

Democrats expand lead in local enrollment

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In the months leading up to next week's election, Orange, Ulster and Sullivan counties have gotten more blue.

Voter rolls in the region increased by 14,733 voters from April 1 to Nov. 1, with Democrats building on enrollment edges in all three counties, according to new state Board of Elections statistics.

Orange County saw an increase of 8,542 registered voters, including 3,154 Democrats and 1,614 Republicans. The registration advantage of Democrats to Republicans widened to 9,349, nearly doubling since the 2012 presidential election.

In Ulster County, voter rolls grew by 4,419 from April 1 to Nov. 1, with Democrats adding 2,091 voters, and Republicans 677. That gave Democrats an enrollment edge of 13,603.

In Sullivan County, Democrats maintained a large enrollment edge, adding 459 voters to Republicans' 440. Sullivan County added 1,772 new voters to the rolls since April 1. The Democratic enrollment edge increased to 4,649.

In all three counties, net enrollment increases during the past seven months outpaced the same period in 2012.

Gerald Benjamin, director of SUNY New Paltz's research arm, the Benjamin Center, said the recent trend builds on a larger, decades-long Democratic shift in New York. Older Republicans who may be moving away or dying off are being replaced by people moving from New York City, he said.

"The pattern is not that different from other suburban counties around New York City," said Benjamin, who is also a political science professor at the school.

Benjamin also said the national Republican label and its more conservative shift hasn't always aligned with the historically more centrist New York Republican views, which could account for some shifts in enrollment.

"The center of New York Republican politics is different than national Republican politics," Benjamin said.

The advantage has also shifted slightly in the 19th Congressional District, where the race between Republican John Faso and Democrat Zephyr Teachout is neck-and-neck. Democrats now have a razor-thin enrollment edge over Republicans for the first time since it was redrawn, with Democrats outnumbering Republicans by 165 voters.

That's a change from April 1, when active Republicans in the 19th District outnumbered Democrats by 2,375. The 19th District includes all or parts of 11 counties, including all of Ulster and Sullivan.

The registration deadline to vote in Tuesday's election was Oct. 14 in most cases, though some later registrations were accepted under certain circumstances.
