

The re-elections of United States Rep. Steve Austria (R-Ohio), the first, first-generation Filipino in the U.S. Congress; Maryland State Delegate Kriselda “Kris” Valderrama, and Hawaii State Senators Will Espero, Donovan dela Cruz and Donna Mercado Kim, and California voters’ confirmation of Tani Cantil-Sakauye to a 12-year term as the state’s chief justice highlight the victories among Filipino-Americans who ran in the Nov. 2 midterm elections.

In California, three Fil-Am mayors also managed to retain their positions. Austria won Ohio’s 7th Congressional District with 132,615 votes compared to the 67,393 votes obtained by Democratic challenger Bill Conner.

“Now that the Republicans are taking over control of the House of Representatives, and we have the next speaker of the House right here in Ohio (likely Rep. John Boehner), we have an opportunity in the majority party to better get things done,” Austria said. “Our focus will be turning this economy around and creating real, sustainable jobs.”

Austria said he was pleased with the percentage of votes he received, which was close to what he received during his first election to U.S. Congress in 2008 after serving 10 years as a state lawmaker.

He obtained 62.3 percent of the votes in 2008, and 62.6 percent of the vote this election.

“The American people have spoken loud and clear,” said Austria, whose late father, Dr. Clement G. Austria, was a World War II guerrilla from Tiaong, Quezon, Philippines. “They are tired of Washington not listening to them and pushing through policies for the expansion of government and creating more spending. We as Republicans are going to stop that and turn this country around,” he said. “That all starts with helping the job creators.”

In Maryland’s Prince George’s County, Democrat Kris Valderrama was re-elected for a second term as one of three representatives of District 26 in the House of Delegates of the General Assembly.

Valderrama placed third, defeating Republican challenger Holly E. Henderson.

Valderrama’s father, Manila-born David Valderrama, held the same post from 1991 to 2003.

He is the first Fil-Am to be elected to the Maryland Legislature.

In California, 3,573,448 voters (or 68.8 percent) gave their overwhelming “yes” to make Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye the second woman and first nonwhite to head the state’s highest court beginning January 2011.

Cantil-Sakauye, the 51-year-old daughter of Filipino immigrants, ran unopposed and far exceeded the simple majority she needed for approval.

She was nominated by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in July to succeed retiring Chief Justice Ronald George.

A former Sacramento County prosecutor, she spent more than 14 years as a trial judge in the county before Schwarzenegger named her to a state appeals court in 2005.

When she takes office in January, the seven-member court will have a female majority for the first time.

In California’s mayoral elections, Fil-Am Mayor Christopher Cabaldon defeated challenger Greg Potnick, 64.2 percent to 35.8 percent.

Cabaldon, 45, has been mayor since 1998, except for a two-year period from 2000 to 2002.

He is West Sacramento’s first and only elected mayor.

Until 2004, the mayor's job rotated among council members.

That year, voters decided to elect a mayor every two years, and Cabaldon won in a landslide. He has received much of the credit for bringing the River Cats minor league baseball team and Raley Field to town, as well as an Ikea store and other major retailers.

In his current term, he presided over the openings of a new library, a community college campus and a public-transit facility on a formerly seedy stretch of West Capitol Avenue.

The city also broke ground on the Bridge District, a major development along its side of the Sacramento River.

In Milpitas, former Mayor Jose "Joe" Esteves reclaimed his old post in a landslide victory with 42.3 percent of the votes.

Though Esteves spent less than his two chief competitors and had no paid campaign staff, he prevailed over Debbie Giordano (28 percent) and Pete McHugh (24.4 percent) with his comeback kid theme "Back for the Future."

Born and raised in Dagupan City, Philippines, he served as mayor of Milpitas from 2002 to 2008, and he was voted Best Elected Official for all six years of his term.

Under his leadership, Esteves, among other things, completed on budget schedule in 2008 the Milpitas Public Library, and initiated the Economic Development Commission to enhance the economy and image of Milpitas, and the renovation and new construction of the Town Center.

Esteves added that he would bring back the knowledge of the many successes he had implemented in Milpitas, notably fiscal responsibility, support for business, and innovative services.

Meanwhile, Mayor Pete Sanchez easily won a second term as Suisun City's chief executive, trouncing City Councilman Mike Segala and local programmer Charles Kingeter.

Sanchez collected 3,312 votes, or 65 percent, while Segala had 1,238 votes, or 24 percent, and Kingeter had 556 votes, or 10.9 percent.

Sanchez ran on his record, saying he had worked to keep the city fiscally healthy and without furloughs or service cuts.

A graduate of the University of the East in Manila, he passed the CPA exam and worked with Banco Filipino and the Central Bank of the Philippines prior to immigrating to the U.S. in 1980. Sanchez takes pride in the way his city weathered the current economic crisis: a stable budget and no layoffs, furloughs, or cuts in basic services.

He served as a Suisun City councilor for 12 years before he got elected as mayor.

In the City Council elections in California, incumbent Daly City Mayor Michael Guingona topped the contenders for Daly City Council, the five members of which elect among themselves the next city mayor.

Guingona, the first Fil-Am elected to the City Council of Daly City in 1993, has since held the position of mayor four times.

A lawyer by profession, he was the youngest Daly City Mayor at age 33.

In Hercules City Council, Planning Commissioner Myrna De Vera, a native of Cebu, Philippines, won one of the two open seats.

The U.P. architecture graduate is an exclusive agent for Allstate Insurance, San Francisco, and has served the government as vice chairman and later chairman of Hercules Planning Commission for a total of five years.

In Bay Area's Union City Council, Pat Gacoscos garnered the highest number of votes to become one of the council members, while Joanne del Rosario was reelected as one of two members of the Colma Town Council.

In the Alameda City Council, newcomer Rob Bonta won a seat with over 20 percent.

A favorite of the Democratic Party and Alameda's Firefighter's union, Bonta is a trustee of the Health Care District Board.

In Hawaii, election results show popular Democratic incumbent State Sen. Will Espero won over his Republican challenger Anel "Tito" Montes in District 20—7,644 (59.6 percent) to 4,659 (36.3 percent).

In District 22, Democratic State Sen. Donovan dela Cruz clobbered his Republican opponent Charles Aki with 8,738 votes (67.3 percent) to 3,576 votes (27.6 percent).

Also in the Aloha state, Kymberly Marcos Pine, a Republican, won a landslide victory in her bid to be reelected as state House Representative in District 43.

Pine registered a wide margin with 66.3 percent of the votes, over her challenger Jason Bradshaw's 31.4 percent.

Pine's grandfather Nemesio Marcos came from Ilocos Norte and fought in World War II.

Among the losing Filipino-American political candidates are Paul Verzosa for Union Township Committee in New Jersey; Chris Pareja, a write-in candidate for Congressional representative of California's District 13; Tony Daysog, mayoralty contender for California's Alameda City; businesswoman Dorie Paniza for the City Council of Daly City; and Cecilia "Ces" Rosales, who would have been the first Fil-Am on California's Berkeley City Council.