

National Association of State Boards of Education

➔ Education Drives State and Federal Elections in 2022

By Joseph Hedger and Abigail Potts

Politically charged education issues roiled the 2022 races for seats on state boards of education, yet none of the boards flipped partisan control. However, majority parties expanded their representation on boards in Colorado, Kansas, and Utah so far. Of the 63 seats on the ballot for 12 state boards, 35 incumbent candidates were reelected.

There are approximately 525 state board of education positions total, with about 12 percent on the ballot in 2022. The majority of state board members—about 75 percent—are appointed rather than elected. However, not all elected candidates were on the ballot, since many states stagger terms across districts.

Redistricting affected state board elections. Colorado voters had two new seats on the

ballot, including a new eighth congressional district and an at-large seat. Kansas voter district boundaries shifted following passage of a senate bill to redraw the districts after decades of population shifts. However, this did complicate matters for some incumbents in running again in their districts. New district boundaries in Texas resulted in all 15 state board seats being on the ballot this year. Ohio and Utah also saw new state board district maps, which pitted some incumbent board members against each other in Utah.

In 36 governors races, voters mostly favored incumbents. All gubernatorial incumbents on the ballot won reelection, aside from Nevada, where Republican Joe Lombardo ousted Gov. Stephen Sisolak. Nine newcomers were elected in total, with political parties flipping in Arizona, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Nevada (see map). In all four, the governor appoints the state board of education.

On the federal level, the most predictable aspect of American politics has long been a loss of seats for the president's party in midterm elections. However, 2022 gains for Republicans fell short of expectations. While Republicans won a slim majority in the House, Democrats managed to maintain the Senate by nudging ahead in some close races.

ELECTED STATE BOARDS

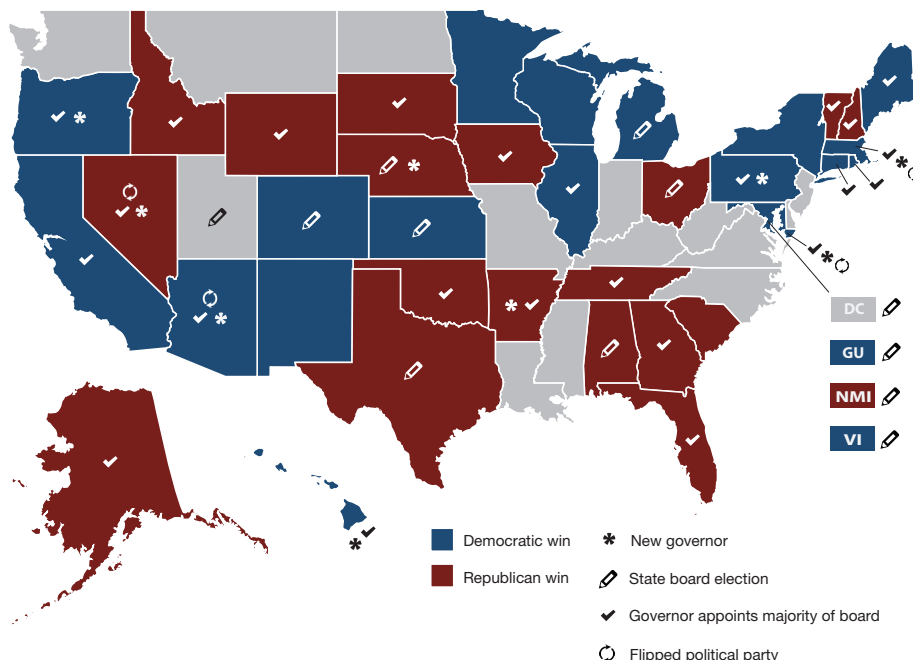
In **Alabama**, incumbents Tracie West and Yvette Richardson won uncontested general elections. Incumbent Wayne Reynolds also won reelection after facing Libertarian candidate Patrick Wallace. Republican Marie Manning ran unopposed in the general election for the open District 6 seat.

