



AP Wirephoto

BRENDAN BYRNE
New Jersey winner

Watergate-- Little Effect Seen at Polls

Washington

While the Democrats on balance appear to have come out on top in Tuesday's elections, the chiefs of both major parties agree that Watergate had little to do with it.

Instead, Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss and Republican George Bush said in separate news conferences, the real test was their efforts in rebuilding troubled parties. Both said yesterday they saw evidence of their own success.

"Watergate doesn't appear to have been a determining factor," said Bush, who has been campaigning to persuade the nation that the party shouldn't be blamed for scandals at the White House.

And Strauss, who has been warning Democrats against a false sense of security, said, "I don't think the elections were a Watergate referendum."

DEMOS

Democrats in general did well, however, especially in New Jersey, where they recaptured the governorship and controlled the legislature. Democrat Brendan Byrne beat Republican Representative Charles W. Sandman Jr., by about 700,000 votes in the governor's race.

Democrats scored heavily in important municipal elections across the country, principally in New York, where Abraham D. Beame led a citywide Democratic sweep.

GOP

The closest thing to Republican glee came in Virginia where the GOP retained the governorship by a paper-thin margin in a race that included no Democratic nominee. Mills E. Godwin Jr., a former Democratic governor running as a Republican, beat Henry E. Howell Jr., a Democrat who ran as an independent, by about 1 per cent of the vote.

Godwin, who succeeds moderate Republican Linwood Holton, ran a campaign based chiefly on his opposition to school busing. Howell's platform featured opposition to the state sales tax on food and non-prescription drugs.

In the Minneapolis mayoral race, another possible trend might be seen in the defeat of Mayor Charles Stenvig, a tough law and order proponent seeking a third term, by Democrat-Farmer-Labor candidate Al Hofstede.

"Three of four of these police chiefs got beat," Strauss said. "People know now that law and order doesn't just come from electing a police chief as mayor. They know it's got to come from electing people who know something about the processes of government and meeting the needs of the people."

Despite their losses, top Republican strategists say they did pretty well considering the off-year nature of the elections following the national ticket's landslide victory last year and in view of the Washington scandals.

"I think one could read in a kind of anti-incumbency in these elections," Bush said. "I think the message might be that the loser might be incumbency in 1974."

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