

THE SACRAMENTO BEE [sacbee.com](http://sacbee.com)

# Brown survives Whitman's spending spree to win handily in governor's race

McClatchy Newspapers

Published Wednesday, Nov. 03, 2010

SACRAMENTO, Calif -- SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The most expensive non-presidential race in U.S. history ended Tuesday with Democrat Jerry Brown back in the California Governor's Office after surviving more than \$160 million in campaign spending by Republican Meg Whitman.

Exit polling and the Associated Press projected that Brown would be the winner.

With 48 percent of votes counted, Brown was claiming 52 percent of ballots cast to Whitman's 43 percent.

"They haven't got all the votes in yet, but hell it's good enough for government work," Brown told supporters gathered for a victory party at the Fox Theater in Oakland. "It looks like I'm going back again."

Brown said the election reflected "real divisions, and the divisions tonight in California will be divisions in the state Capitol. I take as my challenge forging a common purpose."

Whitman told a crowd gathered at the Universal City Hilton in Los Angeles that "we've come up a little short."

"It is my hope that a new era of bipartisan problem-solving can begin tonight ...," she said. "Tomorrow, we are all Californians."

The 72-year-old Democrat will become the state's oldest governor ever elected and the first to return to office after serving years before. He was among the youngest governors in state history when he first held the post, from 1975 to 1983.

Brown's victory defied national trends Tuesday as Republicans scored gains across the country and took control of the House of Representatives. The two candidates sought to replace Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in a year marked by stubborn double-digit unemployment and the longest budget standoff in state history.

Brown can now relish a prize - a third gubernatorial term - that eluded his famous father, Gov. Pat Brown, who lost to Ronald Reagan in 1966. Only one governor, Earl Warren, was previously elected to three terms in California.

With her loss, Whitman joins 1998 gubernatorial hopeful Al Checchi and 1994 U.S. Senate candidate Michael Huffington on the list of self-funded wealthy candidates in the state who fell

short on Election Day.

Ultimately, the election became a referendum on Whitman, a political newcomer who had rarely voted but was breaking spending records to become governor.

Whitman, the billionaire former CEO of online auction company eBay, saturated the airwaves with more than a year of paid advertising and ran a tightly controlled campaign that rarely strayed from its talking points.

Whitman surpassed New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg as the biggest self-funding candidate in U.S. history, investing \$141.6 million of her own money in the race.

Her loyalty to the campaign script kept from voters a more human glimpse of the candidate, said Corey Cook, an assistant professor of political science at the University of San Francisco. He said the famously irreverent Brown came across as more personable, especially in the race's three debates.

"I see this election more through the lens of why she wasn't able to connect with voters," Cook said. "Undoubtedly, part of that was she has her own deficiencies as a candidate." It was also true, he said, that "the only group disliked more than politicians now are corporate CEOs."

The biggest game-changer, said political consultants from both parties, was the controversy over Whitman's former housekeeper Nicky Diaz Santillan, who came forward in late September saying the Republican had employed her for nine years and had reason to believe she was an illegal immigrant.

Whitman said she learned of Diaz Santillan's immigration status only in June 2009 and then promptly fired her, without offering to help her become a legal resident.

Spanish-language media reported heavily on Diaz Santillan's case and looped footage of her tearfully recounting Whitman's refusal to help her stay in the country. Polls showed Whitman's Latino support eroding after the story broke.

"It exposed (Whitman) as being mean and made her look uncaring," said political analyst Tony Quinn. "And the public had not seen Whitman other than through television spots. In the fiasco over the housekeeper, they saw her without the cocoon of her campaign spots."

Throughout her campaign, Whitman stuck to promises to reduce the state work force by 40,000 people - later reducing the figure to 33,000 - cut taxes, streamline business regulations and take on public employee unions. She also said her experience leading eBay had given her the business know-how to chip away at the state's 12.4 percent unemployment rate.

Brown also played up his background as a two-term governor, mayor of Oakland and current attorney general, saying it gave him the depth of experience necessary to bring about a new era of bipartisanship.

Especially during the summer, Brown faced trials of his own as he held his fire while Whitman ran ads slamming him as a failed career politician. Facing an enormous fundraising disadvantage, Brown began running paid advertising only after Labor Day.

Union-funded independent expenditure groups, however, came to Brown's aid in the meantime, ultimately spending more than \$28 million against Whitman. Two law enforcement unions also spent \$2.5 million against Brown.

"Given what Jerry had at his disposal, there was an idea that (the Whitman campaign) might stay off for a couple of weeks, give the electorate a chance to take a break from her," said Democratic

consultant Roger Salazar, who ran a pro-Brown group called California Working Families. "We were able to successfully force her to abandon that. And she basically oversaturated the marketplace."

The Democrat raised and spent about \$40 million for his campaign, with much of the money coming from union contributors. He sailed through the primary after the only other major Democratic primary challenger, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, dropped out of the race in October 2008.

Whitman spent \$84 million before the June 8 primary, when she demolished Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner, and at least \$75 million in the general election.

The two candidates stayed statistically tied in public opinion polls until after their first debate on Sept. 28, when Brown began pulling away in the polls.

As governor, Brown will immediately face an estimated budget deficit of more than \$10 billion as soon as he takes office on Jan. 3, 2011.

Republican consultant Adam Mendelsohn, a former deputy chief of staff to Schwarzenegger, said Brown might be in a better position to win needed concessions from Democratic legislators and state employee unions to balance the state's budget.

"It's going to take a Democrat telling the majority party 'no' to make some of the important fixes," Mendelsohn said. "When I'm the most optimistic, I think Jerry Brown at this stage of his career, as a member of the majority party, has a unique opportunity to make fixes that really only he could."