

## Obama makes history: Minnesotans reject amendments

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.

Friday, 09 November 2012 00:00

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Barack Obama made history ... again.

The nation's 44th president and its first African-American to be elected to the office was re-elected on Nov. 6 by beating Gov. Mitt Romney; winning in virtually every battleground state. Pres. Obama won in battleground states of Ohio, Virginia, Colorado, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and most likely Florida. Florida's vote favors Obama, but is still considered too close to call. The only battleground state the president did not carry was North Carolina. Pres. Obama handily defeated Romney in Minnesota outpacing his Republican challenger by nearly 220,000 votes.

"We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate America, in a tolerant America, open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag," said the president in his victory speech. He continued, "To the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner. To the furniture worker's child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president – that's the future we hope for. That's the vision we share. That's where we need to go – forward."

The president expressed hope for the nation in his second term.

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"Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. A long campaign is now over," said Obama. "And whether I earned your vote or not, I have listened to you, I have learned from you, and you've made me a better president. And with your stories and your struggles, I return to the White House more determined and more inspired than ever about the work there is to do and the future that lies ahead."

The key to Obama's win was his overwhelming support of African-Americans, Latino-Americans and women. Obama carried 93 of the African-American vote and 71 percent of the Latino-American vote. The president lost among white men.



Faced with mounting voter suppression laws and tactics, many Americans took their right to vote seriously. Some voters in states such as Florida and Ohio stood in lines as long as nine hours.

Locally, voting ran smoothly for the most part, with a couple of exceptions. Minnesota's Secretary of State's press coordinator, Patricia Turgeon said minus a few ballot box jams, lines were short and voting was unhampered. One exception was in Yellow Medicine County where a bomb threat was phoned in. That threat proved to be a hoax.

### Proposed state Constitutional amendments fail

The big news in the state – besides the presidential election – was the defeat of two proposed amendments that many say would have infringed on the liberties of Minnesotans.

The voter ID amendment was handily defeated by a more than 173,000 votes. The proposed amendment would have become one of the most restrictive voting laws in the land had it passed. Our Vote Our Future, which coordinated the opposition to the initiative, celebrated the defeat as a victory for democracy.

"We are going to be the leader in the country and we'll show the rest of the country we're moving towards equality and not away from it," said Minn. House Minority Leader, Rep. Paul Thissen.

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak pointed to the troubles others states such as Ohio and Florida were having with voter suppression efforts and said he is proud of the choice Minnesotans made.

"Here in Minnesota, thank God we're better than that," said Rybak.

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Rybak praised a coordinated effort of many forces including Take Action Minnesota, AAPR, the League of Women Voters and elected officials such as Rep. Keith Ellison for helping to defeat the measure.

Ellison, who handily defeated his House challenger, Republican, Chris Fields, said a strong ground game was able to defeat the proposed amendment despite initial polls showing 80 percent support for the measure.

"We proved that if you do the right thing regardless of what polls say that democracy would prevail," said Ellison. "We didn't care that at the start of this the polls said this (measure) would pass by 80 percent. When the polls started moving in our favor, we didn't coast – we ran faster. We knew this was important because the people we were fighting for were the people who are on the margins of society."

Civil rights pioneer, Dr. Josie Johnson said working to defeat voter ID in the state was something she had to do.

"It made me terribly disappointed and angry – and I try not to entertain the emotion of anger – but it made me angry that a group of people, for selfish reasons, would try to take away the rights that many people I know died for and sacrificed so much for," said Johnson. "This (proposed) amendment would have put us in the category of Mississippi in 1964."

In another stunning defeat, the proposed amendment to ban gay marriage fell by just over 100,000 votes. No votes received a little more than 1.5 million votes as opposed to just fewer than 1.4 million in favor of the ban. In 30 states prior, similar ballot questions were approved by voters, thus making the Minnesota defeat all the more shocking. Though the measure was defeated, marriage in the state is still defined as between a man and a woman, but the door is now open for court challenges to that definition.

### **Other state and local races**

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