



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 19, 2010

Incumbent Specter Loses in Pa., Incumbent Lincoln Forced into Runoff in Ark.

Democratic challenger and Congressman Joe Sestak defeated Republican-turned-Democratic Senator Arlen Specter by a 53-47 margin in the Pennsylvania U.S. Senate primary, while Arkansas incumbent Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln will face a June 8 runoff after failing to win a majority in a three-way primary with Lieutenant Governor Bill Halter.

Combined with a [Rand Paul victory in the Kentucky Senate race](#) against the GOP establishment, Tuesday's elections marked a strong voter reaction against incumbents and Washington-selected successors.



Specter had the backing of President Obama and the Democratic Party establishment, despite Specter's nearly 30 years as a Republican senator. Sestak had run a brutal television ad campaign on Specter's party switching as saving only one job: "His."

Lincoln's 45 percent to Halter's 43 percent is largely seen by the major media as part of the "anti-incumbent" mood of voters so far this year, but both major candidates were political insiders. Halter nevertheless made a lot of political hay about Lincoln's cavalier attitude about taking on more debt with the "stimulus" bill last year. "To those who say the projects are increasing the national debt, she says," Halter [noted](#) on his campaign website, Lincoln had told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*: "The fact is, the stimulus money is a drop in the bucket."

"Tonight, people in Washington are getting mighty nervous about what is happening in Arkansas," Halter said in an [election night address](#). "And they ought to be."

Democrats retained the open congressional seat that had been vacated by the death of Democrat John Murtha earlier this year. Democrat Mark Critz [defeated](#) Republican Tim Burns, 53 percent to 45 percent, in an election Republicans and Democrats had focused national attention upon. The two parties had spent a combined \$4 million in advertisements for the special election, marked by heavy lobbying by Republican former Speaker Newt Gingrich and current Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The Republican establishment had hoped to sell the race as part of a wave of GOP support that was coming in November. GOP Chairman Michael Steele tried to [sell](#) the issue as a strongly Democratic district, despite the fact that the district now [leans slightly Republican on presidential races](#). But the undercurrent of electoral politics is not explicitly partisan.

Photo of Arlen Specter leaving his election party after giving his concession speech: AP Images



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