



What's ahead for Maryland Republican party after midterm elections?

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November 9, 2022

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Failed Republican gubernatorial candidate Dan Cox led his party down a "blind alley" with no exit strategy in sight, according to a scholar for the Cato Institute.

Cox was defeated at the polls Tuesday gaining only 37% of the vote, despite running in a state that has had a popular Republican governor, Larry Hogan, since 2014.

"It can't stay where it is, at least not if it hopes to win any elections in the future," said Walter K. Olson, senior fellow at the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies as he reflected on the state of Maryland's Republican Party in the wake of the midterm elections. "It has gone up blind alley, and it decided, for whatever reason in the primaries, that it was going to repudiate its own governor who had been tremendously popular and successful."

By contrast to Cox's defeat, Hogan won his last election in 2018 with 55% percent of the vote.

Olson blames former President Donald Trump and the pandemic for the party's problems in Maryland. He said many deeply conservative Republicans turned against Hogan for ordering public health lockdowns during the pandemic and for refusing to side with Trump's false claims of a stolen election.

"I'd vote for Joe Biden before I'd vote for Larry Hogan," shouted one Cox supporter Tuesday night outside Washington County's Republican headquarters in Hagerstown.

In the 2022 primary, Republicans went with Frederick County State Delegate Cox, an election denier who had sponsored an unsuccessful bill in the General Assembly to impeach Hogan. Olsen says the damage to state Republicans is now widespread with potential future conservative leaders like former Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman and former Harford County Executive Barry Glassman now crippled by losses in their races down ballot.

"Barry Glassman would have made a possible governor," Olson said. "Allan Kittleman just lost a second time. So they become less plausible statewide winners for your next time given how badly the party has been beaten up."

Olson said Cox and failed attorney general candidate Michael Peroutka energized Democrats and demoralized a significant number of more moderate Republicans.

"They figure, 'Alright, how do I deal with the Cox problem? I don't show up at all,'" Olson said.

Olson added that Cox's campaign may have ruined chances for fellow conservative Delegate Neil Parrott to succeed in his effort to unseat incumbent Democrat David Trone in their contest for the state's 6th Congressional District representing Western Maryland and parts of Montgomery County. As of Wednesday, Parrott and Trone remained deadlocked in a too-close-to-call race. Neither had conceded.

But nearly 60,000 mail-in ballots were yet to be counted Wednesday, and most are from Trone strongholds in Montgomery County.