

# Deseret News

## Official results: Biskupski will be next mayor of Salt Lake City

By Katie McKellar , Deseret News

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Salt Lake City Mayor-elect Jackie Biskupski hugs state Sen. Jim Dabakis after the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, at the City-County Building. Biskupski beat Mayor Ralph Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

SALT LAKE CITY — It's official: Jackie Biskupski will become the first openly gay mayor of Utah's capital city.

The Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results Tuesday, solidifying Biskupski's victory after a long, hard-fought battle against incumbent Mayor Ralph Becker.

She will officially take office Jan. 4.

"We are very aware that today is historic, but today is not just about making history. It is about people," Biskupski said Tuesday, her voice cracking slightly as she spoke with composure at the Salt Lake City-County Building. "It is about effecting change for the sake of so many people in this community who felt like they had not been heard. We will move forward today with ears wide open, and there is no question you will be heard."

On [Election Day](#), Becker lagged 1,450 votes behind Biskupski. He did not concede, holding onto hope that he could still be re-elected because the results of nearly 5,000 outstanding ballots could not be released until Tuesday's canvass — a comeback that election experts deemed [highly improbable](#).

Biskupski still captured a majority of votes after all ballots were counted and certified Tuesday. She defeated Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with



Mayor Ralph Becker prepares to address the media after the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, at the City-County Building. Jackie Biskupski defeated Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

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The updated results brought Salt Lake City's voter turnout to 54.6 percent — the highest ever in the city, according to city elections officials.

The final count's 3 percent gap was even closer than expected, Biskupski said.

"Today our work begins, and we begin with thanks," she said. "I am grateful to Mayor Becker for his years of service and leadership. ... For the last 11 months we have been competitors, but today we are on the same side committing to the best interest of our city, our residents and the people of Utah."



Mayor-elect Jackie Biskupski takes a call from Mayor Ralph Becker prior to the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certifying final election results on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, at the City-County Building. Biskupski beat Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

When the final tally was certified, Biskupski's supporters cheered, applauded and congratulated her with hugs. In the hall outside the City Council chambers, Becker's staff was somber as the mayor walked toward his office to prepare for his concession speech.

Speaking solemnly, Becker congratulated Biskupski for her victory as he stood outside his office.

"I remain committed to this city and our future. I will work with Mayor-

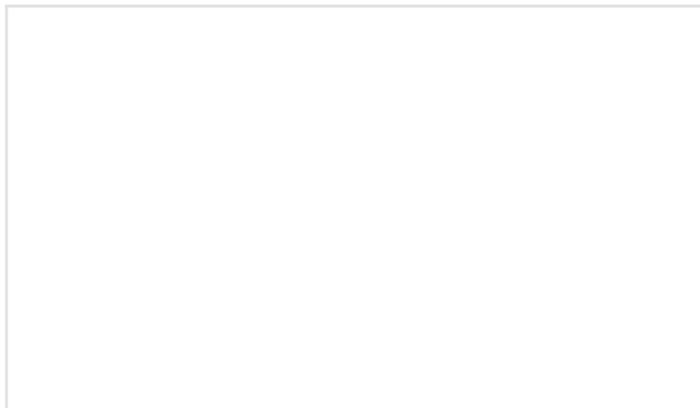
elect Biskupski to assist in a smooth transition," he said.

Becker paused and his eyes brimmed when he thanked his family for supporting him through his campaign.

"A way to measure success in a job is to look at whether the place you're leaving behind is better off than when you started. I leave this job with a wonderful feeling of success," he said. "Now it's time for us to move on and support (Biskupski) and her administration so that we can have an evermore successful Salt Lake City."

When asked what he will do next, Becker answered simply: "I have no idea."

"My whole career has been a step at a time," he added. "Today is no different."



Over the next month and a half, Biskupski will lead a transition team to phase her administration into office. She said she doesn't yet have a timeline for announcing any staff changes, but she will be meeting with existing department heads before she makes any decisions.

"We have a lot of work to do between now and Jan. 4 to make sure that the transition happens in a very smooth fashion," she said. "We absolutely want every public employee to understand and feel that they will be respected through this entire process."



