

POLITICS

Nail-Biting Night Ends in Trump Victory

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Donald Trump has been elected the next president of the United States. Hillary Clinton reportedly called Trump to concede in a phone conversation.

The announcement came after 2:30 a.m., after a nail-biter race too close to call in many key states. The night concluded a year and a half of the ugliest presidential race in modern history. Trump's campaign, once dismissed as an impossibility, rallied previously unseen support from white, working-class voters, as well as voters who voiced support for Trump's nationalist, anti-immigrant vision. Clinton's campaign led Trump's by large margins in mid-October following revelations that Trump had bragged about sexually assaulting women, and may not have paid taxes for over a decade. But Clinton's numbers dipped shortly before Election Day, and polls showed her leading Trump by just a few percentage points when polls opened.

And then voters turned out to support Trump in numbers past what the polls had suggested. In a 3 a.m. acceptance speech, Trump congratulated Clinton, whom he said had conceded. "I've just received a call from Secretary Clinton. She congratulated us ... and I congratulated her and her family on a very, very hard-fought campaign. I mean she fought very hard. Hillary has worked very long and very hard over a long period of time, and we owe her a major debt of gratitude for her service to our country. I mean that very sincerely," he said.

An hour earlier, it was unclear whether the Clinton campaign would concede. Hours after the glass ceiling was supposed to be shattered into a million pieces at the Javits Center, a man appeared on stage to tell the crowd it would have to wait a bit longer. "They're still counting votes, every vote should count," said John Podesta, the campaign chair of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. "Several states are too close to call. So we're not going to have anything more to say tonight."

His unexpected statement came at the end of a wild night where Democrats were stunned Tuesday night as a series of unexpected wins positioned Donald Trump to be the next likely president. Trump clinched the vote in the key swing states of Ohio, North Carolina, and Florida, setting him ahead of opponent Hillary Clinton. While both campaigns waited out the results in their respective Manhattan "victory parties," their supporters anxiously watched as hopes of an early evening decision faded, and crucial races came down to a few hotly contested counties.

Trump scored big wins in historically red states in Indiana, South Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Louisiana, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Montana, Georgia, and Iowa.

Clinton locked down blue-leaning states Vermont, New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada.

Key congressional races yielded few surprises early in the night, with incumbent Senator Marco Rubio winning his re-election bid over Democratic challenger Patrick Murphy, despite Rubio's previous pledge not to run for re-election. In Indiana, Democrat Evan Bayh lost to incumbent Senator Todd Young by a considerable margin. But in Illinois, Democratic challenger Tammy Duckworth ousted incumbent Mark Kirk to become Democrats' first pick-up necessary to retake the chamber.

Republicans kept control of both houses Congress, with incumbent GOPers beating their Democratic challengers in key races. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan won easy reelection over opponent Ryan Sollen. Other key congressional races yielded few surprises early in the night, with incumbent Senator Marco Rubio winning his re-election bid over Democratic challenger Patrick Murphy, despite Rubio's previous pledge not to run for re-election. In Indiana, Democrat Evan Bayh lost to incumbent Senator Todd Young by a considerable margin. In North Carolina, incumbent Republican Senator Richard Burr beat challenger Deborah Ross in a race that had been considered a toss-up. But in Illinois, Democratic challenger Tammy Duckworth ousted incumbent Mark Kirk to become Democrats' first pick-up necessary to retake the chamber.

The final days of the presidential race saw both campaigns redouble their efforts, with Trump adding new campaign stops and the Clinton camp pouring money into advertising. In the final week, the Clinton campaign more than doubled its ad spending, from \$14 million to \$32.4 million in television ads. Nearly \$5 million of that spending went to advertisements in Florida, which is a must-win state for the Trump campaign.

At both camps' Manhattan election night parties, the candidates and their supporters nervously watched the results roll in. At the midtown Hilton, the site of what the Trump campaign promised would be a "victory party," the cake was frowning. The dessert was a bust of the Republican nominee, and its face was fixed in a deep, disappointed scowl, the corners of its mouth nearly reaching its shirt collar. Earlier in the day, the projections for Trump could've explained the expression, but by 9pm, the hoots and cheers from the ballroom and the crowds at the cash bar told a different story: things were going better than expected for The Donald.

The midtown Hilton is a dark place lacking in style, but Trump's fans flooded onto the carpet in their cocktail attire, stopping to pose for photos before a backdrop stamped with the nominee's name. Bo Dietl, the former NYPD detective who is currently running for mayor of New York as a Democrat, has known Trump since the 1980s. He wore a small, Trump-Pence pin on his expensive suit. It was too early, he told The Daily Beast, for people to get excited here. He was concerned they would be disappointed once battleground states started turning in results for Clinton. He posed with the cake, and then he made his way over to the bar.

On 4chan, a stalwart of Trump support, backers started their celebrations early. "I can't believe it. Meme magic won, pol actually played a part in UNITED STATES HISTORY," one user posted after Trump clinched Ohio. "MOTHERFUCKING AMAZING"

Across town from Trump Tower at the Javits Center, Democratic Party stars milled around, talking to television cameras. Debbie Wasserman Schultz and her entourage meandered through the area where reporters were cordoned off from the crowd, and Khizr Khan made an appearance as well. The crowd itself wasn't hopeless. Jennifer Romano, a stay-at-home mom from Virginia, said she never lost faith.

"She's got a great ground game everywhere," she said.

More than anything, attendees were on edge, going from dead quiet to raucous cheers when John King on CNN said Clinton had nosed ahead in Virginia to a tiny lead over Trump. And Na'ilah Amaru, a New Yorker, said she was confident Clinton would win -- but that Clinton herself, in 2008, helped show her how to lose with grace.

"What she taught me back in 2008 was, you pull yourself back together, you pick up the pieces, and you get to work," she said.

Outside the Javits Center, people who couldn't get inside the glass building gathered just outside at a "block party" but around 9 pm, "party" was a bit of an overstatement. Those outside watched the CNN returns, broadcasted on a big screen above their heads, watched with growing nervousness.

Brian Hassett, 55, an American who now lives in Toronto, drove down to New York in the hopes of celebrating a Democratic win. "It's history, I was here when Obama became president, the city partied that night until dawn," he said. "I didn't want to miss one of those."

Hassett, wearing a top hat with a "Hillary for President" sticker affixed to the front and a coat pinned with about two dozen buttons promoting Democrats and their causes, he was still optimistic, but was getting nervous.

“I know some of these numbers aren’t looking great,” Hassett said. “I’m not liking some of the numbers I’m seeing...we can’t take what we’re seeing as being finalized.”

Hassett admitted the enthusiasm for Clinton was not what it was for President Obama.

“Obama was a new car coming off the lot, this is like you are buying a used car that’s been around the longtime and you already know what the problems are,” he said.

Inside Javits. A few hours ago, this area was packed pic.twitter.com/wOvnq5f1PR
— Betsy Woodruff (@woodruffbets) November 9, 2016

Amy Carovinci, 29, of Long Island, said she came to the rally was the first one she had attended, because, given the negative tenor of the race, she couldn’t possibly stay away.

“I usually go vote and go home and hope for the best,” she said. “I want to see what happens, if she wins, it’s great, but I’m still biting my nails furious because it’s become very close.”