

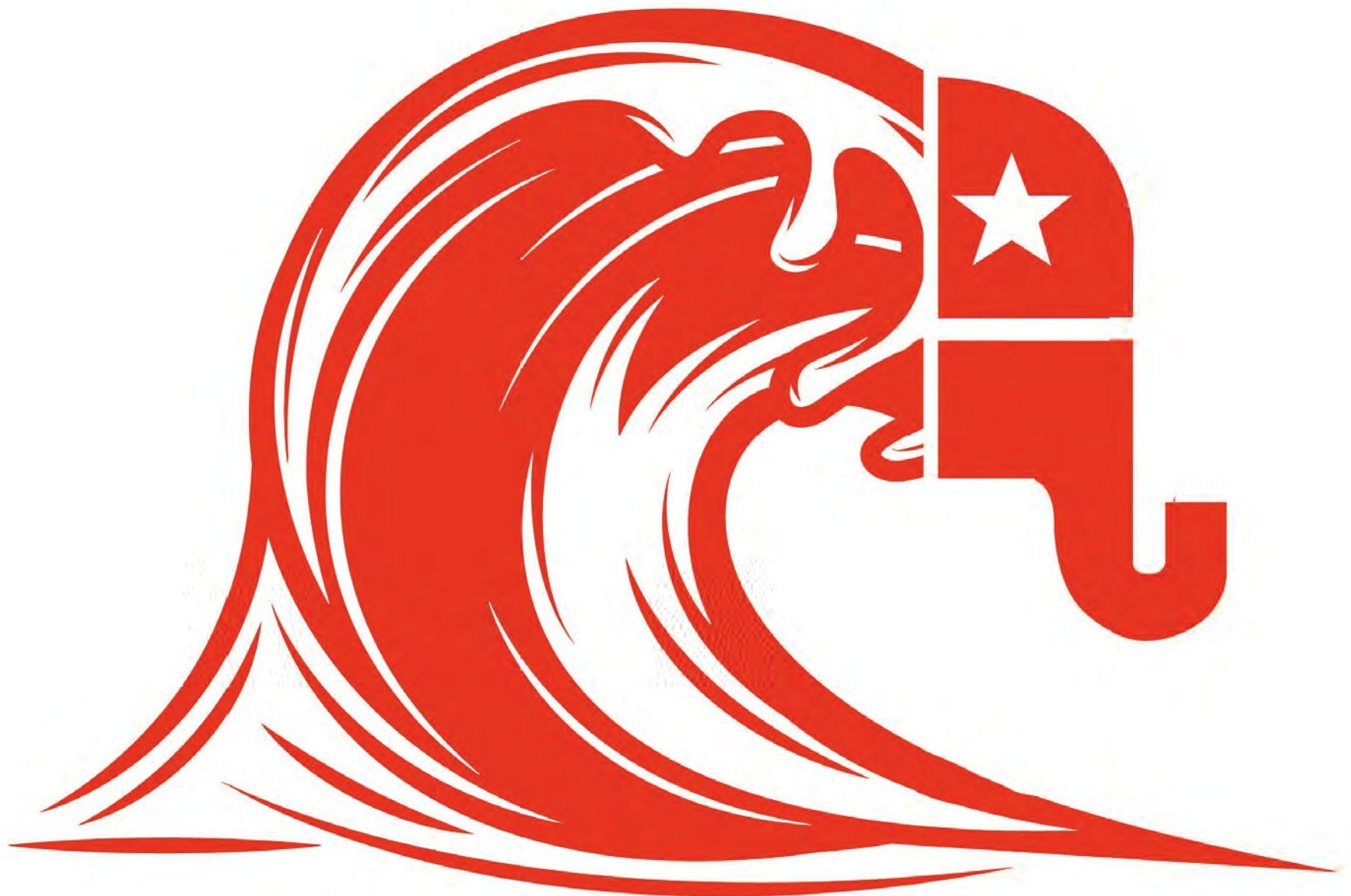


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RED WAVE

How the sweeping Republican victories may impact the business community

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RED WAVE

How the sweeping Republican victories may impact the business community

By ADINA GENN

If relationships are a currency on Long Island, business owners have ties to foster, given the sweeping red wave voters brought in during last week's election.

The Election Day outcome gave Republicans control of the Suffolk County Legislature, and expanded its majority in Nassau County. Republicans also won the two district attorney races in both counties, as well as took the Nassau County comptroller seat. And while there are still 19,859 absentee ballots to be counted in Nassau, Bruce Blakeman, a Republican, has declared victory in the county executive race, while incumbent Laura Curran, a Democrat, has yet to concede.