Salt Lake City Mayor-elect Jackie Biskupski hugs state Sen. Jim Dabakis after the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015 at the City-County Building in Salt Lake City. Biskupski beat Mayor Ralph Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

The mayor-elect celebrated her victory Tuesday night at the Utah Pride Center. When she arrived, about 100 supporters welcomed her with cheers.



Mayor Ralph Becker leaves a conference room with his wife, Kate Kopischke, after addressing the media at the City-County Building in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015. The Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results Tuesday. Jackie Biskupski defeated Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

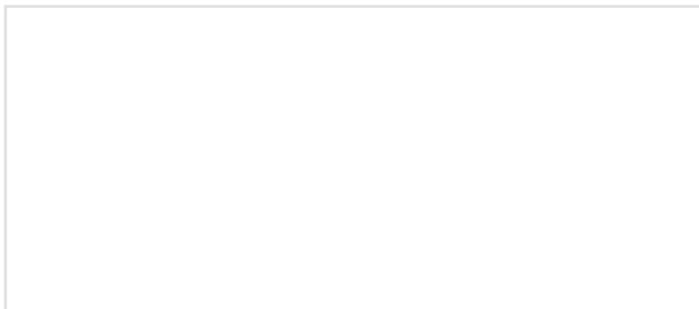
"What a journey," she said, thanking her supporters. "This wasn't just for me. This is for you, and the rest of the people in this city. I promise we will never lose sight of why we are here and the work that needs to be done. We will effect change. We will experience a cultural shift we have been needing for a very long time, and that is one that includes everybody."

The mayor-elect deemed solving the city's homeless "crisis" as one of her top priorities, and she pledged to move quickly in her efforts.

Biskupski said she had already met with Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams this week and has a meeting scheduled Wednesday with Gail Miller and Palmer DePaulis, leaders of Becker's homeless facility commission that is due to make site recommendations by the end of the year.

"That work will get done without missing a beat," she said.

Biskupski also has prioritized improving collaboration between the city's police department and



other law enforcement agencies to tackle the region's drug and weapon trafficking, and she has a meeting scheduled Wednesday with Mike Brown, the city's interim police chief.

Throughout their [expensive](#) and at times bitter campaign, it was Becker's call to build upon the momentum he had set in motion for Salt Lake versus Biskupski's demands for change and a more "collaborative leader."



Mayor Ralph Becker listens as mayoral election results are announced by the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, at the City-County Building on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015. Jackie Biskupski defeated Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

Becker's bid for a third term was a historically rare pursuit in Salt Lake City. It's been 31 years since a Salt Lake City mayor has won a third term. Ted Wilson, first elected in 1976, was the last to win three consecutive terms as mayor.



Mayor-elect Jackie Biskupski signs an autograph for Chuck Whyte after the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, at the City-County Building. Biskupski defeated Mayor Ralph Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

In Becker's eight years, he carried Salt Lake City through the Great Recession and to new economic heights. Hallmarks of his administration include protected bike lanes, the high-tech Public Safety Building and the up-and-coming Broadway-style theater on Main Street.

Biskupski is no stranger to making history in Utah: In 1999 she was elected as the first openly gay member of the Utah House of Representatives, where she served until 2011.

She will also become the city's second female mayor, after Deedee Corradini, who was elected in 1992.

Hours after Biskupski's win was made official, she attended a tree planting in honor of Corradini, who died of lung cancer in March.

Tears ran down Biskupski's face as she spoke about their friendship and working closely together the last three years of Corradini's life on [Real Women Run](#), a nonpartisan initiative focused on empowering women to run for public office.

Biskupski said she felt like Corradini was with her throughout her campaign.



"I hope I make you proud," she said.

Tuesday's official tallies also solidified wins in Salt Lake City Council races for incumbent Charlie Luke and newcomers Derek Kitchen and Andrew Johnston.

Luke bested Tracey Harty 63.54 percent to 36.46 percent; Kitchen beat Nate Salazar 51.77 percent to 48.23 percent; and Johnston defeated Van Turner 52.71 percent to 47.29 percent.



Mayor-elect Jackie Biskupski speaks to the media after the Salt Lake City Council, acting as the city's board of canvassers, certified final election results Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, at the City-County Building. Biskupski defeated Mayor Ralph Becker by 1,194 votes — 51.55 percent to 48.45 percent — with more than 38,000 votes cast. (Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News)

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