



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 22, 2010

## Key Senate Seats Up For Grabs

With less than two weeks left until the 2010 midterm elections, key senate races across the country are tightening. Both Democrats and Republicans who found themselves behind their opponents have revived their polling numbers and are now within striking distance.

Fox News reports, "Democrats who were all but written off, including Rep. Joe Sestak in Pennsylvania and Sen. Michael Bennet in Colorado, have revived and are pulling even with their Republican opponents in some polls."



In fact, Joe Sestak's shift has been the most remarkable, as he has been steadily trailing behind Republican Pat Toomey, virtually from the start of the campaign. Some Democrats assign the change in Pennsylvania's polling numbers to the nomination of Christine O'Donnell in the neighboring state of Delaware. Sestak's campaign has done an apt job of associating the Tea Party-backed Toomey to the Tea Party-backed O'Donnell.

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Similarly, Bennet now finds himself within three points of Colorado Republican Ken Buck, a stark contrast from the nine-point lead Buck held in August.

A new poll in Kentucky suggests that Democrat Jack Conway may be catching up to Republican Rand Paul. Since the seat in question currently belongs to a Republican, this would be a blow to the GOP.

However, Republicans are also benefiting from changing poll numbers. Fox News writes, "Republican challengers, including Dino Rossi in Washington and Carly Fiorina in California, who polls showed had slipped behind two Democratic incumbents, have drawn even."

A McClatchy-Marist poll shows Rossi within one point of Patty Murray, while a Real Clear Politics average of polls indicate the same for Fiorina and Boxer.

Brian Walsh, spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee, responds to the newest poll figures: "It speaks volumes about the Democrats' situation nationally that in two of the bluest states in the country, the 18-year Democratic incumbents find themselves in a dead heat."

Republican Ron Johnson now leads Democratic Senator Russ Feingold by two points, revealed a St. Norbert College and Wisconsin Public Radio poll on Tuesday. Other polls show Johnson ahead by six points.

Experts believe that the recent change in poll numbers reflects a return of party loyalists to their candidates.

Lara Brown, a political scientist at Villanova University, contends that there are more elements affecting the changing numbers. "The further [momentum] starts to move in one direction, the more it energizes the opposite party."



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The *Wall Street Journal* explains, "Both national parties are making the case that momentum is on their side. Democrats see loyalists becoming more energized."

According to Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, "As voters home in on their decision, they see these stark contrasts and a real choice."

Walsh states, "I don't think it should surprise anyone that as the election draws nearer, polls will tighten up as voters come home to their respective parties." He adds, however, "But a key factor in a lot of these races will be enthusiasm."

Overall, both political parties have proven to be wholly unpopular in the polls, which is also a contributing factor to the fluctuating popularity of individual candidates, as voters shift between the two parties. Brown notes, "Neither party is running on their own platform .... They're running on how bad the other side is."

Republicans are in the precarious position of having to acquire 10 seats currently held by Democrats, with 11 seats in play, in order to gain a 51-49 Senate majority. While three of the 11 seats have been tallied for Republicans, the other eight seats are too close to call.

The intensity of the midterm elections is best exemplified by the hard-hitting political advertisements seen and heard in recent weeks on television, radio and the Internet. Advertisements have ranged from comparing President Obama to the Grim Reaper to likening Christine O'Donnell to a witch. Politicians from both sides have proven unafraid to pack a punch.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "The volatility of the Senate campaigns contrasts with a more settled pattern in the House races, where most analysts believe the national political climate has locked in significant GOP gains."

Dick Morris, political analyst and former campaign consultant to President Bill Clinton, continues to assert that the Republicans will see enormous gains in November.

In fact, Morris asserts, "Many Democrats are retreating from their party positions and are running as Republicans. In West Virginia, Senate candidate and Democratic governor Joe Manchin has an ad in which he is loading his rifle and aiming at a distant tree. He says that he will defend Second Amendment rights, will fight 'to repeal the bad parts of Obamacare,' and will fight cap-and-trade because it is 'bad for West Virginia.' With that, he hits the bull's-eye on the target pinned to the unfortunate tree."

According to Morris, the Democrats had nothing to offer in their campaigns but tired "personal attacks and attempts to depict themselves as conservatives."

He concludes, "Voters are realizing the bankruptcy of the Democratic candidates and are turning to the Republicans in ever-increasing numbers."



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