

Democrats Have The Best of It

Washington

Democrat Brendan T. Byrne swept to a landslide victory in New Jersey, while conservative Republican Mills E. Godwin Jr. squeezed out a narrow victory in Virginia in the two governor's races that highlighted yesterday's off-year elections.

After a night in which the lead switched hands three times, Godwin defeated liberal Lieutenant Governor Henry E. Howell Jr., his independent opponent.

With politicians and analysts watching for signs of a Watergate impact, Democrats appeared to be making a strong showing.

In New York City, veteran Democratic Comptroller Abraham D. Beame easily defeated three opponents to

win the mayoralty held for eight years by John V. Lindsay, who did not seek reelection.

In New Jersey, where Byrne piled up a record-breaking margin and led Democrats to control of both houses of the legislature, a party leader claimed the victory stemmed from widespread voter dissatisfaction with President Nixon over Watergate and other matters.

A similar claim came from Kentucky, where Democrats retained the Louisville mayoralty and swept five offices in neighboring Jefferson county.

In Virginia, the Democrats had no candidate for governor in a state they had long dominated though both

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of the contenders had spent most of their lives in Democratic ranks.

With 1784 of the state's 1832 precincts counted, the count stood Godwin 500,563, Howell 489,479.

Howell, however, refused to concede, telling campaign workers in Norfolk he will await the official canvass.

Godwin, 58, was the state's Democratic governor from 1965 to 1969 but backed Mr. Nixon in 1972 and switched to the GOP this year. Howell, 53, won the state's No. 2 post as an independent in 1971.

EARLY

In New Jersey, the Byrne landslide was evident from the first returns as the 49-year-old former prosecutor and judge easily outdis-

tanced his conservative Republican opponent, Representative Charles W. Sandman Jr.

With 1114 of 5374 precincts tallied, the count stood Byrne 323,275, Sandman 160,302.

Byrne will succeed moderate Republican Governor William Cahill, who was unseated by Sandman in a bitter June primary that created GOP wounds that never healed.

The results made the apparent national lineup of governors 32 Democratic, 18 Republican. That would be the widest gap since 1968, when the Republicans held the same margin and the largest Democratic contingent since 1964, when the party controlled 34 state-houses.

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