



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 15, 2010

Insurgency Is Theme in Primary Elections

Voters were not at home with a Republican named Castle in Delaware, as GOP primary voters once again ignored the advice of the party establishment and saw to it that insurgency would continue to be the dominant political theme of 2010. Tea Party favorite Christine O'Donnell defeated establishment man Mike Castle in the U.S. Senate primary, despite warnings from party chieftains that O'Donnell is "unelectable" in the general election.



Castle is a former two-term Governor and entered the Senate race heavily favored against O'Donnell, a political neophyte. Yet the O'Donnell victory was not even close, with the challenger, a former abstinence counselor, taking 53 percent of the vote to Castle's 47 percent. She will be opposed in the general election by Democratic nominee Chris Coons, the county executive in New Castle County, for the seat vacated two years ago by Vice President Joe Biden, who had held the seat since 1973.

Tea Party heroine Sarah Palin, leader of the "Mama Grizzlies," campaigned in person for O'Donnell and notched another victory in her cross-country campaigning for candidates with grass-roots conservative support, especially women.

Supporters gathered at the O'Donnell victory party chanted "Christine! Christine!" and railed at charges that the political upstart could not win in November. Borrowing a page from the Obama playbook, O'Donnell led them in a chant of "Yes, we can!" The challenger had been dogged throughout the campaign by reports that she had trouble with personal finances, had fudged her educational history, and was not fit for office. The charges came largely from the candidate's own party and appeared directed from Washington, with even such political heavyweights as former White House political advisor Karl Rove weighing in against O'Donnell. But that may have helped the challenger in a season of voter discontent, when voters are inclined to believe little or nothing good comes from Washington, D.C.

"I think she's going to make it," O'Donnell supporter Marie Bush told the *New York Times*. "Too many people have been slinging mud at her, and she's a survivor."

In New Hampshire, former Attorney General Kelly Ayotte, endorsed by Palin, is locked in a tight race against Manchester attorney and former state school board chairman Ovide Lamontagne for the GOP Senate nomination. As of Wednesday morning, the race was still too close to call, with Ayotte of Nashua clinging to a precarious one-point lead over her Queen City rival, 38-37 percent. Bill Binnie of Rye, a



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millionaire businessman whose spending on campaign ads rivaled the GDP of some developing countries, finished a distant third. Binnie, who sensed his candidacy was not catching on with conservative Republican voters, in the end appealed primarily to independents and emphasized his "pro-choice" position on abortion. He received roughly 13 percent of the vote. Another businessman and pro-choice Republican, Jim Bender, finished fourth. The Republican nominee will face U.S. Rep. Paul Hodes of Concord, who ran unopposed in the Democratic primary. The battle is for the seat being vacated by retiring Senator Judd Gregg, a three-term Republican who retires undefeated after serving as a member of the Governor's Council, a U.S. Representative, and a two-term Governor.

One issue that seemed not to matter in the Senate race is Lamontagne's professional involvement in an effort to form an alliance between the Catholic Medical Center in Manchester and Dartmouth Hitchcock hospital, based in Lebanon, but with facilities in Manchester. Conservative Catholics argued that the proposed affiliation is really a takeover of the Catholic hospital by the secular institution and would amount to a victory for proponents of abortion and other "reproductive health services." Both pro-life and abortion "rights" advocates have opposed the affiliation since it would involve at least formal restrictions on what reproductive services Dartmouth Hitchcock physicians could provide at CMC. Abortion foes have argued those restrictions would be a sham, since the Dartmouth Hitchcock physicians could simply refer CMC patients to another Dartmouth Hitchcock facility to receive abortions, sterilizations, or other contraceptive services.

Evidence that the issue did not affect voting was seen in Lamontagne's margin of two to one or better on the West Side of Manchester where the hospital is located and where support for the conservative Catholic with the French surname is strong. In voter-rich southern New Hampshire, Lamontagne easily won Manchester, the state's largest city, while Ayotte won her hometown of Nashua, the state's second city. The two frontrunners essentially split the vote in other parts of the state.

