

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

Remember on Wednesday when we got to cackle in glee over another batch of wins for reproductive rights, which felt kind of weird because it was such a departure from the normal angst of things? Well. I have since been reminded of the eternal truths of American politics. One is that power ebbs and flows from side to side. The other is that Democrats cannot have nice things. Or, more succinctly, elections giveth, and then Joe Manchin taketh away.



The Big Takeaway

Let me begin by restating Tuesday's victories, which extend far beyond the issue of reproductive rights. Residents in five cities approved reform measures designed to ensure that election results reflect voter preferences. Publicly financed candidates nearly swept local races [in New Mexico](#). Voters [in Kansas](#) rejected far-right school board candidates who campaigned on culture war issues like book bans and bullying LGBTQ+ kids, mirroring a national trend of local pushback against fringe groups interfering in school policy. Virginians locked in [Democratic majorities](#) in both chambers of the state legislature, stymieing GOP efforts to enact new voting restrictions. As far as I know, no one blamed their loss on [Hugo Chavez](#), [election workers](#) or [nonexistent voter fraud](#). It was a good night for Democrats, yes — but it was also [a good night for democracy](#).



*A good night for democracy.
(Photo by Arden Barnes for the Kentucky Lantern)*

The abortion wins are a key part of that story, of course — and advocates hope it's only the first chapter. Fresh off his reelection win, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear [on Wednesday](#) called on lawmakers to amend the state's strict abortion ban to include exceptions for victims of rape or incest. The GOP-majority legislature ignored a similar proposal earlier this year, but support has grown since then, the bill's Republican sponsor [told the Kentucky Lantern](#).

"I think our people believe in the exemptions," said state Rep. Jason Nemes, a Louisville Republican. "And at some point, we're representatives of the people, and we have to do what their demands are."

It's pretty clear where Kentucky voters stand. Beshear, a Democrat, [coasted to reelection](#) in a deeply red state on a campaign that focused heavily on abortion, one year to the day after voters rejected [a ballot measure](#) to strike the right to abortion from Kentucky's constitution. Kentuckians *love* Beshear, so he may have won without abortion. But advocates hope his resounding victory, along with his decision to feature the issue so prominently, could signal a turning point in attitudes about a politically fraught issue.

“I think it is very obvious that abortion has become an issue that people are not afraid to talk about any longer and that certainly does drive people to the polls,” said Angela Cooper, communications director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky.



*A good night in Ohio.
(Photo by Graham Stokes for the Ohio Capital Journal)*

The mood was similar for Ohio Democrats, who introduced a bill to repeal the state’s six-week abortion ban and roll back other restrictions, including a mandatory 24-hour waiting period and a requirement that abortion providers have privileges at nearby hospitals. The proposal, filed Thursday, is the first attempt to enact policy changes required under a [voter-approved amendment](#) that enshrines abortion and reproductive rights in the state’s constitution, [the Ohio Capital Journal reported](#).

“Tuesday showed us that Ohioans understand the science, that abortion is a medical decision that should not be made by politicians, but by a patient and their physician,” said state Rep. Anita Somani, a Democrat and OB-GYN who co-sponsored the bill.

You’d think that would be the end of the story, but of course it isn’t, because

this is *Ohio*, where Republicans control everything and thus do not care ([like, at all](#)) what voters want. They have such little regard for the people who elect them that they tried to prevent this from happening in the first place, via a haphazard plan to amend the constitution to make it harder for voters to amend the constitution. Once voters (shockingly!) [nixed that scheme](#), Republicans could do nothing but wait out Tuesday's election to see how abortion rights would fare. (Because: *That's how democracy works.*)



See, there are two things, so you vote for the one you like better, and the one with that most votes wins, and that's how it works.

(Photo via the Ohio Capital Journal)

“Surely,” you think, “*that* is the end of the story.” But of course it isn’t, because this is *still Ohio*, where a free and fair election is just a speed bump on the road to the town of Republicans Doing Whatever They Want. Which is to say: Now that the voters have spoken, Republicans are ready to shut them up. Less than two hours after [the amendment prevailed](#) on Tuesday, Senate President Matt Huffman vowed to repeal it. The election, he said, was only “the beginning of a revolving door” of similar attempts.

