

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

The American electorate vented its wrath on Republican candidates across the nation on Tuesday, striking hardest at state legislators and United States Representatives—those theoretically most responsive to the public will. The Democrats marked gains in state legislatures, posting triumphs in states as diverse as New York, Tennessee, Illinois and Wisconsin. They did equally well in the House of Representatives, picking up two or more seats each in California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.

The Democratic advances in the Senate and in the governorships were more modest, about four in each case, but were still substantial.

Ways of Looking at It

By the measurement of most politicians, including President Ford, the results, taken together, constituted a Democratic sweep, if not quite the utter debacle some Republicans feared earlier this year.

There are a number of ways to look at the over-all picture, including the following:

Measured against the recent past, the Democratic gains were above average but not extraordinary. In the postwar era, the party out of power in the White House has gained in a off-year elections an average of four Senators (as against four or five this year), six Governors (as against four or five this year) and 30 members of the House (as against 42 or 43 this year).

But the comparison is misleading. The underlying reason for the long-term trend is that most Presidents pull in many members of their party in the Presidential years. But Richard M. Nixon did not do that in 1972, so the Democrats began this year from a much stronger position than usual for the party out of power.

Probable Record

Thus, it may be fairer to look at the levels the Democratic majorities attained. In the House the Democrats will hold at least 290 seats, a level reached by either party only

five times in this century. In the Senate, they will hold at least 62 seats, a level reached only nine times since 1900.

In terms of the popular vote, according to computer projections by the television networks, the Democrats pulled 60 per cent, probably a twentieth-century record.

In an era when it had supposedly become all but impossible to dislodge incumbents in the House and Senate, three Republican Senators and 36 Republican Representatives were ousted, more House memzrs than both parties lost in the three previous elections combined. Only four House Democrats lost and not a single Senate Democrat was voted out.

Big Democratic Reversal

In terms of stunning reversals, the Republicans had all the worst of it. The Democrats' one real heartbreaker was the loss of Gov. John J. Gilligan in Ohio. But the Republicans had many—the loss of a Senate seat in Vermont for the first time since the founding of their party, the loss of their coastal bases in Albany and Sacramento, the devastation of their House delegations in Oregon and Indiana and New Jersey.

In regional terms, the Democrats accomplished their goals, but not with the decisiveness they would have liked. They checked but did not wholly reverse their slippage in the South (a net gain of seven House seats and two Senate seats). They made substantial inroads as well into the Republican heartland—the Middle West and the Mountain States.

Patterns in the Return

Here, too, Ohio was the anomaly. Not only did Mr. Gilligan lose; he lost to former Gov. James A. Rhodes, the living symbol of the old-politics, low-tax, low-services style that the Democrats thought they had buried forever. And, with a good chance to gain three House seats, they gained only one and lost one—that of Thomas A. Luken of Cincinnati, the only victor in a 1974 special electio to lose Tuesday.

Apart from the size o the Democratic triumph, the returns were shot through with other patterns.

Turnout: The trend toward lighter and lighter voting, dis-

turbing to most political theorists, apparently continued. Although computer projections differed, it is safe to say that those who stayed home could have reversed the result in almost every race if they had decided to vote.

Money: Despite the Watergate-induced flurry of concern about campaign financinr, there was the usual overwhelming correlation between big spenders and big winners.

Women: As advertised. For the first time, a woman was elected Governor of a state her husband had not previously governed (Connecticut). Chief Justice of a State Supreme court (North Carolina) and Mayor of a city of more than 500,000 population (San Jose Calif.). And, in a year when four women Representatives retired, six new ones were apparently elected.

Moderate Republicans: contrary to some predictions, the party's left and enter survived nicely, in the person of Governors such as William G. Milliken of Michigan, Senators such as Robert W. Packwood of Oregon and Jacob K. Javits of New York and Charles McC. Mathias Jr. of Maryland, of Maine Representatives such as William S. Cohen and Alan Steelman of Texas and Ronald A. Sarasin of Connecticut.