In New York, Buffalo businessman Carl Paladino trounced former Congressman Rick Lazio of Long Island for the GOP gubernatorial nomination in what is considered a significant upset. With 97 percent of the vote tallied, Paladino had 62 percent of the vote versus 32 percent for Lazio. Paladino will face state Attorney General and former U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo in what will likely be a target-rich general election environment. As HUD Secretary in 2000, Cuomo boasted of his efforts to persuade, even coerce, banks to make home loans they would not otherwise have made to borrowers who would have been considered ineligible under normal banking guidelines. Paladino is likely to blame Cuomo for contributing mightily to the collapse of the housing market and the crisis in the financial industry as the result of bad loans. He will also portray him as a stereotypical big-spending liberal Democrat, content with the "status Cuomo."

In Maryland, the tea party movement suffered a setback, as former Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. won the Republican nomination for Governor, positioning him for a rematch with Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat who defeated him four years ago. Ehrlich defeated Brian Murphy, an investment executive, who was endorsed by Palin, the former Alaska Governor and Republican vice presidential nominee who has become a one-woman band for tea-party insurgency.

In Wisconsin, Scott Walker, the Milwaukee County executive, won the Republican nomination for Governor. He defeated Mark Neumann, a former Congressman, and will face Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee, a Democrat, in November.

The contests on Tuesday night were the last big cluster in a seven-month string of primaries that will come to an end when Hawaii votes on Saturday and Louisiana holds a runoff early next month. Seven



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members of Congress had already been defeated in their bids for reelection.

In other New Hampshire races, former Manchester Mayor Frank Guinta won a four-way Republican primary in the 1st District congressional race to take on Democrat Carol Shea-Porter, a two-term incumbent. In the Second District, former six-term Rep. Charles Bass of Peterborough edged out conservative columnist and radio talk-show hostess Jennifer Horn and businessman Bob Guida to try to win back the seat he lost to Hodes in 2006. Bass will face Concord attorney Ann McLane Kuster, who easily defeated Bow lawyer Katrina Swett, wife of former Rep. Dick Swett, in the Democratic primary, 69 percent to 31 percent.

There was no drama in New Hampshire's emerging gubernatorial race, as Republican John Stephen, former state Commissioner of Health and Human Services, easily won his party's nomination to take on three-term Democratic Governor John Lynch in the fall. Lynch, who is looking to become the first New Hampshire Governor in recent history to win four consecutive two-year terms, is generally regarded as a moderate on fiscal issues, though he has consistently supported the left-wing social agenda, while at times appearing reluctant to do so.

A faithful defender of abortion "rights," Lynch successfully supported repeal of the state's parental notification law passed during the one-term reign of his Republican predecessor, Craig Benson. The law was still in a legal challenge when the Democratic legislature repealed it in 2007. Lynch also signed a bill creating same-sex unions for homosexuals, while saying he believed marriage should be reserved for heterosexual unions. A year later he signed into law the same-sex marriage bill passed by the legislature. Stephen, a conservative on both fiscal and social issues, will likely challenge the incumbent's credibility and ask why, if voters could not believe Lynch on something as basic as marriage, they should believe him about taxes and spending.

Yet Lynch remains personally popular with voters of both parties and independents. He maintains consistently high approval ratings and has won three times over a Republican Party that might as well have traded the elephant for the amoeba as the party symbol, since it quickly divides into separate factions. The state's moderate-to-liberal Republicans have been without a statewide champion for decades and many of the left-leaning or "centrist" Republicans backed former Democratic Governor (now U.S. Senator) Jeanne Shaheen before lining up behind Lynch. If Republicans unite behind Stephen, it will be the first time since 1994, when Gov. Steve Merrill was reelected, that the rank and file was unified behind the candidate at the top of the ticket. In 2008, gubernatorial candidate Joe Kenney, a state Senator with tours of duty in Iraq in his repertoire, was not backed in a single press release put out by the Republican State Committee.

Photo of Mike Castle: AP Images



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