The **Colorado State Board of Education** added two seats this year to make nine total, one representing a new congressional district, and another statewide at-large seat to maintain an odd number of board members. Democrat Rhonda Solis narrowly beat former board member Peggy Propst for the new District 8 seat, and Kathy Plomer was elected to the open statewide at-large seat. Incumbents Steve Durham and Rebecca McClellan held onto their seats in Districts 5 and 6.

Republicans won every state board seat on the ballot in **Kansas**. New district boundaries disqualified Democrat Janet Waugh from running again in District 1, where newcomer Danny Zeck was elected to replace her. Incumbent Michelle Dombrosky was reelected in District 3. Cathy Hopkins defeated incumbent Jean Clifford for the District 5 seat in the Republican primary and ran unopposed in the general election, and Dennis Hershberger won over incumbent Ben Jones in the Republican primary for District 7. Republican incumbent Jim Porter faced a primary challenge, then ran unopposed in the general election for District 9.

While the governor appoints 13 of the 14 state board members in **Maryland**, current teachers across the state voted in March to reelect Rachel McCusker to fill the teacher member role. She began her second term in July 2022.

Nine States Elect New Governors in 2022



Two of eight state board seats were on the ballot in **Michigan**. Democrat Pamela Pugh ran as the only incumbent candidate, while current Michigan board president, Casandra Ulbrich, did not run after finishing her second eight-year term. NASBE recently awarded Ulbrich a 2022 Distinguished Service Award for her bipartisan leadership and steadfast commitment to ensuring Michigan students have access to quality schools. Pugh and newcomer Mitchell Robinson won the general election for the two at-large seats.

State board activity over the past few years, including on sex education standards and the role of parents in education, animated voters who aimed to replace incumbents on the **Nebraska State Board of Education**. Elizabeth Tegtmeier ousted incumbent Robin Stevens in District 7, and after Maureen Nickels announced she was not running again, Sherry Jones was elected to replace her in District 6. Kirk Penner, who was appointed to fill the vacancy in District 5 after Patricia Timm announced her retirement in 2021, won the general election for his seat, and Deborah Neary won her second term in District 8. These new members will come at a pivotal time. Since Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt announced his intention to resign at the start of 2023, the state board will appoint his replacement.

In **Ohio**, the state board appoints the state superintendent of public instruction, a position filled on an interim basis by Stephanie Siddens following the resignation of Steve Dackin, who had also served on the state board. Ohio's board has eight appointed at-large members and 11 regionally elected members. Following the 2022 elections, incumbents Charlotte McGuire and John Hagan retook their seats in Districts 3 and 7. However, board members Jenny Kilgore and Tim Miller lost their seats to Katie Hofmann and Tom Jackson in Districts 4 and 8. Teresa Fedor took the open seat in District 2.

All nine incumbents on the ballot for the **Texas State Board of Education** were re-elected. In District 2, newcomer L.J. Francis was narrowly in the lead over Victor Perez at this writing, which, if called for Francis, would flip the seat from Democrat to Republican for the first time since 2012. Otherwise, no seats flipped political parties, even where incumbents lost out to newcomers in the primaries. Evelyn Brooks defeated incumbent Sue Melton-Malone in the Republican primary for District 14 before winning the general election, and Aaron Kinsey ran unopposed

in District 15 after defeating incumbent Jay Johnson in the Republican primary.

In **Utah**, five of the eight seats up for election were in districts with previously nonpartisan elected board members, since the board switched to a partisan ballot only in 2020. Three incumbents on the ballot regained their seats. After defeating long-time board member Janet Cannon at the Republican Convention, Melanie Monestere advanced to the general election for District 6 but lost to Democrat incumbent Carol Barlow Lear. Republican Christina Boggess ran unopposed in the general election after defeating incumbent Stacey Hutchings in the Republican convention. Redrawn district maps moved Cannon from District 8 to 6, and Hutchings from 6 to 8. Newcomer Republicans Joseph Kerry, LeAnn Wood, Christina Boggess, Emily Green, and Democrat Sarah Reale won in their districts.

