

Legends of the Fault in Kentucky

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By Tony Perkins - Family Research Council

Heading into Tuesday night, not even the pundits knew what would happen in the Kentucky governor's race. But there was one thing the president was sure of: if Governor Matt Bevin lost, "they're going to say, 'Trump suffered the greatest defeat in the history of the world. The greatest.'" He was right. This morning, the mainstream media was downright giddy at the chance to pin any of the blame on Trump for a race so close that even the AP didn't call it. But how much of voters' ire is really directed at the president? Based on the big picture in Kentucky, not much.

If you listen to the liberal talking heads (and based on the ratings, not many do), Bevin's razor-thin loss is an "embarrassment," "failure," even a "bad omen" for Trump. But the real experts have a different take. "Reality check," NBC and Cook Political Report analyst [Dave Wasserman warns](#). "A <1% Dem win against an unpopular GOP governor is *not* a sign KY is competitive at the federal level in 2020." Democrats are trying to make the president the anvil that sank Bevin, when in reality, pollsters say, the president probably is the one who helped make Bevin so competitive. Josh Kraushaar, the political editor at National Journal, [cautioned](#) "against extrapolating too much from the statewide results. Bevin was uniquely unpopular, even within his own party. Barely won majority in primary. Lowest approval of any governor in America. Rest of the GOP ticket doing fine in Kentucky."

This is a candidate, the president pointed out, who made up a significant deficit to come within striking distance of being the first Republican governor to win reelection [in Kentucky history](#). In a state where eight of the last 10 chief executives were Democrats, the governor's mansion hasn't exactly been a conservative stronghold. Still Trump tweeted, Republicans "won five out of six elections in Kentucky, including five great candidates that I spoke for and introduced last night. Matt Bevin picked up at least 15 points in last days, but perhaps not enough (Fake News will blame Trump!)." If the governor does concede, he will be the only Republican in Kentucky who lost Tuesday (thanks in large part to the libertarian [siphoning off two-percent of the vote!](#)). [Every other statewide office went to the GOP](#), including a historic win for Daniel Cameron (R), the first African-American attorney general ever elected in the Bluegrass State. If that's a referendum on Trump, it's a good one.

Nationally, the Republicans picked up another attorney general seat in Mississippi -- giving them two in Tuesday's election. They also won the other statewide races, including governor and lieutenant governor. Purple Virginia did manage to flip the legislative majorities to the Democrats, which was on par with recent trends. And, as Wasserman points out, it wasn't as bad as conservatives feared. "Republicans lost control of the VA Senate, but it could've been a lot worse: they managed to win all four of the closest races, by margins ranging from 0.9 to 4.4%."

In deep-blue New Jersey, Republicans were thrilled by a small surge in the legislature, where the GOP gained seats in both chambers. So while the Left is proclaiming that even red states are turning liberal under Trump, that's just not the case. As for Bevin, Inside Elections' Leah Askarinam [says people need to remember](#) the uniqueness of our governors' races. "[Those]

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candidates can campaign on issues that are state-specific like the state's budget and education funding -- and they can cross party lines without facing the same kind of political pressure as Senate candidates who have to work with a national legislature," she pointed out.
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Keep in mind that Republicans picked up about 1,000 seats in the states (including governors, attorneys general, etc.) during Barack Obama's tenure. As FRC's State and Local Director Quena Gonzalez explains, the losses in Virginia and for Bevin are significant, "especially given the aggressive, abortion-until-the-moment-of-birth stance of the Democratic Party -- but the Left has a long way to go to cancel those conservative gains."

Tony Perkins's Washington Update is written with the aid of FRC Action senior writers.