

November 13, 2018 by [David Griffith, ASCD Public Policy](#)

What Do the Midterm Election Results Mean for Educators and Education?

The votes have been counted (well, [most of them](#)). What do the midterm election results mean for educators and education? Here are 7 initial takeaways on post-mid-term people, politics, and policies:

1. With more than 100 educators on general election ballots in the states, educator activism was one of the campaign season's biggest winners, regardless of the final outcomes. For the more than 40 educators who won, it means firsthand education experience in state decision making; those who lost blazed a path for an even greater number of teachers to [get actively involved in the policymaking process](#) in the years, and elections, to come.
2. Of those educators running for office, Wisconsin Governor-elect Tony Evers (D) and U.S. Representative-elect Jahana Hayes (D-CT) were the biggest winners. Evers, the Wisconsin state superintendent, defeated incumbent Governor Scott Walker. Hayes, the 2016 National Teacher of the Year, becomes the first African-American woman to represent Connecticut in Congress.
3. The current House Committee on Education and the Workforce will likely be renamed to the "Committee on Education and Labor," which was what the panel was called before Republicans changed it in 2011.
4. Bobby Scott (D-VA) is in line to be the new chair of the House education committee. He's a 13-term congressman from Newport News, Virginia, who served as the committee's ranking member for the past four years and was one of the Democrats' lead negotiators on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Current Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) is expected to become the ranking member for the Republicans. Some new rank-and-file faces will join the committee, too. Eight of the 22 GOP committee members have retired, run for another office, or were defeated.

5. Republicans will retain their majority in the Senate and may even expand their current 51 seats when the two “too close to call” races in Arizona and Florida and the Mississippi special election run-off are settled. This means that Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) will remain chair of the Senate HELP Committee for two more years. Because of GOP caucus term limits, he’ll have to step down from that committee perch in 2020, so look for him to make a push to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) during his last years running the committee. A bipartisan deal on the mammoth student financial aid program is a definite possibility.
6. Whispers over the past several months have suggested that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos might step down at the end of the year, and the election results probably made that more likely to happen. Although DeVos has made the requisite annual appearance before the Appropriations Committees to review the administration’s budget request, she has only testified once before either the House or Senate education committees. Potential House chair Bobby Scott is surely eager to bring DeVos before his committee for some tough oversight hearings, but DeVos almost certainly isn’t too keen on enduring the grilling that would ensue. Look for DeVos to join a number of other cabinet secretaries who are expected to depart by the end of the year.
7. Issue-wise, the Trump administration’s school privatization, and voucher priorities were already floundering in the GOP-controlled Congress and will be a nonstarter with a Democratic House. The FY19 education budget was completed with bipartisan support and little drama this year. Whether that continues in FY20 or the president wants to use the budget to score political points remains to be seen. Several education programs are relatively noncontroversial and could garner bipartisan support for reauthorization. The aforementioned HEA is one, as is the renewal of the federal government’s education research activities. And while it may be hard to believe, ESSA is technically up for reauthorization in 2019! While it won’t occur next year, it is a reminder that time flies while you are having fun.