

OBAMA'S NIGHT

TOPS ROMNEY FOR 2ND TERM IN BRUISING RUN; DEMOCRATS TURN BACK G.O.P. BID FOR SENATE

In Massachusetts and Indiana, New Seats

By JONATHAN WEISMAN

Democrats snatched Republican Senate seats in Indiana and Massachusetts on Tuesday, averting what was once considered a likely defeat in Missouri and were poised to hold control of the Senate, handing Republicans a string of stinging defeats in the second campaign season in a row.

In Indiana, Representative Joe Donnelly did what had seemed impossible by taking a Senate seat for the Democrats in a heavily Republican state, just weeks after his opponent, State Treasurer Richard Mourdock, said conception by rape was God's will.

Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri, a Democrat once considered the most endangered incumbent in the Senate, beat Representative Todd Akin, who seemingly sank his campaign when he said women who are victims of "legitimate rape" would not get pregnant.

In Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren, a Harvard professor, swept from power Senator Scott P. Brown, a Republican whose surprise victory in January 2010 heralded the coming of the Tea Party wave.

Those Democratic triumphs followed quick wins in Connecticut, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania, all states where Republicans had harbored ambitions of victory that would propel them to a Senate majority for the first time since 2006.

Republicans lost another state when former Gov. Angus King Jr. of Maine, an independent, won his race to succeed Senator Olympia J. Snowe, a moderate who is retiring. Mr. King has yet to say which party he will caucus with next year, but he had warned Republicans and Democrats that his treatment during the campaign would bear on that decision. National Republicans and their "super PAC" allies responded by pummeling him with

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DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

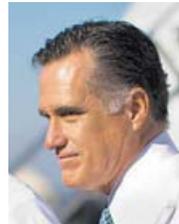
President Obama, at a campaign office in Chicago Tuesday, overcame a bad economy, resistance to his agenda by Republicans in Congress and an unprecedented torrent of advertising in winning election to a second term.

Still Facing Challenge of a Deeply Divided Country

By JEFF ZELENY and JIM RUTENBERG

Barack Hussein Obama was re-elected president of the United States on Tuesday, overcoming powerful economic headwinds, a lock-step resistance to his agenda by Republicans in Congress and an unprecedented torrent of advertising as the nation voted to give him a second chance to change Washington.

In defeating Mitt Romney, the president carried Wisconsin, Iowa, New Hampshire, Colorado and Virginia and was holding onto a narrow advantage in Ohio and Florida. The path to victory for Mr. Romney narrowed as the night wore along, with Mr. Obama steadily climbing toward the 270 electoral votes needed to win a second term.



A cheer of jubilation sounded at the Obama campaign headquarters in Chicago when the television networks began projecting him as the winner at 11:20 p.m., even as the ballots were still being counted in many states where voters had waited in line well into the night. The victory was far narrower than his historic election four years ago, but it was no less dramatic.

As a succession of states fell away from Mr. Romney, a hush fell over his Boston headquarters on Tuesday night. Two advisers said in interviews that the contest seemed over, but Mr. Romney was not conceding, with the electoral votes from Ohio and Florida still outstanding.

The evening was not without the drama that has come to mark so many recent elections: Even after Fox News Channel projected that Mr. Obama would win Ohio — effectively sealing Mr. Obama's re-election — its on-air analyst, the Republican strategist Karl Rove, was arguing that it had done so too quickly and that Mr. Romney still had a chance.

Hispanics made up an important part of Mr. Obama's winning coalition, preliminary exit poll data showed. And before the night was through, there were already recriminations from Republican moderates who said Mr. Romney had gone too far in his rhetoric against those here illegally

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As of 12:28 a.m. Wednesday

Republicans Face Struggle Over Party's Direction

By CARL HULSE

Mitt Romney's loss to a Democratic president wounded by a weak economy is certain to spur an internecine struggle over the future of the Republican Party, but the strength of the party's conservatives in Congress and the rightward tilt of the next generation of party leaders could limit any course correction.

With their party on the verge of losing the popular presidential vote for the fifth time in six elec-

tions, Republicans across the political spectrum anticipate a prolonged and probably divisive period of self-examination.

The coming debate will be centered on whether the party should keep pursuing the anti-government focus that grew out of resistance to the health care law and won them the House in 2010, or whether it should focus on a strategy that recognizes the demographic tide running strongly against it.

"There will be some kind of

war," predicted Mike Murphy, a longtime Republican Party consultant, suggesting it would pit "mathematicians" like him, who argue that the party cannot keep surrendering the votes of Hispanics, blacks, younger voters and college-educated women, against the party purists, or "priests," as he puts it, who believe that basic conservative principles can ultimately triumph without much deviation.

"We are in a situation where

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Question for the Victor: How Far Do You Push?

By PETER BAKER

For President Obama, now comes a second chance. An electorate that considers the country to be on the wrong track nonetheless agreed to renew his contract on Tuesday in hopes that the next four years will be better than the last.

Mr. Obama emerges from a scalding campaign and a four-

year education in the realities of Washington a far different figure from the man sent to the White House in 2008. What faces him in this next stage of his journey are not overinflated expectations of partisan, racial and global healing, but granular negotiations over spending cuts and tax increases plus a looming showdown with Iran.

Few if any expect him to seriously change Washington any-

more; most voters just seemed to want him to make it function. His remarkable personal story and trailblazing role are just a vague backdrop at this point to a campaign that often seemed to lack a singular, overriding mission beyond stopping his challenger from taking the country in another direction.

More seasoned and scarred,

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ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS

THE HOUSE

G.O.P. Holds Its Grip

Deep public disapproval of Congress and dissatisfaction with partisan division proved no match for incumbency. Republicans and Speaker John A. Boehner appeared to retain a firm hold on the House of Representatives, assuring that divided government would continue for at least two years. PAGE P12

THE PRESIDENT

Hope and History

Becoming the first African-American president has never been enough for Barack Obama. He has long aimed to be counted among the greatest presidents, a transformative figure who would heal the country's divisions. PAGE P1

THE CHALLENGER

Family and Politics

For Mitt Romney, it was a time to relish a race that had evolved from a movement against the president into a genuine embrace of Mr. Romney as the Re-

publican nominee. It was a day of family, politicking and ritual. At day's end he huddled with his family, eating comfort food. PAGE P7

THE TV WATCH

Partisan, but on the Mark

Fox News was the channel to watch on this election night, Alessandra Stanley writes. Despite its reputation for Republican advocacy, in the end it called the election for Mr. Obama at the same time as CNN. PAGE P13

THE NEW YORK REGION

3 Senate Seats for Democrats

Two Democratic incumbents won easy victories: Robert Menendez of New Jersey was re-elected to a second term, and Kirsten E. Gillibrand, left, held the Senate seat to which she was appointed after Hillary Rodham Clinton became secretary of state. And in Connecticut, Representative Christopher S. Murphy won the United States Senate seat long held by Joseph I. Lieberman.

THE COUNT

Few Challenges (So Far)

Election Day had its share of flaws and partisan disputes, but it is unclear whether any will change the results or lead to a big lawsuit. The day was largely uninterrupted by judicial activity, perhaps because both parties were out in force watching poll workers — and each other. PAGE P9

Online: Results and Reaction

STATE BY STATE An interactive map of results across the nation.

THE DECIDERS Portraits of voters in battleground states.

WORDS OF A NATION Optimistic. Worried. Tired. The Election Day mood, as seen in words submitted by readers.

nytimes.com/politics

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