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Obama Wins Divided Electorate

Obama's lease renewed despite tough economic times

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama has claimed a second term from an incredibly divided electorate in trying economic times. He is bracing for daunting challenges and progress that comes only in fits and starts.

He told supporters at a victory rally early this morning that "the best is yet to come."

The same voters who gave Obama another four years also elected a divided Congress. Democrats retained control of the Senate; Republicans renewed their majority in the House.

The vanquished Republican, Mitt Romney, tried to set a more conciliatory tone on the way off the stage, saying the nation "can't risk partisan bickering" after a campaign filled with it.

Obama claimed a commanding electoral mandate - at least 303 electoral votes to 206 for Romney - although the popular vote was closer.

CONGRESS RDP

Democrats expand Senate grip but fail to win House

UNDATED (AP) - Democrats have strengthened their hold on the Senate but failed Tuesday to recapture the majority in the House of Representatives they lost two years ago.

Freshly re-elected President Barack Obama will face the same divided Congress in 2013 that has bedeviled efforts to enact his major legislation.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who may have a slightly bigger working majority, says "it's time to put politics aside and work together to find solutions."

House Speaker John Boehner also gets to keep his job, and he offered to work with any willing partner, Republican or Democrat, to get things done.

Congress returns next week to deal with unfinished business - including a looming "fiscal cliff" of $400 billion in higher taxes and $100 billion in spending cuts.

WHO VOTED-EXIT POLLS

NEW: Obama bets electorate matches 2008 - and wins

WASHINGTON (AP) - Barack Obama and Mitt Romney made sharply different bets about who would vote this year.

It turned out that Americans who cast ballots looked collectively much more like what Obama had envisioned - a diverse tapestry that reflected a changing America - than the whiter, older electorate that Romney had banked on.

Younger voters and minorities voted at levels not far off from the historic coalition Obama assembled in 2008. Republicans who banked on a more monolithic voting body sending them to the White House were caught off-guard.

The outcome revealed a stark problem for Republicans: If they don't broaden their tent, they won't move forward.

And it foreshadowed changes over the next generation that could put long-held Republican states onto the political battleground maps of the future.

GOVERNORS RDP

UPDATE: GOP sees limited results in governors' races

ST. LOUIS (AP) - Republicans poured tens of millions of dollars into an effort to gain control of more governors' offices, but the party saw limited results.

The GOP managed only to wrest North Carolina from Democrats for the first time in two decades. Democrats fended off Republican challengers in Missouri, New Hampshire, West Virginia,

Delaware and Vermont.

Votes in Washington and Montana - two states with open races for governor - were still being tallied early today.

Former Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory's victory in North Carolina came two years after Republicans snatched six governors' offices in the midterm elections. Those victories gave the party 29 governorships to 20 for Democrats and one independent going into the latest elections.

Republicans remained at the top of state government in North Dakota, Utah and Indiana.

Associated Press