

New York Democrats fall just short of keeping supermajority in Albany



Election results show Democrats won 41 of the 63 State Senate seats. Credit: Newsday/Thomas A. Ferrara

By Keshia Clukey

keshia.clukey@newsday.com | Updated November 18, 2024 6:40 pm

ALBANY — Democrats kept their majority in the State Legislature but fell one Senate seat short of retaining a supermajority, losing the ability to easily override a veto from Gov. Kathy Hochul and giving her more bargaining power in the upcoming legislative session.

Late last week, as final absentee and mail-in ballots were counted, Democrat Chris Ryan claimed a victory over his Republican challenger Nick Paro in the Central New York 50th State Senate District. The race had previously been too close to call.

The win gives Democrats 41 of the 63 State Senate seats, maintaining the majority but falling one seat short of a supermajority.

Republicans, who in the Senate were able to flip one seat and maintain all their incumbent candidates, see it as a move in the right direction and already are looking to the 2026 elections. Senate and Assembly members are elected to two-year terms.

Democrats in the Assembly maintained their supermajority and picked up at least one seat, winning 103 of 150 seats.

The race for the 45th Assembly District in Brooklyn is still being counted, with incumbent Republican Assemb. Michael Novakhov having a slight lead over Democratic challenger Joey Cohen-Saban. The seat, if flipped, would give the Democrats 104 seats.

Much will be status quo in Albany when the legislative session starts in January, with Democrats holding onto their trifecta: a Democratic governor and majorities in both houses.

But losing the supermajority does take some of the bargaining power away from legislative leaders who, without at least some Republican support in the Senate, would no longer be able to override gubernatorial vetoes.

The Democratic-led legislature hasn't used its veto power against Hochul, but the threat of using it has an impact, experts said.

"Having a supermajority in both houses gives the leader a bit more leverage," said Blair Horner, executive director of the New York Public Interest Research Group. "It's a silent saber that they can rattle if they need to," though, he said, they "never pull it out of its scabbard."

Looking ahead

Democrats have had control of the Assembly for decades, but the majority in the Senate is relatively new. Democrats gained control after flipping the chamber in 2018.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Yonkers) in a statement touted the chamber's electoral victories this cycle as "affirmations of the progress" made for New Yorkers, saying "Senate Democrats have once again proven our strength and resilience, holding firm across the state even as a national red wave swept across the country."

Moving forward, Democrats likely will have a unified strategy to deal with the incoming Trump administration, Horner said.

But rifts between moderate and progressive left-leaning Democrats could show up on topics where the party is not necessarily united; for example, on medical aid in dying or raising taxes for millionaires, he said.

Some legislative priorities may shift because Democrats may need at least some buy-in from Republicans, said Na'ilah Amaru, a Democratic strategist.

"When you lose the supermajority, you have to work with the other side," she said. "It's an interesting point in time where Democrats have to reimagine how they have to reengage with Republicans, which they haven't had to do."

Senate Minority Leader Rob Ortt of Niagara County said the shift also strengthens Hochul's position, which he hopes allows her to be more moderate and move away from more progressive policies.

Ortt said this election cycle was a positive trend for his party. "I think growing the conference in a state like New York in a presidential election cycle, not having anybody lose, I think is a real testament to the work that our members do, that our candidates did," he said.

Senate Republicans were able to end the Democratic supermajority by flipping at least one seat, the highly contested 17th Senate District in Brooklyn, where Steve Chan ousted incumbent Democrat Iwen Chu.

Republicans are already looking to 2026 and ways to thwart a veto-proof supermajority, particularly if a Republican is elected governor, Ortt said.

Horner said he's watching for what happens next election cycle.

While this election by and large was good for Democrats in New York, "I think the loss of the supermajority in the Senate is an example of a warning sign," he said. "If it's a trend, then it probably becomes more of an issue."

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