



Written by on November 9, 2010

## Oklahoma Offensive Surges Ahead

In the March 15 issue of The New American magazine, the article "Oklahoma Offensive" by Kelly Taylor Holt chronicled some of conservative advances made during recent years in Oklahoma. Those advances continued to surge even farther on midterm election night.



There were several historic records set with Oklahoma electing its first female governor, U.S. Representative Mary Fallin (R-Okla.) Fallin, a former state representative and three-term lieutenant governor before being elected to a congressional seat in 2006, defeated a former lawmaker and current Democratic lieutenant governor, Jari Askins. Fallin received just over 60 percent of the vote, and along with the 70 percent majority garnered by U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), they ushered in Republican candidates in all other statewide races, another first in Oklahoma history.

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When Oklahoma gained statehood in 1907, the state constitution had a very strong populous bent with significant influence from a powerful socialist movement. Prior to this year's elections, Oklahoma had had only three Republican governors in its history. The Democrats controlled the state house until 2004 with the exception of 1920-21. The state senate had been under control of the Democrat party until 2006, when the Republicans and Democrats were evenly split at 24 seats each. Then in 2008, the Republicans gained control with a 26 to 22 majority.

When the last votes were counted late into the night on November 2, the Republicans in the state house had picked up an additional eight seats, to extended their majority to 70 compared to only 31 Democrats. In the senate, Republicans extended their dominance by picking up six new seats, for a total of 32 Republicans to just 16 Democrats.

Twenty years ago, Democrats outnumbered Republicans in registration by a 3.5 to 1 margin. At that time Oklahoma had one Democrat U.S. senator and one Republican. There were five Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives and only one Republican. As of Tuesday evening, the only Democrat in Oklahoma's congressional delegation was Dan Boren, son of David Boren, who currently has the position of President of the University of Oklahoma. In years past, President Boren served as a popular governor and U.S. senator. Representative Dan Boren, representing Oklahoma's most heavily Democrat district, narrowly escaped defeat by Republican Charles Thompson, a conservative constitutionalist. Thompson amassed less than \$100,000 to a \$1.5-million war chest for Boren.

Since January of this year, just over 40,000 new voters have registered in Oklahoma, with the



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Republicans getting the lion's share at 28,500. Independents registered 11,500 and the Democrats only 313. Statewide, Democrats still have dropped to a 48 percent majority, Republicans have grown to 41 percent and Independents have made gains to 11 percent of the registered voters.

While this has been a surge for the Republicans, it remains to be seen if that translates into greater conservatism. One clue might be found in the campaign promises of some of the newly-elected statewide officeholders. The newly-elected Attorney General Scott Pruitt ran on a strong states' rights platform. He was up front everywhere he spoke about challenging the federal government in every arena outside of the bounds of their enumerated powers. He even pledged to form a department of lawyers within the AG's office made up of constitutional experts, ready to do battle with the feds when appropriate.

Newly-elected Insurance Commissioner John Doak said he decided to get involved when he saw what he believed to be damage to the economy done by President Obama and the Democrat-controlled Congress. The incumbent Democrat had been an Obama delegate in 2008. Doak continues to promise now that the election is over to do everything possible to neutralize and repeal Obama's healthcare legislation from a states' rights perspective.

State Labor Commissioner-elect Mark Costello decided he could no longer sit by as a successful businessman and do nothing. He credited the "radical positions" of the Obama administration for motivating him to run for office. He intends to work with the legislature to lower the workmen's compensation insurance costs to businesses and help create a better business environment in which the free market can grow. He also intends to use his office in dealing with Oklahoma's illegal alien population.

Another clue regarding the growth of conservatism was the outcome of 11 state questions. Oklahoma voters defeated by a margin of 81 percent to 19 percent a measure to constitutionally mandate Oklahoma having to spend an amount equal to the regional average on education. The NEA spent an estimated four million dollars to get this proposal on the ballot and support its passage.

Oklahoma voters passed a state question with a 70 percent majority to amend its constitution to prohibit Sharia law as well as international law from ever being used in Oklahoma courts. In addition, the citizens amended the constitution with a 65 percent majority to allow any citizen or entity to opt out of any federal healthcare mandate. It also prohibits the fining or penalizing of anyone opting out.

The question always arises as to what influences have caused these changes in Oklahoma. In talking with activist leaders along with my nearly 30 years of activism, the consensus would be the rising activism of Oklahoma's large population of fundamentalist Christians, conservative Catholics, and active Mormons. This has been brought about by a growing number of "black-robed" or patriot pastors affiliated with Chuck Baldwin, the Constitution Party presidential candidate in 2008. Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ, under the leadership of former NFL player Paul Blair, was formed five years ago. Those attending the annual seminar have grown from 300 its first year to 3,000 in attendance this year.

The John Birch Society has had an effective presence in Oklahoma for many years. However, with the rise of the Tea Parties and the 9-12 groups, many Birch members joined with those groups and were quickly sought out for educational and leadership positions. While Birch members supported these new movements, many in these movements joined the Society, creating exponential growth in Oklahoma's Birch numbers.

Other older and more established groups such as Oklahomans for Sovereignty and Free Enterprise and



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the Oklahoma Conservative Political Action Committee (OCPAC), an organization of which I serve as Chairman, have also worked with their particular niches. In the previous five election cycles, OCPAC members have vetted and supported 72 candidates, with 37 of those being elected to office. On election night this year, there were 19 candidates on the ballot supported by OCPAC. Sixteen of them were elected to office. The members of OCPAC have never been interested in supporting just those expected to win, but rather true conservatives and constitutionalists.

With the legislative session beginning in February, it remains to be seen if the increase in Republican numbers will translate into an even more conservative government. Oklahoma's legislative leaders have great power over the agenda and are under enormous pressure from the state's establishment and powerful central planners. In most situations, the American and state governmental systems work as designed. If limited-government constitutionalists are engaged with and influencing elected officials, they will have good government. If not, then government becomes a magnet for self-serving special interests.



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