



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 6, 2018

Did Kavanaugh Smear End the Coming Blue Wave?

As expected, the [U.S. Senate confirmed](#) federal judge Brett Kavanaugh for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court.

[The 50-48 vote](#) today was somewhat anticlimactic, given yesterday's [51-49 vote to limit debate](#). Once pro-abortion GOP Senator Susan Collins of Maine voted for cloture, the game was over. Kavanaugh had the votes he needed, including Democratic Red State Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, and Senator Jeff Flake, a wild card who happened to flip for the GOP this time.



Today, pro-abortion GOP Senator Lisa Murkowski voted present, while Montana's Senator Steve Daines did not vote because he attended his daughter's wedding. Murkowski's "Present" vote saved Daines from having to return to vote "Yea."

The question is what the confirmation of Kavanaugh, and of course the character assassination tactics preceding the vote, mean for the GOP on the November 6 midterm election.

Kavanaugh Boost

The analysts are relatively uniform in reporting two diverging trends relative to the bruising confirmation battle: Democrats, they say, will take the House, while Republicans will improve their majority in the Senate.

All because of Kavanaugh, who was sailing smoothly for confirmation, [having handled the outright lies](#) and deceptive statements Democrats made about him during the Judiciary Committee's hearings. When those tactics failed, women began hurling last-minute unproven accusations of sexual assault against Kavanaugh. An additional FBI investigation at the insistence of Flake and the Democrats [did not uncover corroborating evidence](#) for those accusations.

The two sides took shape quickly. "Believe women" on the one hand; no evidence, innocent until proven guilty on the other.

And that is how it will shake on November 6, the analysts say.

As the [Washington Post reported](#) just this morning, "the weeks-long Kavanaugh saga appears to be pushing House races toward Democrats, even as it has given Republicans better odds of maintaining control of the Senate."

But why is that?

According to the *Post*:

That division stems from the make-up of the races and the political geography of the most competitive battles. House contests this year already were expected to be determined by suburban women, who had pulled away from the president ... and appear to be the most sympathetic to Christine Blasey Ford....



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But most of this year's competitive Senate races are in traditionally red states, and as Republicans have rallied to Kavanaugh's side, the chances of Democratic upsets there have dropped, at least for now.

Democrats fear "losing ground" in Texas and Tennessee, the [Post reported](#), and Heidi Heitkamp, a Red State Democrat who voted against cloture, "has fallen far behind her Republican challenger in new polling. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, another vulnerable Democrat, reached for political survival when he became the final senator and only Democrat to announce a vote for Kavanaugh."

Not so for the House. "The Cook Political Report and other predictors have moved more than half a dozen seats in the Democratic direction in recent days, and Republican operatives are bracing themselves for an onslaught of Democratic money that they are calling 'a green wave.'"

A report in the *Washington Examiner* [backs that up](#): "Democrats are challenging in districts from coast to coast... Women are the tip of the spear ... helping the party build a durable generic ballot lead of more than 7 percentage points." A Quinnipiac University survey showed Democrats ahead of Republicans 49 percent to 42 percent on who should be running Capitol Hill. With women, Democrats are head by 18 points on that count, while the GOP leads only by five among men.

"Our guys are taking a beating," a gloomy GOP consultant told the newspaper.

Blue Wave Killed?

Mike Allen and Jonathan Swan, [writing at Axios.com](#), aren't so sure. "The Kavanaugh debate has dropped a political grenade into the middle of an electorate that had been largely locked in Democrats' favor for the past six months," Josh Holmes, a former top aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told them.

The Senate looks good for Republicans, the pair agree. Added Holmes, "Private polling shows the enthusiasm shift is ... unmistakable in the red states that will determine control of the Senate."

But an NBC/NPR/Marist poll, they noted, [showed that](#) the "wide Democratic enthusiasm advantage that has defined the 2018 campaign up to this point has disappeared." The director of the Marist polling effort told NPR the Kavanaugh hearings had awakened the GOP base. "GOP pollsters and strategists," Allen and Swan reported "are at least more confident now that the Republican base wants to turn out and vote in the midterms."

That might hold back the anticipated blue tsunami.

Quoting House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, [the two reported](#) that the smear campaign against Kavanaugh "had awakened Republican voters in some key House districts," meaning women who support Ford might not be the only voters who turn out because of the confirmation fight.

"Prior to the Kavanaugh hearing, the intensity level was really on the Democratic side," McCarthy said on Fox news. "But in the last week there has been a fundamental shift."

A former top aide for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told the two that "a strongly negative reaction ... is building far beyond the Beltway."

With Trump's Rasmussen approval [rating at 51 percent](#), a Democratic House come January is by no means certain. And his loyalty to Kavanaugh might have encouraged fence-sitting GOP voters.

[Wrote women's activist Heather Higgins](#) for *The Hill*, "The Left hopes that they have further sullied Republicans in this episode, but they have shown to many that the Republicans is [sic] the party of



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fairness and themselves extremists. Democrats just killed the blue wave.”

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