS</u>	<u>FINAL JOURNAL POLL RESULTS</u>
Attorney General		
Gary King (D)	53.7%	51%
Matthew Chandler (R)	46.3%	41%
Undecided	-	8%

Gary King, the Democrat Attorney General, sought reelection for a second term of office. He faced Republican Matt Chandler who was not widely known outside of his eastside Judicial District, where he serves as District Attorney. Matt Chandler came on strong at the end of the campaign with some hard hitting and effective television commercials. But it was too little, too late and Gary King was able to hold on and ultimately win by a comfortable but relatively narrow margin of victory.

	<u>OFFICIAL ELECTION RETURNS</u>	<u>FINAL JOURNAL POLL RESULTS</u>
First Congressional District		
Jon Barela (R)	48.2%	49%
Martin Heinrich (D)	51.8%	46%
Undecided	-	5%

Two years ago, Martin Heinrich was the first Democrat to win this Albuquerque-based congressional district in its thirty years of existence. He defeated well-known Republican Darren White during the Obama wave after the seat was vacated by Heather Wilson. No incumbent had ever lost this seat, whether it was Manuel Lujan, Steve Schiff or Heather Wilson, all of whom were Republicans. Could Martin Heinrich, as a Democrat, continue this trend?

The Republican candidate Jon Barela ran a good campaign, but many observers thought he peaked too late in the election. Barela never achieved the level of excitement or popularity that Republican gubernatorial candidate Susana Martinez was able to garner. Heinrich won Bernalillo County by about 10,000 votes, whereas Diane Denish, the Democrat candidate for Governor, lost it by about 3,000 votes. This made the difference in the race. In the long run, the political liability of Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi was not as damaging to Martin Heinrich as the liability of Bill Richardson on Diane Denish. In this Republican wave year, Heinrich was able to hold his seat, a feat that was not achieved by Democrats in 63 other Democrat-controlled congressional districts in the nation. This victory is partly attributable to the urban nature of his Albuquerque-based congressional district and partly due to the excellent organizational effort and media campaign that Heinrich ran.

In the final Journal Poll of the election season, Research & Polling, Inc. (RPI) had Barela up by 3 percentage points, but Heinrich prevailed on Election Day with 51.8% of the vote. This is the fourth time in 25 years (since 1986) in which Research & Polling, Inc. had the wrong candidate on top in a statewide or congressional district General Election race (4 out of 74). The first time RPI had the wrong candidate on top was the 2000 presidential General Election in which RPI had George Bush up by two percentage points and Al Gore won by six-hundredths of a percentage point. In 2006 RPI had Patricia Madrid ahead of Heather Wilson by four percentage points and Heather Wilson won by 0.4%. RPI also had the wrong candidate on top in the 2002 Land Commission race; however, 25% were undecided in that final poll.

	<u>OFFICIAL ELECTION RETURNS</u>	<u>FINAL JOURNAL POLL RESULTS</u>
Second Congressional District		
Harry Teague (D)	44.6%	45%
Steve Pearce (R)	55.4%	48%
Undecided	-	7%

Harry Teague pulled off the most unimaginable election victory two years ago in this conservative congressional district. He not only became the first Democrat in 30 years to win, but he did so with a tremendously large margin of victory. Two years ago, Steve Pearce vacated this seat to run for higher office. Thus Teague was able to take advantage of an open seat with no incumbent during an Obama wave election cycle.

However, in 2010 Steve Pearce sought to regain his seat during a Republican wave election year. Neither candidate ran on their experience nor track record since there was an anti-incumbent mood among voters. The brunt of Pearce's attack focused on Teague's integrity and the way he treated his employees (i.e. alleging that Teague cut off health insurance to his employees prior to Christmas).

This district can be divided into two parts from a political perspective. The eastern half (Hobbs, Carlsbad, Roswell, Alamogordo, etc.) is very conservative and the western half (Las Cruces, Deming, Silver City, Socorro, etc.) leans Democrat. The conservative side of the district voted for Pearce with tremendous margins, whereas the western portion came through for Teague with much lower margins of victory. Thus, the outcome of the election resulted in a very comfortable victory for Steve Pearce, with the district having a "course correction", after a two year stint with a moderate Democrat congressman.

Third Congressional District

Ben Ray Lujan cruised to a comfortable victory in this congressional district which is considered to be a Democratic stronghold. While his opponent, Tom Mullins, was quite articulate, Lujan was able to capitalize on a few controversial comments made by his opponent.

The *Albuquerque Journal* did not conduct a poll for the Third Congressional District race.

Secretary of State

Typically, Democratic Party candidates have a tremendous advantage over Republicans in statewide low profile election contests such as Secretary of State, State Auditor and State Treasurer. Voters rarely pay a lot of attention to these races, thus the Democrat candidate tends to win due to the voter registration advantage Democrats hold over Republicans in New Mexico. Only 32% of New Mexico's registered voters are Republican compared to 49% who are registered Democrats.

In fact, New Mexico's voters have not elected a Republican Secretary of State for over 80 years, until now. Democrat Mary Herrera was seeking reelection as the Secretary of State. Usually, name recognition would be sufficient for a Secretary of State to comfortably win her reelection contest. But due to numerous well-publicized controversies involving the Secretary of State's Office, the Republican challenger, Dianna Duran, not only defeated the incumbent Democrat, she also received more votes than any other contested candidate during the 2010 general election cycle.

The *Albuquerque Journal* did not conduct a poll for the Secretary of State race.

State Legislature

The Republicans had a very successful campaign cycle in that they picked up eight state House seats. Thus, Democrat control of the state House was diminished significantly. Prior to the election, Democrat House members outnumbered Republicans 45 to 25. After the election, Democrats controlled the House by a margin of 37 to 33. Of the eight lost House seats, four had been held by Democrats for a long period of time prior to Republican candidates winning them in 2010, while four had been Democrat controlled for a short period of time (2006 and 2008 elections) and were thus recaptured by Republican candidates. The loss of Democratic Party legislative seats was a national trend as well as a local one. Overall, the Republicans gained 675 legislative seats throughout the nation, which shows the importance of national mood in the outcome of local races.