

Other winners and losers yesterday

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

November 7, 2012

So we all know President Obama won reelection, the Republicans kept control of the House and the Democrats held onto the Senate. Some other winners yesterday:

- **Religious diversity.** Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii will become [the first Hindu in Congress](#). UPDATE: I overlooked this before, but Mazie Hirono will be [the first Buddhist senator](#) as well.
- **Gender diversity.** The new Senate will include a record 19 women-- despite the fact that two current female senators (Hutchison and Snowe) did not seek reelection and their seats were won by men.
- **Gay rights.** One of these new female senators is Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, who is also [the first openly gay senator](#). More dramatically: Maine, Maryland and Washington all approved same-sex marriage by popular vote, a first (and second and third). And Minnesota declined to ban it.
- **Undocumented immigrants.** [Maryland approved its state-level Dream Act](#), enabling students without documents to go to state schools at the in-state rate.
- **Separation of church and state.** [Florida declined to start allowing taxpayer money to go to churches](#) and other religious organizations.
- **A saner approach to controlled substances.** Colorado and Washington State [voted to legalize recreational marijuana](#), and Massachusetts approve medical marijuana. But Oregon rejected recreational use, while Arkansas and Montana voted against medical use. There's also the minor matter of federal law.
- **Math.** [The number crunchers were right about the presidential race](#). In politics as in baseball, this may well mean more and more credibility for

Nate Silver and other "quants" relative to the instinct-oriented pundits we've tended to look to.

Some losers:

- **The food movement.** [Agribusiness money beat back California's effort to require labeling for genetically modified food.](#) GMO labeling has been voted down elsewhere as well, but California's size, huge farming sector and role as a ballot-initiative-driven laboratory make this a tough loss for food reformers.
- **Representative democracy.** U.S. House races continue to be determined largely by how the districts are drawn and redrawn--by partisan state legislatures. Where I live, this means Republicans didn't have much of a voice yesterday; elsewhere it's the opposite. In either case it's an outrage.
- **The seamless garment of life.** [California failed to ban the death penalty](#)  
.
- **Clean energy.** [Michigan failed to increased its renewable-energy target.](#)
- **Low-income Marylanders.** The state voted to raise funds in a painfully regressive way: by [expanding casino gambling.](#)