

# Could this year's election fallout shape 2018 races?

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How divided is Dutchess County?

Well, in the race for Dutchess County Comptroller, the Democratic challenger leads the two-term Republican incumbent by 412 votes in the more than 62,000 cast on Tuesday. That's a little more than half a percentage point of difference.

Later this week, elections workers will begin counting thousands of absentee ballots for a finally tally in that and other close races. But the closeness of the vote raises questions about next year's elections for state and federal offices, including governor.

Yet, despite the close vote and that Democrats have a slight enrollment edge over Republicans in Dutchess, most town supervisor positions last week went to GOP candidates. And in county government, Republicans hold offices for county executive, clerk, sheriff and district attorney. They also have the majority in the legislature.

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**[2018 ELECTIONS: How impact of 2017 could resonate in 12 months \(/story/news/local/new-york/2017/11/08/what-nys-elections-mean-2018/107465890/\)](#)**

What does it all mean for Dutchess? How could this year's elections shape next year's races? And how could national politics resonate locally?

[Republican Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro \(/search/Molinaro/\)](#) is reportedly eyeing a 2018 challenge against [Gov. Andrew Cuomo \(/search/Andrew%20Cuomo/\)](#), a two-term Democrat. And some say voter turnout against the Constitutional Convention helped Democrats on Tuesday while backlash against President Donald Trump could help them next year.



"I think the national conversation is going to be about Trump and the national reaction is going to be an environment favorable to Democrats," [Gerald Benjamin \(/story/news/local/2015/09/28/suny-new-paltz-center-named-longtime-professor/73002906/\)](#), director of the Benjamin Center, a regionally-focused think tank at the [State University of New York at New Paltz \(/search/SUNY%20New%20Paltz/\)](#), said of next year's elections.

Added Benjamin, "In Dutchess, if Marc Molinaro runs for governor, he'll carry Dutchess. That doesn't mean he'll get elected governor."

[Democratic Dutchess County Elections Commissioner Marco Caviglia \(/search/Caviglia/\)](#) could not be reached for comment.

[Republican Dutchess County Elections Commissioner Erik Haight \(/search/Erik%20Haight/\)](#) doesn't believe anti-GOP backlash can be predicted 12 months in advance.

"A year is an eternity in politics," Haight said.

As for Dutchess, Haight said Republican track records have generated Republican victories at the polls, for county and town leaders. Haight believes that trend will continue for local incumbent Republican state legislators in the 2018 elections.

But, Haight continued, "Dutchess County in gubernatorial and congressional years, it's essentially a fifty-fifty toss up. It comes down to the quality of the candidate, how hard they work and the effectiveness of the campaign."

If Molinaro runs, Haight said, "Obviously the Hudson Valley is in play."

The county comptroller race remains up for grabs between [Republican incumbent Jim Coughlan \(/search/Coughlan/\)](#) and Democrat Robin Lois. Haight believes this race remains close because the failed constitutional convention ballot proposal attracted a large number of union supporters who typically vote Democratic.

Dutchess County is home to 61,628 registered Democrats and 52,085 registered Republicans. Haight said voter turnout on Tuesday was 39 percent, typical for an odd-year election in which neither governor nor president are on the ballot.

Benjamin said population shifts from New York City northward are boosting the local numbers of voters who are Democrats or not enrolled in a political party.

Ten Republicans were elected to town supervisor posts in Dutchess, compared to five Democrats. However, the Town of Poughkeepsie supervisor race is still to close to call with hundreds of absentee ballots to be counted. Republican Town of Poughkeepsie Supervisor Jon Jay Baisley leads Democratic challenger Michael Treybich by only 37 votes.

But Benjamin said Republicans may have fared well in Dutchess County town supervisor races because there "is a lot of friend and neighbor politics going on at the local level in upstate New York. People are voting for the incumbents, the person they know, the person that has been in office a long time."

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