By Wednesday, 27 House Republicans had signed onto the effort, [vowing to do](#) “everything in our power to prevent our laws from being removed based upon perception of intent.” (I have no idea what that means. My perception of their intent is vague at best.)

“We were elected to protect the most vulnerable in our state, and we will continue that work,” they said.

I regret to inform you that continuing my work means that we’ve got to talk about the guy who is not continuing his: U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, a [I-guess-we’ll-go-with-moderate](#) Democrat from West Virginia who announced Thursday he would not seek reelection next year, [per West Virginia Watch](#).



*Just a guy, sitting between his bald eagles and American flags, asking you to love him.
(Photo via West Virginia Watch)*

Having accomplished what he “set out to do in West Virginia,” Manchin now plans to spend his time “traveling the country and speaking out to see if there is an interest in creating a movement to mobilize the middle and bring Americans together,” which sounds like a very normal thing to do once you leave office and thus can no longer do anything to “mobilize” or “bring together” anyone. In other words, Manchin is exploring a presidential run, and he is not particularly interested in pretending otherwise.

Manchin has long been a key target of [No Labels](#), a political group that wants to cobble together an “independent unity ticket” — one Democrat, one Republican — for next year’s presidential election. That interest goes both ways — Manchin popped up at several of the group’s events this year and is, crucially, also a longtime hater of the two-party political system in which he’s served since 2010. I can’t find a great explanation for that distaste beyond what he said in his

prerecorded announcement video, which was mostly just a soliloquy about his own dedication to putting “country before party” in the Senate, even if it often landed him “in hot water.”

No matter, he said. The “fight to unite is worth it.”

I am hard-pressed to furnish an example of Manchin prioritizing the needs of the country. By [torpedoing a bill](#) that would have invested in child care and clean energy? By refusing to pass voting rights legislation because it would have required [changing the filibuster](#)? By leaving the Senate to pursue a long-shot presidential bid that will probably just [give Donald Trump](#) a second term (and also [a Republican Congress](#))? None of this makes me feel particularly united or prioritized, if I’m being honest. Mostly, I’m just annoyed.

For what it’s worth, Manchin and No Labels won’t confirm the presidential run. Asked whether Manchin’s totally-spur-of-the-moment American road trip was related to higher aspirations, his office said it did not have “anything else to add” to the announcement. In a statement, No Labels said only that it “commended” Manchin for “stepping up” to start a “long overdue national conversation about solving America’s biggest challenges.” It seems safe to assume that conversation will not include challenges like the Senate filibuster, [transitioning from coal](#) to clean energy or, you know, Manchin himself, but whatever. The fight to unite is worth it, or something.

I feel so united: [It was a good election for Connecticut Democrats, but hardly a wave ... Advocates push for national popular vote for president in Florida and across the U.S. ... Court suit against Georgia’s law that allows mass voter challenges nears judge’s ruling ... Kentucky’s 2023 voter turnout was 6 points lower than four years ago ... Weddle’s excess giving to Beshear, Kentucky Democratic Party under investigation ... What do progressives want for the future of Louisiana Democrats? ... Curious about the campaign finance petition at the polls in Maine? Here’s what we know. ... Michigan Supreme Court hears 2020 election robocall misinformation case ... Brandon Presley is not ruling out another campaign for Mississippi governor ... Legislators object to Montana Secretary of State rule proposal on ballots ... Elections over, New Jersey Democrats plan lame-duck agenda ... Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine calls on legislators to modify recreational marijuana law before it goes into effect ... FBI investigating suspicious mail sent to elections offices in Oregon, other states ... Controversial Virginia prosecutor Buta Biberaj on verge of defeat as counting](#)

[continues ... Wisconsin Assembly advances elections-related constitutional amendment proposals and bills](#)



From The Newsrooms

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One Last Thing

Baseball cards, NERF balls, Cabbage Patch Kids and a Fisher-Price push popper [are now members](#) of the National Toy Hall of Fame. (And [Ken is not.](#))



*The '80s were a weird time.
(via [Giphy](#))*

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