Hurt by Watergate

Watergate: It clobbered the Republicans. Four of Mr. Nixon's staunchest Judiciary Committee defenders lost. So did Representative Earl F. Landgrebe of Indiana, who had vowed to stick with the former President "until they take me out and shoot me," and Representative Richard G. Shoup of Montana, who described the impeachment proceedings as a "cheap partisan witch-hunt." Many a Democratic cakewalk (the Illinois and California Senate races, for example) resulted from the refusal of strong Republican candidates to run.

Age: New faces abounded, most of them young, and many of them wit hunusual credentials. For example, in the 21st District in Texas, O. C. Fisher, a 70-year-old country lawyer, will be succeeded by Robert Krueger, a 39-year-old Shake-

Not a G.O.P. Debacle

spearean scholar, college dean and Oxford graduate.

Ford impact: The President appeared to have helped Republican candidates in Utah and Kansas but, in the acid test in his old home district in Michigan, the Republican lost despite the President's speeches, television commercials and letters.

'Heat' on the Democrats

Mr. Ford and his fellow Republicans face a trying time, a time when they must rebuild their party for 1976 and try to work out a modus vivendi with the Democratic Congress.

But, paradoxically, the smell of success may not prove to be entirely sweet for the Democrats in the next two years.

As Senator Walter F. Mondale, the Minnesota Democrat, put it yesterday morning, "Now the heat's on us." By that he meant that unless the chronically disorganized Democrats on Capitol Hill can somehow find a way to give shape to an alternative program, especially on the economy, they may find themselves blamed for inflation and recession in 1976.

The same point was made, directly or indirectly, by other party leaders. Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, the House Republican leader, who survived the toughest re-election fight of his career, said, "The ball is in their court now." And Robert S. Strauss, the Democratic chairman, said pointedly, "The opportunity begins tonight."

Even though the new Democratic contingents in the Senate and the House appear to be somewhat more liberal, and therefore probably more prepared to support wage and price controls, for example, there is no guarantee of orthodoxy.

Stance Less Strident

Before the balloting, Gary Hart, Colorado's Democratic Senator-elect, warned that the incoming Democrats would not be "a bunch of Little Hubert Humphreys." Liberal, yes; but automatic advocates of the old-time religion, no.

Mr. Hart himself, the 1972 Presidential campaign manager for Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, took a nota-

bly less doctrinaire, less strident stance than he in his successful 1974 campaign.

Even if they are able to ameliorate the economic situation, in concert with the President, the Democrats are far from assured of an easy ride into the White House in 1976.

For one thing, most of the pre-election polling by both parties indicated that much of the vote for Democratic candidates this year would, in fact, be anti-Republican, a slap on the wrist for Watergate and high prices, just as much of the 1972 Nixon vote was at least partly anti-McGovern.

So, the Democrats, in their more realistic moments, can consider Tuesday's swollen majorities neither permanent or even a short-term "mandate."

In addition, they are about to confront once again the problem that has bedeviled them since the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt; namely, that it is easy enough for them to find candidates who can appeal to relatively narrow constituencies, such as states or Congressional districts, but terribly difficult to find one who can appeal across all the regional and ideological gulfs of the national party.

Candidate May Emerge

There is no such candidate in sight now, although one may emerge from among those already running — Senators Mondale, Lloyd M. Bentsen of Texas and Henry M. Jackson of Washington — or those thrust forward on Tuesday — Hugh Carey in New York, John H. Glenn Jr. in Ohio, Edmund G. Brown Jr. in California, Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana.

The path to the convention is strewn with obstacles, including the mini-convention in Kansas City next month, a bewildering series of two dozen primaries and the unpredictable course of events in the nation and in the world.

But at least the Democrats have regained the initiative. They have a strong base in the governorships, bigger majorities in both houses of Congress and a plethora of new talent. The Republicans would probably be glad to trade places with them.