AACC's post-election review

What the results might mean for community colleges

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Overall election results

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Democrats will have substantial majorities in both chambers of Congress

54–56

Democratic Senate seats in the next Congress: at least 54, with two close races undecided. (Current breakdown: 53 R – 47 D)

~260

Democratic House seats on track for the next Congress. (Current breakdown: 219 R – 214 D, one vacancy each)

+13%

Democratic margin in the overall House vote, a 15-point shift from 2024

+33 pp

Shift among 18–29 year olds

+29 pp

Shift among Hispanic voters

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Democrats also gained significant ground in the states

29 (at least)

Majority of governorships now held by Democrats, after flipping 5. First time in 16 years.

10+

State legislative chambers flipped to Democratic control

TX · WI · AZ

Notable flips: Texas House, both chambers in WI and AZ

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Key Congressional committees

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Senate HELP Committee

COMPOSITION

- Bernie Sanders (I-VT) likely chair; Josh Hawley (R-MO) may be ranking member
- Departing: Cassidy, Collins, Marshall, Husted
- Julia Letlow (LA) a possible new Republican based on her House record
- Likely assignment for freshman Rs

AACC PRIORITIES

- College Transparency Act
- SCCTG permanent authorization
- Strengthening the Pell Grant
- AI displacement/workforce program?

LIKELY DYNAMICS

- Sanders: few legislative achievements, little higher ed focus
- Favors tight controls on workforce Pell; reservations on College Transparency Act
- AACC has a constructive relationship with current staff
- Committee is traditionally bipartisan; Sanders' relationship with the ranking member is key
- Hawley has not been particularly engaged on higher ed issues; cosponsored very few higher ed bills

House Education and Labor Committee

COMPOSITION

- Bobby Scott (D-VA) is ranking member and former chair
- Challenged by Jahana Hayes (D-CT) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
- Scott favored, outcome uncertain
- Tim Walberg (R-MI) likely to stay as top Republican

AACC PRIORITIES

- College Transparency Act
- SCCTG permanent authorization
- Strengthening the Pell Grant
- AI displacement/workforce program?

LIKELY DYNAMICS

- Dems likely to focus on oversight of:
  - Restructuring of the Department of Education
  - ED policies on Title VI and other statutory protections
  - ED grantmaking practices
- Possible new reauthorization agenda; Scott reintroduced "America's College Promise" and released report on lowering college costs and barriers to completion

Senate Appropriations Committee

COMPOSITION

- Patty Murray (D-WA) to chair and likely chair Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee
- Ranking member unclear – possibly Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
- Shirley Capito (R-WV) likely LHHS-ED subcommittee ranking member

AACC PRIORITIES

- Pell Grant program
- SCCTG
- CCAMPIS
- Institutional Assistance / TRIO / GEAR UP
- Adult Education
- NSF
- Numerous other programs

LIKELY DYNAMICS

- Democratic-Republican relationship unclear, though generally bipartisan
- Approps bills will still require bipartisan support in the Senate
- Stance toward White House on spending bills unclear
- Close oversight of Administration bureaucracy changes
- Defeated chair Susan Collins is a strong community college supporter

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House Appropriations Committee

COMPOSITION

- Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) becomes chair; likely Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee chair
- Ranking members: Tom Cole (R-OK) for the full committee and Robert Aderholt (R-AL) for LHHS

AACC PRIORITIES

- Pell Grant program
- Advanced Technological Education
- Strengthening Community College Training Grant
- Adult Education
- NSF
- Institutional Assistance / TRIO / GEAR UP
- Numerous other programs

LIKELY DYNAMICS

- Democrats likely to call for substantial spending increases
- Spending tied to changes in Administration policy
- Major clashes with Senate minority and White House likely

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Tax-Writing Committees

COMPOSITION

- House Ways and Means: Richard Neal (D-MA) to chair; Jason Smith (R-MO) ranking
- Senate Finance: Ron Wyden (D-OR) to chair; Mike Crapo (R-ID) remains ranking; Chuck Grassley (R-IA) a key supporter of Tax-Free Pell

AACC PRIORITIES

- Tax-Free Pell Grant legislation
- Alter Lifetime Learning Credit to emphasize training
- Business incentives to support community colleges
- TAACCCT II is a possibility

LIKELY DYNAMICS

- Neal and Wyden are strong community college supporters
- Reconciliation option, though a Trump veto is extremely likely
- Republicans likely shut out as House minority
- Big spending proposals may come; Finance has a bipartisan history

Lame duck outlook

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Lame duck: appropriations come first

- Continuing resolution runs through Dec. 11; another CR is almost certainly needed
- Parties have not agreed on top-line funding levels; Senate remains way behind schedule
- Democrats may want to finish FY 2027 appropriations this year despite taking control in January
- Other “must-dos” on Congressional agenda – NDAA, Farm Bill

AACC PRIORITIES

- Permanent Pell Grant shortfall fix, with no corresponding cuts
- Realize House bill increases for SCCTG, SIP and others
- At least level funding for programs cut in the House bill
- Increase for the ATE program
- Continue OMB rule blocking language; expand to EDGAR and other department regulations
- Authorize new CC agriculture grant program in a Farm Bill reauthorization

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