There's been much finger-pointing, from voters speaking out against leadership in Washington, DC, to New York's bail reform law, to who ran the better campaign and more.

But while these debates rage on, as new faces take on government leadership roles, it is business as usual for most owners.

Local experts shared insights with Long Island Business News on what the red wave might mean for the business community in the region.



MICHAEL DAWIDZIAK: 'For the business community, it might mean that elected officials in Washington and Albany will take notice of the suburbs.'



LARRY LEVY: 'Anyone who knows how things get done understands it's about personal relationships.'



KYLE STROBER is looking to conversations about the Hub, which has 'transformative potential in Nassau County.'



MATT COHEN: 'The LIA is eager to partner with elected officials who share our goals.'

"There's the stereotype that Republicans are better for business, but anyone who knows how things get done understands it's about personal relationships," said Larry Levy, vice president of economic development and professional studies at Hofstra University.

That view resonated with Michael Dawidziak, a political strategist and the president of Sayville-based Strategic Planning Systems, who said that Curran "was pro-business."

Experts agree that both parties support projects that spur economic development and advocate for paved roads, the Long Island Railroad Third Track project and sewer infrastructure, as well as provide meaningful resources that support continued business operations amid COVID-19.

Still, with the red wave, "for the business community, it might mean that elected officials in Washington and Albany will take notice of the suburbs," Dawidziak said.

Dawidziak said that Long Island was a top donor area in the country.

"We pay more than our fair share of the taxes," he added. "New York sends more money to Washington than it gets back." And Long Island sends "more money to Albany as a region."

Dawidziak noted that if Suffolk County Leg. Kevin McCaffrey becomes majority leader – he's currently minority leader – the region might see a "more pro-business approach in Suffolk County," adding "that's not to say Democrats were anti-business."

Meanwhile Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, who may throw his hat in New York's gubernatorial race next year, would now have to work with a Republican majority in 2022.

Pockets of new conversations

And for those developers and business owners with close ties to the current Democratic leaders – many who "governed like moderates" – they will have to develop new relationships, Levy said.

And should the absentee ballots sway Blakeman's way, "people in the business community who supported Laura Curran will

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make peace with Bruce Blakeman," he said.

Still, regardless of the recount, forthcoming discussions on the direction of the Nassau Hub and the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in the wake of COVID-19 and in the shadow of the soon-to-open UBS Arena at Belmont Park will carry on, Kyle Strober, executive director of Association for A Better Long Island said.

The Hub's pending development has "transformative potential in Nassau County," he said.

Curran's administration "worked very well with [Republican] Don Clavin and the Town of Hempstead," Strober pointed out. Yet with future discussions about the Hub, people will look to see "what that vision will be should a new county executive come in."

Levy didn't expect to see "anything significantly different that the average person would notice" at Nassau's Industrial Development Agency, which may see new leadership. He pointed out that its chairman, Richard Kessel, has served both parties in the past.

And save for North Hempstead – where a Democrat ran as a Republican, and according to Nassau County Democratic Chairman Jay Jacobs, won the race for supervisor – election results showed parties retaining their control. Democrats held on to Babylon and East Hampton, while Republicans held on to Oyster Bay, Hempstead, Huntington, Smithtown and Riverhead.

Still, Levy pointed out, "the people who control the purse strings for a business on Long Island are still governed by the same rules."

Yet, business leaders say, elections matter. "The election results are always important to the business community," said Phil An-

draws, president of the Long Island African Americans Chamber of Commerce.

The group, which bills itself as New York's largest African American chamber, "advocates for responsive government across different administrations," Andrews said.

"Small businesses do not operate in a vacuum as they are affected by the decisions that elected officials make under their jurisdictions," he said.

The chamber has served on the Nassau County Comptroller's Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises Committee for two consecutive administrations, and served on the Nassau County Executive Economic Recovery Committee, Andrews said.

"We will continue to forge partnerships with various government entities with the goal to improve the quality of life on Long Island and advocate on behalf of our members in the region," he said. "Wherever our interest is at stake, we will continue to be at the table to ensure that our voices are heard and a proper response is given to our concerns and needs by a responsive good government"

That sentiment is shared by the Long Island Association, the region's largest business group.

"At the LIA we work with any elected official, regardless of political party, that supports Long Island's business community," said Matt Cohen, LIA president and chief executive officer.

"Spurring new growth and improving our region's business climate transcends political affiliation and now, more than ever, our region needs leaders who are laser focused on our economic recovery," he said. "The LIA is eager to partner with elected officials who share our goals."

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PHIL ANDREWS: 'Small businesses do not operate in a vacuum as they are affected by the decisions that elected officials make under their jurisdictions.'