

LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, PUBLISHER



Battle is over. Dust is settling. States and the U.S. government are accommodating new faces in the political leadership.

The re-election of President Bush probably signals an accelerated push for more open-door trade agreements and North Carolina sent him an ally for his agenda. Senator-elect Richard Burr defeated Democrat Erskine Bowles, riding the coattails of the president who is popular in the Tarheel state. Bowles had called for a suspension of trade pacts until the longtime implications of current agreements could be analyzed.

Burr's campaign advertisements touted his repeated opposition to the trade pact with China, claiming he had voted against such agreements six times. Sen. Elizabeth Dole who worked hard for Burr was ebullient on election night. She also has been an ardent supporter of President Bush's trade strategies.

South Carolina's Senator-elect DeMint also campaigned as a supporter of President Bush and his trade policies.

Democrats picked up enough new members to control the House and the Senate in North Carolina. The 63-57 margin for Democrats in the House put into question whether a joint speakership with Jim Black and Richard Morgan would continue.

Conservative firebrand Sam Ellis, allied with Rep. Leo Daughtry and George Holmes, lost his seat to Democrat Linda Coleman in Wake County. Also in Wake, Democrat Grier Martin, son of D.G. Martin who ran for the U.S. Senate several years ago, defeated veteran Republican Don Munford, a supporter of Rep. Morgan.

Republican Bonner Stiller of Brunswick fought off a challenge by former Rep. David Redwine, and held on to his seat by 466 votes. Leslie Cox lost his comeback effort against GOP incumbent John Sauls by 452 votes out of more than 25,000 cast.

On the Senate side, Democrats extended their margin by two seats --28 to 22. Two incumbent Democrats--Joe Sam Queen and Cecil Hargett--lost. But former Sen. Oscar Harris defeated GOP incumbent Harris Blake by nine votes.

The leadership structure in both North Carolina chambers remains intact. But if the bipartisan power-sharing arrangement in the House disappears, some Republicans will lose their chairs.

In Congress, the Republicans 7-6 control of the state delegation remained in place. Former N.C. Senator Virginia Foxx, who survived a bruising primary, defeated Jim Harrell Jr., father of State Rep. Jim Harrell III. Foxx will represent the 5th Congressional District which was home turf to Richard Burr. The district is regarded as safe for Republicans.

Rep. Charles Taylor of Buncombe, who has been plagued with ethics questions, held on to his 11th District seat for an

eightth term. He survived a tough battle to gain 55 percent of the vote. He and Democrat David Price of the 4th District serve on the prestigious U.S. House Appropriations Committee.

How deep is the partisan divide?

Nationally, it may take years, even decades, to heal. Democrats in the U.S. Senate will not forget the role Majority Leader Bill Frist played in the defeat of Minority Leader Tom Daschle. Nor will they overlook the antics of Zell Miller of Georgia.

Democrats also will remember that no New England candidate has won the presidency since John Kennedy. Only Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, both Southerners, were able to penetrate the Sunbelt constituency.

Alabama Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions are examples of political leaders who stay in touch with their voters. Sen. Elizabeth Dole and Sen. Richard Burr are more Bush "team players." They have no seniority and have yet to prove leadership skills.

But as Erskine Bowles said in his concession speech, it is time to move ahead and unite as one nation.

Petition Support



Gov. Mike Easley held a press conference at Harriss & Covington Hosiery Mills in High Point on Oct. 29 to discuss the U.S. sock petition.



Ned Covington, president of Harriss & Covington Hosiery Mills, and Darrell Frye, vice president of finance, voiced appreciation for Easley's support at the event, which attracted regional and statewide media.