



November 2016

Democrats Pick Up Super Majority in the California Assembly

The California 2016 election results for president were not surprising. Hillary Clinton easily defeated Donald Trump in the longtime Democratic stronghold. Clinton received 61 percent of the vote to Trump's 33 percent. However, although the Nov. 8 election was historic in many respects nationally, it also has very practical implications for how the Legislature functions in California.

Overturning vetoes by the Governor, emergency legislation, general tax increases and placing constitutional amendments or bond measures on the ballot in California all require a two-thirds super-majority in each house of the Legislature. California Democrats were looking to recapture several seats that Republicans took from them two years ago, when the GOP had rare success in picking up a handful of "swing" districts in a non-presidential election year with lower turnout numbers. The Democrats needed a net gain of two Assembly seats and one Senate seat to give them a working super majority in both houses. To do this, they targeted a handful of Republican-held districts in Orange County, the Inland Empire, and the East San Francisco Bay Area. These races include first-term Republicans in districts where the parties are closely matched. Democrats and their allies poured millions of dollars into efforts to defeat freshman Republican Assembly members Catharine Baker of Dublin, David Hadley of Torrance, Young Kim of Fullerton, and Marc Steinorth of Rancho Cucamonga, as well as second-term Republican Eric Linder of Corona.

Their efforts appear to have worked for them – at least in the Assembly where Democrats need 54 out of 80 seats to get the super majority. So far, the democrats picked up a "net" three seats on Nov. 8 with Linder, Kim and Hadley all losing their races (Kim's race is still very close with absentee ballots being counted). This makes the partisan makeup in the Assembly 55 Democrats and 25 Republicans and a working super majority. However, so far Democrats failed to pick up any seats in the Senate; both Scott Wilk of Lancaster and Ling Ling Chang of Diamond Bar survived hard fought races to claim their Senate seats. Partisan makeup of the Senate remains 26 Democrats and 14 Republicans, one short of the necessary 27 seats.

So for now, the minority Republicans hold onto a small sliver of power in the Legislature but, with declining registration and demographic shifts, could very easily lose more seats in 2018 thus giving the Democrats the super majority they seek.

This *GT Alert* was prepared by **Thomas L. Sheehy**[~]. Questions about this information can be directed to:

- > [Thomas L. Sheehy](mailto:sheehyt@gtlaw.com)[~] | +1 916.442.1111 | sheehyt@gtlaw.com
- > Or, your [Greenberg Traurig](#) Attorney

[~] Not admitted to the practice of law.

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