

WALL STREET JOURNAL

What the Election Means

Republicans should take advantage of their electoral opportunity to reduce government.

By PETE DUPONT

At the end of 2007 America began its economic decline. It started in the Bush administration, continued in the Obama administration, and is likely to be with us many months or even years longer. The federal deficit soared to \$1.3 trillion from \$161 billion in 2007. Unemployment in the same period rose to 9.6 percent from 5 percent.

But the good news is that as the American people began to see the decline, they began to do something about it. In November of 2009 they threw out the Democratic incumbent governor in New Jersey and in Virginia elected a Republican to take over. Governors Chris Christie (R-NJ) and Bob McDonnell (R-Va) began to improve their states. Next came Republican Scott Brown's stunning victory in the Massachusetts special January 2010 election to fill the seat of the late Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy who had served in the Senate for 47 years.

On November 2nd voters spoke even more forcefully, continuing to voice their belief that the current government was doing badly. Republicans added six senators, over 60 congressmen and at least 675 state legislators. The North Carolina state senate became Republican for the first time since the 1870s and the Alabama chambers swung to the GOP for the first time since Reconstruction. Republican gained more than 100 seats in the New Hampshire House and flipped the Michigan House from 64-42 Democratic to 63-47 Republican. In Iowa the House Republicans went from a 12 seat deficit to a 20 seat majority.

Republicans now hold 29 of the governorships and 53% of all state legislative seats. They will control 54 of the 99 state legislative chambers, their largest number since 1952. They will fully control congressional redistricting in 15 states including Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

In 2012 there will be 23 Senate Democrats (including the 2 independents) up for election, but only 10 Republicans. The Republican seats—Arizona, Indiana, Utah, Tennessee and Texas, for example—seem likely to remain Republican, and many of the Democratic ones—Florida, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin—may be won by Republicans too. Additionally, Nancy Pelosi's continued leadership in the House will allow Republicans to argue that the Democrats have not learned anything from the November elections.

* * *

Our biggest challenge is to get the economy moving again. From the end of World War II to 2000 America's GDP grew at an average annual rate of 3.5 percent. Since 2000 it has grown at an average of just 1.8 percent per year. House Republicans must encourage job growth, reduce government spending and extend the Bush tax cuts. We must also reduce corporate tax rates to become globally competitive, eliminate farm and ethanol subsidies, adjust Social Security and end earmarks.

All of this must somehow be done with a Republican House, a Democratic Senate and some cooperation with the current President who won't like any of it. What our nation needs is a sincere debate about the proper role of the federal government in modern America and how to expand our economy, add jobs and increase our prosperity.