

Kansas governor has been a balancing act for both parties

Despite the fact that Kansas is a heavily Republican state, the governor's office has been split party control for the past 40 years.

Since Mike Hayden was elected as a Republican in 1986, both parties have enjoyed 20 years of control of the governor's mansion in Kansas.

After Hayden's four years, he was denied a second term by Democrat Joan Finney.

But she wore thin on the Kansas voters like Hayden did, and she chose not to run in 1994.

Bill Graves, won the governor's mansion back for the Republicans, and that started a trend of eight-year swings for both parties.

After Graves, Kathleen Sebelius took control for the Democrats for eight years, and following that, Republican Sam Brownback became governor for

eight years.

The last eight years has been controlled by Democrat Laura Kelly.

But in her tenure, Republicans have actually expanded their super majority in the Legislature.

Republicans have been able to override virtually all of Kelly's vetoes especially in the last session, and the budget was actually produced last year by the Legislature rather than the governor.

When Kelly's term ends in 2026, it will cap a 40-year period where Republicans and Democrats have split the governorship equally, and if history is any indication,

Republicans are poised to take Cedar Crest.

The landscape has certainly changed over the years. Kelly was re-elected even though she only won a majority of votes in eight of the 105 counties in Kansas.

That means Kansas has become urbanized even though the election was only separated by 22,000 votes. Conservative Dennis Pyle ran as an independent and siphoned off

more than 20,000 votes, but he was rewarded by losing his Kansas senate seat in the Republican primary, finishing third to Craig Bowser who won the general election.

Republicans have expanded their control of the Kansas Senate from 28 of the 40 seats in the beginning of Kelly's term to 31 seats today. Democrats control only nine seats of the Kansas Senate, giving Republicans control of 78 percent of the Senate.

Republicans also dominate in the Kansas House, moving from 86 of the 125 seats at the beginning of Kelly's tenure to 98 seats



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