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Finally, a state government that reflects the public will

AUSTIN — Texas now has a state government that thinks like the people; a dream-team, if you will, reflecting the mood of Texans. It's about time.

Many pundits are suggesting the big conservative wins around the state are owed to global terrorism and a national emotionalism. In reality, this election was won on the basis of good ideas versus bad; new solutions vs. old problems.

More importantly, Texas conservatives succeeded in this election because of years of solid, steady gains — not at the ballot box, but in the beliefs of citizens across the state.

Even as conservative beliefs took root over the last several decades in Texas, they were not fully represented in the Legislature, thanks to district lines drawn to benefit Democrats. Texas conservatives have long held all or most of the statewide offices, and even made amazing strides in legislative races stacked heavily against them.

In a year that, by conventional wisdom, should have favored Democrats, Texas Republicans literally walked away with every prize, and then



MICHAEL SULLIVAN

Guest column

some. Tony Sanchez's millions garnered him an embarrassing defeat. John Sharp's near-iconic status with the media elite was handily defeated by a relative newcomer.

A Republican speaker will control the House for the first time, while the Senate's GOP majority has been increased.

The commanding majority in the House reflects the pent-up conservatism of Texans held at bay by the old guard.

Apologists for the left, and even light-weight conservatives unaccustomed to victory, are crediting factors outside philosophy for the Election Day sweep. Sure, the potential for war played a part. Yes, the popularity of President Bush was a

factor.

But the fact remains that margins were so great, the majorities so decisive, only a fool could presume conservatives do not have a mandate to govern as conservatives.

Texas' growth over the past decade was driven principally by individuals fleeing high taxes and overregulation in other states and nations. Having made themselves at home in the Lone Star State, these new Texans evidently are unwilling to see repeated here the liberal mistakes of big government and high taxes that they ran away from in the first place.

From the governor's mansion to the lowliest of state House freshmen, the people of Texas have said in no uncertain terms that they are ready for significant changes in both the style of governance and the state's approach to issues. They want conservative ideals — not compromising deals — reflected in the new laws that will govern this state.

Let liberal apologists beware: The way government approaches issues is going to be different.

The people have demanded it. The debate has changed: New spending will be scrutinized more, and old spending must be justified; once sacred programs will now have to prove their worth to the taxpayer. An income tax is dead-on-arrival.

Significant reforms of our schools can get underway, and building our way out of traffic congestion can begin. Free-market conservatives understand that government is slower to respond to market pressures than are individual consumers and businesses. Similarly, the old way of doing things is finally passing away, even if 20 years behind the will of the people.

The mantle of leadership has been laid at the feet of Texas conservatives. The question remains as to how effectively they will wear it, how efficiently they will usher in the new ideas.

Stripping away everything else, the election tally simply inaugurates political leadership that finally looks philosophically like the beliefs Texas citizens have held for a long time.

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