BIG UPSET IN SOUTH CAROLINA MIDTERM SENATE ELECTIONS

OVERVIEW

On an election night full of surprising results across the country, South Carolina did something not seen in decades – voters elected a Democrat to the U.S. Senate. Dr. Annie Andrews defeated Sen. Darlene Graham, who was serving out the remainder of her late brother's term, despite a late surge in campaign activity in the weeks before the election. President Trump, who endorsed Darlene, visited the state three times (between August and November) to drive up support among Republicans.

Dr. Andrews won 51.1% of the votes cast, flipping the South Carolina seat from Republican to Democrat and overturning the 10-point margin Sen. Lindsey Graham won over Jaime Harrison in 2020. This victory came on a night when Democrats flipped 7 Senate seats across the country - North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Kansas, Iowa, and Maine - with results in Alaska and Mississippi yet to be confirmed. Democrats also flipped about 43 seats in the U.S. House, wrestling control of both chambers of Congress from the Republicans. Democrats are projected to have an 83-seat majority in the next congressional term.

Republicans, however, maintained the South Carolina governorship and state offices, with Alan Wilson fending off Dr. Jermaine Johnson's push.

THE CLAFLIN POLL

The election results are consistent with the findings of the 2026 Claflin Poll – conducted between October 15 and 21, which called Dr. Annie Andrews ahead of Darlene Graham among the 751 registered voters they surveyed. Details of the poll are published on the POSBRI website.

TURNOUT

About 2,054,240 votes were cast in this year's Senate race in the state, according to the SC Elections Commission, representing a 59.75% turnout. This is a significant increase compared to the 50.9% recorded in the 2022 midterms.

STATEWIDE RACES

Republican clean sweep

Former Attorney General Alan Wilson won the race for governor in a race that proved more competitive than the polls had suggested. Wilson won 51.58% of the vote on election night, a 13.42-point swing toward the Democrats compared with the 2024 presidential election. This win makes Alan Wilson the fourth successive Republican to lead the state, following Mark Sanford, Nikki Haley, and Henry McMaster, in a run that dates to January 2003.

In other races, Republican Mark Hammond beat Democrat Jason Belton for Secretary of State, winning with 52.97%. With 52.30% of the vote, David Stumbo (Republican) beat Richard Hricik (Democrat) for Attorney General. Republicans Curtis Loftis, Mike Burkhold, Ellen Weaver, and Cody Simpson won their elections as the next State Treasurer, Comptroller General, Superintendent of Education, and Commissioner of Agriculture, respectively. This represents a clean sweep for Republicans in South Carolina's statewide races.

SENATE AND HOUSE RESULTS

U.S. Senate

Annie Andrews (D)	Darline Graham (R)
51.14%	46.64%

U.S. House

DIST.	LEADING CANDIDATE	RUNNER-UP
1	Nancy Lacore (D) 49.66%	Jenny Costa Honeycutt (R) 48.63%
2	Joe Wilson (R) 49.82%	Zyon Khalifa (D) 48.83%
3	Sheri Biggs (R) 63.68%	Eunice Lehmacher (D) 34.39%
4	William Timmons (R) 51.71%	Courtney McClain (D) 45.65%
5	Wes Climer (R) 52.81%	Mallory Dittmer (D) 47.13%
6	Jim Clyburn (D) 69.36%	John Peterson (R) 30.52%
7	Russell Fry (R) 56.71%	John Gregory Vincent (D) 43.23%

This year's U.S. House races drew national attention, given Democrats' performance across the country. In addition to flipping the Senate seat, Democrat Nancy Lacore also flipped the District 1 seat blue. The seat was previously held by Republican Nancy Mace, who stepped down to make a run for the governor's mansion. This flip gives Democrats two congressional seats in the U.S. House next term.

In the district 2 race, Republican Joe Wilson survived a close election after his 19-point edge in 2024 against David Robinson II shrank to less than 1 point against Zyon Khalifa.

Wilson's win means that all incumbents in this year's midterms retained their seats in the state, with Nancy Lacore (Democrat) and Wes Climer (Republican) as the state's new members heading to Washington, D.C., in January 2027.



Author

Dr. Kwadwo Poku-Agyemang

Director,
Public Opinion and Social Behavior Research Institute (POSBRI)