



Howdy, Advocates!

It's no surprise that politics and the elections have dominated the news cycle since our last update. The good news is that the vast majority of Aggies who were running came out on top of their races. In fact, the Texas House of Representatives will welcome three new members with Texas A&M roots: Dr. Brady Buckley '89 and '93, Cody Harris '06 and Michelle Beckley '92. We wish them – and all of the other former students who serve in elected positions – the best during their upcoming terms in office.

Come January, the composition of the 86th Texas Legislature will be a bit different than the previous session, and some races remain too close to call. In the Texas House, the Democrats gained 12 seats. In the Texas Senate, the Democrats gained two seats while the victory of Pete Flores '83 during the recent special election flipped a normally Democratic district. This net gain of one seat in the Texas Senate allows the Republicans to hold on to their "supermajority." Please see our first article for the election results from all of the statewide races.

In addition to the new legislative composition, state funding for higher education continues to be a topic of interest - both in Texas and around the country. Only four states across the nation spend more per student in 2018 (adjusted for inflation) than they did in 2008. Another "headwind" facing higher education funding is reflected in a series of national polls conducted over the previous year. The latter part of this news update provides articles and opinion pieces on both topics.

Lastly, I am excited to announce that recruitment has begun for 2019's **Orange and Maroon Legislative Day (OMLD)**. During this biennial event, Aggies and Longhorns will rally in Austin to show their support for the state's two flagship universities. We are seeking highly-motivated volunteers who are willing to spend a day at the Capitol and advocate for higher education among the Texas legislature. We look forward to your participation in another successful event! Please watch the enclosed video and register [here](#).

Thanks again for your continued support of the Advocacy program, Texas A&M, and The Association of Former Students.

Gig 'em,

Dave Fujimoto '17
Director of Strategic Engagement

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Midterm Election Results

To read the elections results from each Texas race, please click [here](#).



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE



- HUGE turnout for a midterm—8.3 million.
- At the end of early voting, the turnout was already higher than the entire vote for the 2012 presidential election.
- As a percentage of registered voters, **largest number to vote in a Texas gubernatorial election since 1970.**
- The five largest metropolitan counties all went "**blue**" in the U.S. Senate race. In the state senate races, the same occurred except for Fort Worth, which went "**red.**"

State Senate

- Two incumbents lost: Konnie Burton of Colleyville (R) lost to Beverly Powell (D); and Don Huffines of Dallas (R) lost to Nathan Johnson (D).
- New Senate configuration is 19 Republicans and 12 Democrats, a net loss of one Republican. This number is significant since it takes 19 votes to bring up a bill for a vote on the Senate floor, so the margin is thin, but a majority nonetheless.
- We now have two Aggies in the Senate (Sen. Paul Bettencourt '80 and Sen. Pete Flores '83).

State House

- Democrats picked up 12 seats, mostly gains in Houston and Dallas areas.
- New House configuration is 83 Republicans and 67 Democrats. Previously, it was 95 Republicans to 55 Democrats.
- With Speaker Joe Straus stepping down, the increase in Democrats will, according to members, add a new wrinkle for the race to become Speaker of the House.
- We now have a total of 22 Aggies in the House.



Federal Elections

- The midterm elections saw all 435 House seats up for election and 35 Senate seats up for election.
- For the first time since 2010, the **Democrats have regained control of the majority of the House** (currently 225 Democrats and 199 Republicans), with 11 races having yet to be decided. Once the results are certified, Democrats will likely end up with around 230 seats and the Republicans around 205 seats.
- In the Senate, **Republicans will maintain their majority with at least 51 seats.** One race (Florida) is too close to call, and another race (Mississippi) is headed to a runoff. Currently, the Republican candidate is leading in Florida, and it is expected the Republican candidate will win in Mississippi. Should those two races in fact go to the Republicans, they would expand their majority to 53 seats (currently at 51), with Democrats holding 45 seats, along with two independents who both caucus with the Democrats, making the Senate 53-47.

So what does this all mean for the rest of the year?

- Current members head back to D.C. to attempt tackling the remaining appropriations bills, which include the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Agriculture, State, Interior, and Transportation, all of which are operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) until Dec. 7.
- **These agencies account for about 25 percent of all federal annual discretionary spending,** and must be decided before the 115th Congress adjourns. Congress will head back into Session next week with a targeted adjournment of Dec. 13, meaning they only have about three legislative weeks (Congress is out of town Thanksgiving week) to work out any issues, or move forward with another CR.
- In addition to the remaining appropriations bills, **we will be closely monitoring the leadership races for the next Congress,** all of which will be hammered out in the coming weeks.

State Spending On Higher Education Still Hasn't Recovered From The Recession



In the depths of the Great Recession, states across the country, facing balanced-budget requirements, slashed their spending on higher education. In recent years, as the economy has slowly recovered, states have begun gradually increasing higher education spending, although not to pre-recession levels. In a new report, researchers from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities offer evidence that this slow progress has stalled in many states.

Continue reading in the Pacific Standard [here](#).

Gallup: Falling Confidence in Higher Ed



Just under half (48 percent) of American adults have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education, according to an analysis [recently] released by Gallup.

That figure is down from 57 percent in 2015 and represents a larger than typical decline in confidence in an American institution in a relatively short time period, according to Gallup. (Note: Gallup conducts some surveys for Inside Higher Ed, but this publication played no role in the results being released.)

Continue reading about the results of the poll [here](#).

Orange and Maroon Legislative Day 2019

On Feb. 5, 2019, Aggies and Longhorns will unite for a day at the Texas State Capitol to advocate for higher education. We invite you to volunteer and take part in this joint initiative to promote the welfare of higher education in Texas, especially that of Texas A&M University. Watch the video below and submit a volunteer application by clicking on the enclosed link [here](#).

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