

Wisconsin Republicans Hold On

August 10, 2011 by [Eric F. Swanson](#)

Wisconsin held its first round of recall elections last night and Republicans narrowly maintained majority control (17-16) of the State Senate. With high turnout reported in all six races, Senators Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay), Luther Olsen (R-Ripon), Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls) and Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) all prevailed and retain their Senate seats. Senator Dan Kapanke (R-La Crosse) was defeated by current Assembly Representative Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) and Senator Randy Hopper (R-Fond du Lac) was defeated by challenger Jessica King of Oshkosh. Next week, two recalled Democratic Senators face their challengers, with Senator Jim Holperin (D-Conover) facing Republican Kim Simac of Eagle River and Senator Bob Wirsch (D-Kenosha) facing Republican Jonathan Steitz of Pleasant Prairie. Current indications are that both Democrats will prevail. If that holds true, current Majority Leader Fitzgerald will have a razor thin 17-16 majority until the November 2012 elections.

The "split decision" left both sides claiming victory and the recall efforts of Governor Walker up in the air. The Democrats noted the two-seat gain in traditionally Republican areas and claimed it validated their belief that Wisconsin is rejecting the Walker agenda. The Republicans noted that despite millions of dollars in outside money pouring in and a highly motivated base of Democratic activists, Republicans held control, with certain races going heavily toward the Republican incumbent. While Democratic activists claim the drive to recall Governor Walker will continue, it is unclear whether the money and passion will remain after last night's results are further digested.

As for any impact on the legislative agenda of the Governor or the legislative majorities, last night's results would appear to have little impact. If anything, certain pro-business initiatives may be put on the fast track again, in advance of the 2012 elections.