In **Washington, DC**, there were no incumbents on the ballot. Ben Williams ran unopposed in Ward 1. Eric Goulet and Brandon Best won in Wards 3 and 6. After Zachary Parker announced that he would be running for the DC Council rather than the state board, Robert Henderson replaced him in Ward 5.

The territories also saw mostly incumbent victories on their state board races. Five incumbent candidates returned to their seats on the **Guam Education Board**, and newcomer Angel Sablan took Robert Crisostomo's place on the board. Four incumbents won in the **U.S. Virgin Islands State Board of Education** elections, and Antonio Borja and Andrew Orsini were reelected to Districts 2 and 3 on the **Northern Mariana Islands** state board.

IMPACT OF GOVERNORS' ELECTIONS

In states where the governor appoints the majority of the board, voters returned incumbent Democratic governors in four states and incumbent Republican governors in ten. In a few states, the governor takes a formal role in the state board or state education agency. In Alabama, where the governor serves as president of the state board of education, Republican incumbent Kay Ivey was reelected by a wide margin. Oregon's race for the open governor's seat was a surprisingly close race between Democrat Tina Kotek and Republican Christine Drazen, after a 36-year history of Democratic control. However, Kotek pulled through in the end and will now serve also as the state superintendent of schools, where she will be able to appoint a deputy superintendent, who oversees the state education agency.

Several anticipated close governor races may be bellwethers for 2024—many with a direct impact on state boards. Arizona saw a close race between Democratic candidate Katie Hobbs and Republican candidate Kari Lake, with education issues playing a strong role in both candidates' campaigns. Katie Hobbs's win results in a party shift in Arizona, where the governor appoints members of the board. In Maryland, Wes Moore was elected as the state's first African American governor after defeating Republican Dan Cox, returning the state governor's office to Democratic control after Republican Larry Hogan's two terms. Moore can also appoint new state board members in 2023.

While the anticipated national "red wave" did not materialize, Republicans had a strong showing in the Sunshine State. Voters returned Florida incumbent governor Ron DeSantis by a wide margin. In Miami-Dade, a traditionally Democratic-leaning county, Governor DeSantis won by 11 points, signaling a possible shift toward Republicans there and with implications for elections in 2024.

Kansas's governor's race was especially close, as incumbent Laura Kelly sought to maintain Democratic leadership, which she first won in 2018, as she faced Kansas Republican Attorney General Derek Schmidt. Education issues played into the governor's race as well as the state board elections. Michigan's incumbent Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer, returned to office by a wider than anticipated margin. While Michigan voters also elect state board members, the resignation of board member Jason Strayhorn gives Whitmer the opportunity to appoint a successor to complete the seat's term that ends in 2028.

New York Democrat Kathy Hochul won her first full term by a relatively narrow margin after stepping into the role following the resignation of Andrew Cuomo in August 2021. New York's state legislature, which elects members of the state board, saw Democratic Party control maintained in the state assembly and senate.

Wisconsin, where there is no state board, held a closely watched governors race. Former chief state school officer and incumbent Democratic governor Tony Evers won reelection in a tight race against Republican Tim Michaels. In a lighthearted remark during his acceptance speech, Governor Evers said, "As it turns out, boring wins [and Mr. Rogers is cool.]"

ELECTED STATE CHIEFS

Seven state education chiefs were on the ballot in 2022. In Arizona, Thomas Horne, who served in the role from 2003 to 2011, was elected superintendent of public instruction after incumbent Democrat Kathy Hoffman conceded following an extremely close race. Incumbent Tony Thurmond defeated Lance Christensen in California's nonpartisan election for state superintendent. Georgia voters reelected Republican Richard Woods to the state superintendent role. In Idaho, former state board chair Debbie Critchfield defeated incumbent Sherri Ybarra in the Republican primary and won the general election. Democrat Joy Hofmeister, Oklahoma's superintendent of public instruction, chose not to run again after announcing her candidacy for governor. Republican Ryan Walters won the election to take Hofmeister's place and also serve as chair of the Oklahoma State Board of Education.

