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Memorandum To: Interested Parties
Subject: State Gubernatorial Results

From: Jeff Viohl and Ted Koutsoubas
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Overview

The Republican Party has expanded its majority of state governorships to at least 31, taking 24 out of the 36 seats up for election this year. Republicans were successful in Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland, and Massachusetts – states that were all previously controlled by Democrats – and also protected their endangered incumbent Governors in Florida, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The lone bright spot for Democrats was in Pennsylvania, where Tom Wolf defeated incumbent Governor Tom Corbett, leaving the Democratic Party with a total of at least 17 governorships.

The winner has not yet been declared in Vermont and Alaska. The Vermont contest between Governor Peter Shumlin, the chair of the Democratic Governors Association and challenger Scott Milne will be decided by the Democratic-led state legislature. Under the state's constitution, the legislature must make the final decision if no candidate wins a majority of the votes. In Alaska, independent challenger Bill Walker holds a slight lead over incumbent Republican Sean Parnell. At the present time, it appears likely that the Vermont state legislature will affirm Governor Shumlin's victory and that Mr. Walker will defeat Governor Parnell. The last time the Vermont legislature did not vote in the candidate winning a plurality of votes was in 1853.

Analysis and Medicaid Expansion Implications

The Republican Party made significant gains in this year's gubernatorial elections and maintained their control of solidly Republican states such as Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Several of the competitive races were decided on the economy and local issues, such as taxes. Republicans were also unexpectedly victorious in reliably Democratic states, including Maryland and Massachusetts, where relatively low Democratic turnout contributed to these losses. And in Illinois, a state that has voted for President Barack Obama in three elections, voters unseated Governor Pat Quinn in favor of venture capitalist Bruce Rauner, a Republican who had never previously run for public office.

Medicaid expansion did not prove to be a decisive issue in most gubernatorial races. Of the 6 Republican Governors who expanded Medicaid and were on the general election ballot, all except Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett won their races handily. Likewise, if Alaska Governor Sean Parnell ultimately loses to his challenger, he will be the only incumbent Republican Governor opposed to Medicaid expansion forced out of office.

In the Republican pick-up states, all of which expanded Medicaid under the current Governors, none of the challengers strongly argued against the expansions. However, it's not clear whether Arkansas Governor-elect Asa Hutchinson will strongly advocate for continuation of his state's premium assistance alternative Medicaid expansion, which annually requires approval by the state legislature, and opponents of the Arkansas expansion also picked up two seats in the state Senate.

In Pennsylvania, it is not immediately clear if Governor Corbett's *Healthy Pennsylvania* alternative Medicaid expansion plan will continue as Governor-elect Wolf has previously stated his preference for a straightforward expansion of the Medicaid program. Some Governors who were re-elected, including Governor Matt Mead of Wyoming and Governor Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota, have said they may be willing to consider some form of Medicaid expansion upon re-election. The size of the Republican majority of Governors and their positive political brand may also give them more leverage in negotiating alternative expansion models with the Obama administration.

A listing of the Governors-elect and their inauguration dates can be found at the [National Governors Association website](#).