

# Beaten state G.O.P. asks, 'What happened?'

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How could it possibly have happened? That is the Republicans' question as they look over their dead and wounded lying scattered around Tuesday's legislative-election battlefield.

They remember a more joyful Republican day last spring. In a United States Courthouse courtroom, it was ruled that the state's new redistricting plan would remain in force.

Drawn by a Washington geographer, the plan produced howls of anguish from a couple of Democrats. It was, said Democratic Senator R. R. (Bob) Greive, a Republican plot.

The lines were drawn to hand over a decade of House and Senate control to Republicans, he said. (Really the plan wasn't so pro-Republican. Most house Democrats



William Chatalas

were quietly happy with it.)

Last Tuesday Democrats swept into control of the House, perhaps by a 57-41 margin, more or less. And the Democrats bolstered their already-firm rule in the Senate. The margin there may be 32-19.

To accomplish that, Democrats simply out-hustled and out-organized the Republicans. It had been the other way around in 1970. Republican House control looked terribly fragile that year. But C. Montgomery (Gummie) Johnson, then the state G.O.P. chairman, scurried around the state, found candidates, coached them and

worked with them on campaign methods. It paid off. The G.O.P. managed to win a 51-48 margin. This year there was no Gummie Johnson to help Republican candidates. He left the state chairmanship in December, 1970. Democrats, however, had learned a lesson from Gummie.

Representative William Chatalas, a Seattle leader of House Democrats, says that this year "We got a good product (attractive candidates) and we advertised it." That, essentially, was what Johnson had always done for Republicans.

Chatalas and such fellow Democratic house leaders as Bob Perry, Robert Charette and Len Sawyer moved out early in the year, finding Democratic candidates, arranging "schools" for them and helping raise campaign money.

The candidates were coached on key issues. They were briefed on which Democratic votes in the

## Redistricting hopes fizzled

Analysis

last Legislature were "friendly" to property-tax payers, and which Republican votes were "unfriendly."

In January, during the legislative session, House Republicans had gotten boxed into some party bloc votes against open committee meetings.

"We (Democrats) voted as a bloc for it," Chatalas recalled. "The public and media were pleading for it." Democratic candidates were carefully coached on how to devastate a Republican opponent on that issue, too. And others.

"As we moved around the state, we noticed sometimes that the Republicans were following us," Sawyer recalled. But the

Republican "candidate marketing" was too feeble.

Sharp Republican House members such as Stu Bledsoe, Hal Wolf and Tom Copeland weren't able to move around the state to help G.O.P. candidates. Stepping out of the House, each was involved in his own campaign. Each lost.

So, despite the Nixon victory and Dan Evans' re-election in this state, there were Republican disasters which could spell trouble for some G.O.P. leaders.

Some party members already are asking grumbling questions:

Why did the Democrats take it away from us in the

Legislature when we had such a good shot at it?

Why didn't the party come up with better congressional candidates than a beer-drinking longhair (in the 7<sup>th</sup> District) or a McGovernite tombstone sales-lady (in the 5<sup>th</sup>)?

Among the principal targets of such pointed questions is Earl Davenport, state G.O.P. chairman.

Meanwhile joyful House Democrats are scheduled to meet Sunday to elect their speaker of the House and move into total control of the Legislature. (Ironically, an intra-caucus fight between Greive and Senator August Mardesich helped Democrats in Senate contests. The two men poured immense help into campaigns to help their own leadership aspirations. That helped elect Democrats to the Senate.)