Last year, South Carolina Superintendent Molly Spearman announced that she would not seek reelection following two terms. In a Republican primary runoff, Ellen Weaver defeated Kathy Maness then won the general election. Incumbent Superintendent Brian Schroeder in Wyoming lost the Republican primary to newcomer Megan Degenfelder, who ran against Democrat Sergio Maldonado in the general election and won.

BALLOT MEASURES

A few states also voted on ballot measures relevant to education policymaking. By a 16-point margin, West Virginia voters rejected an amendment to the state constitution that would have required the state board to submit new rules and regulations to the legislature for final approval. Kansans also voted down, albeit narrowly, a constitutional amendment that would have enabled the legislature to overrule any executive agency's rule or regulation. California voters supported Proposition 28 funding for music and arts education. Colorado voters passed a ballot measure to create and fund a universal free meals program for all public school students.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Education has and will always be a sector where leadership matters. Next year, when new and continuing state and federal edu-

cation leaders take office, they will need to draw from experience, forge common ground, and take a pragmatic approach to governing focused on increasing positive outcomes for students. With the economy a prominent factor influencing voters, education leaders have a timely opportunity to innovate and scale promising career and technical education programs, such as work-based learning, apprenticeships, and industry-recognized credentials, which can reengage students and set them up to thrive. As states work to positively transform education, leveraging diverse community perspectives, including from families, students, and educators, to ensure meaningful engagement will be essential to create the shared ownership necessary to sustain reforms.

New state board members will take office during a time of unprecedented federal investments in education and take responsibility for translating those investments into improvements for students. Building relationships will be a key to success. As one retiring veteran board member stated, "It takes a village to raise a board member, and [it] has been an honor to serve with knowledgeable leaders so passionate about education." As the season of election politics ends, new state board members must now shift their focus to the hard work of governing education systems. They will need to rely on data, evidence, and a coalition of passionate education supporters to help them do so effectively.

Joseph Hedger is associate editor at NASBE. Abigail Potts is director of strategic initiatives and planning.

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POLICY UPDATES are published by the National Association of State Boards of Education, 123 N. Pitt Street, Suite 350, Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703.684.4000 • www.nasbe.org. Paolo DeMaria, president and CEO. Valerie Norville, editorial director. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Opinions and views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of NASBE, its members, or its sponsors.

The National Association of State Boards of Education is the only national organization focused solely on the nation's state boards of education. NASBE develops, supports, and empowers citizen leaders on state boards of education to strengthen public education systems so students of all backgrounds and circumstances are prepared to succeed in school, work, and life.

