



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 8, 2010

GOP Reaches Out to Democrat Joe Manchin

With a gain of over 60 GOP seats in the House of Representatives, as well as six new GOP Senate seats, the Republican Party finds itself in a better position to block the Obama agenda. Additionally, Republican senators are encouraging West Virginia's Democratic Senator-elect Joe Manchin to abandon his party for the GOP label.



According to Fox News, not only is the GOP making big promises to lure Manchin to the other side of the aisle, such as his pick of committee assignments, they are also offering support for one of his pet projects — a plant to convert coal to diesel fuel that has been stalled by Democratic leadership in Washington.

Joe Manchin won the West Virginia senate seat with 53.5 percent of the vote. Though a Democrat, Manchin is pro-life, pro-guns rights, and in favor of repealing President Obama's signature healthcare law, making him a prime target for GOP outreach.

Because Manchin is replacing the late Democratic Senator Robert Byrd, he will immediately begin his senatorial duties, as opposed to the other candidates elected on November 2 who will not be taking their seats until the start of the new session. As a result of Manchin's unique circumstance, however, he will be facing reelection in just two years, upon the end of Byrd's term.

Because he faces a reelection campaign in just two years, experts believe that Manchin will maintain conservative approaches to key issues in order to assure a win in 2012. Likewise, President Barack Obama faces stunningly low approval ratings, somewhere in the 20s, in the state of West Virginia. Since both President Obama (presuming he is nominated, which is not a given) and Manchin will be on the ticket in 2012, political analysts believe Manchin will do his best to distance himself from the President and his progressive agenda.

Moreover, as coal is a prime industry in the state of West Virginia, and its citizens are unhappy with the Democrats' approach to coal, Manchin stands to benefit from drawing a boundary between himself and his Democratic colleagues.

As a result, Republicans are preparing to reach out to the conservative Democrat to urge him to make a team change.

A Manchin advisor indicates, however, that "He was elected as a Democrat and he has to go to Washington as a Democrat to try, in good faith, to make the changes [on key issues] in the party he campaigned on. Now if that doesn't work and Democrats aren't receptive, I don't know what possibilities that leaves open."

As noted by Christ Stirewalt, Manchin's office seems to be "leaving the door open" to possible GOP courting.



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For now, Manchin's politics will be showcased during the lame duck session and should tell both parties where he truly stands on the issues.

In addition to Manchin, Democrats Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Independent Joe Lieberman have been targets of Republican advances. If all three of these politicians joined the GOP, the Senate would be in a 50-50 deadlock.

Photo: West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin and his wife Gayle Manchin celebrate his win at a U.S. Senate election party, Nov. 2, 2010: AP Images



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