Table 1. Results from SBE, Governor, and Chief Elections, 2022

State	Result	State	Result
Alabama (partisan ballot)	Gov: Kay Ivey, R* SBE: Tracie West, R (2)*; Yvette Richardson, D (4)*; Marie Manning, R (6); Wayne Reynolds, R (8)*	Massachusetts (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Maura Healey, D
Alaska (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Mike Dunleavy, R*	Michigan (partisan ballot)	Gov: Gretchen Whitmer, D* SBE: Pamela Pugh, D*; Mitchell Robinson, D
Arizona (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Katie Hobbs, D Chief: Thomas Horne, R	Minnesota (no SBE)	Gov: Tim Walz, D*
Arkansas (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Sarah Huckabee Sanders, R	Nebraska (nonpartisan ballot)	Gov: Jim Pillen, R SBE: Kirk Penner (5)*; Sherry Jones (6); Elizabeth Tegtmeier (7); Deborah Neary (8)*
California (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Gavin Newsom, D* Chief: Tony Thurmond, D*	Nevada (governor appoints 3 of 7 SBE members)	Gov: Joe Lombardo, R
Colorado (partisan ballot)	Gov: Jared Polis, D* SBE: Steve Durham, R (5)*; Rebecca McClellan, D (6)*; Rhonda Solis, D (8); Kathy Plomer, D (At-Large)	New Hampshire (governor and executive council appoint SBE)	Gov: Chris Sununu, R*
Connecticut (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Ned Lamont, D*	New Mexico (no SBE)	Gov: Michelle Lujan Grisham, D*
Florida (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Ron DeSantis, R*	New York (legislature appoints SBE)	Gov: Kathy Hochul, D*
Georgia (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Brian Kemp, R* Chief: Richard Woods, R*	Ohio (11 elected by nonpartisan ballot; governor appoints 8)	Gov: Mike DeWine, R* SBE: Teresa Fedor (2); Charlotte McGuire (3)*; Katie Hofmann (4); John Hagan (7)*; Tom Jackson (8)
Hawaii (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Josh Green, D	Oklahoma (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Kevin Stitt, R* Chief: Ryan Walters, R
Idaho (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Brad Little, R* Chief: Debbie Critchfield, R	Oregon (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Tina Kotek, D
Illinois (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: J.B. Pritzker, D*	Pennsylvania (governor appoints 17 of 21 SBE members)	Gov: Josh Shapiro, D
Iowa (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Kim Reynolds, R*	Rhode Island (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Daniel McKee, D*
Kansas (partisan ballot)	Gov: Laura Kelly, D* SBE: Danny Zeck, R (1); Michelle Dombrosky, R (3)*; Cathy Hopkins, R (5); Dennis Hershberger, R (7); Jim Porter, R (9)*	South Carolina (governor appoints 1; legislature appoints 16)	Gov: Henry McMaster, R* Chief: Ellen Weaver, R
Maine (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Janet Mills, D*	South Dakota (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Kristi Noem, R*
Maryland (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Wes Moore, D	Tennessee (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Bill Lee, R*

State	Result	State	Result
Texas (partisan ballot)	Gov: Greg Abbott, R* SBE: Melissa Ortega, D (1); L.J. Francis, R (2); Marisa Perez-Diaz, D (3)*; Staci Childs, D (4); Rebecca Bell-Metereau, D (5)*; Will Hickman, R (6)*; Julie Pickren, R (7); Audrey Young, R (8)*; Keven Ellis, R (9)*; Tom Maynard, R (10)*; Patricia Hardy, R (11)*; Pam Little, R (12)*; Aicha Davis, D (13)*; Evelyn Brooks, R (14); Aaron Kinsey, R (15)	District of Columbia (nonpartisan ballot)	Mayor: Muriel Bowser, D* SBE: Ben Williams (1); Eric Goulet (3); Robert Henderson (5); Brandon Best (6)
Utah (partisan ballot)	SBE: Jennie Earl, R (1)*; Joseph Kerry, R (2); LeAnn Wood, R (4); Sarah Reale, D (5); Carol Barlow Lear, D (6)*; Christina Boggess, R (8); Cindy Davis, R (11)*; Emily Green, R (14)	Guam (6 elected at large; governor appoints 3)	Gov: Lou Leon Guerrero, D* SBE: Mary Okada*; Peter Ada*; Ronald McNinch*; Angel Sablan; Maria Gutierrez*; Lourdes Benavente*
Vermont (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Phil Scott, R*	Northern Mariana Islands (nonpartisan ballot)	Gov: Ralph Torres, R* SBE: Antonio Borja (2)*; Andrew Orsini (3)*
Wisconsin (no SBE)	Gov: Tony Evers, D*	U.S. Virgin Islands (partisan ballot)	Gov: Albert Bryan, D* SBE: Winona Hendricks, D* and Terrence Joseph, D* (St. Croix); Judy Gomez, D* and Arah Lockhart, D (St. Thomas)
Wyoming (governor appoints SBE)	Gov: Mark Gordon, R* Chief: Megan Degenfelder, R		

* incumbent