



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 18, 2010

Lisa Murkowski: Alaska's Senator-Elect

Lisa Murkowski made history yesterday when she became the first person elected to the Senate as a write-in candidate since South Carolina's Strom Thurmond in 1954. Two weeks after Election Day, and thousands of counted write-in ballots later, the Associated Press declared Lisa Murkowski the winner of the Alaska Senate race.



After losing the Alaska GOP primary to Tea Party favorite Joe Miller, Murkowski announced her intent to mount a write-in campaign. At the time of her announcement, her victory seemed to be a long shot, but just months later, Murkowski is doing a victory lap.

"Doesn't just feel like, wow," she said at an evening rally. "It feels a little bit mind-boggling."

She adds, "Alaskans have clearly spoken, and they have put it in writing."

Not all Alaskans were pleased by the election results, however. Some, such as Alaska radio host [Dan Fagan](#) of KQFD, dubbed Murkowski a "sore loser" for her decision to launch the write-in campaign.

Likewise, Alaska Tea Partiers were angered by the recent decision of the Alaskan court system that — to appease Murkowski — overturned a 50-year-old law that forbade allowing any information about write-in candidates at the polling place or within 200 feet of its entrance. The court determined that a list of write-ins was allowed to be presented to voters upon request, though party affiliations were not permitted on the lists.

In response to the court's ruling, Fagan encouraged his radio listeners to inflate the list of write-ins by registering as write-in candidates. The goal was to have a "gazillion names" so that voters would have trouble finding Lisa Murkowski's name on the list, and potentially misspell her name on the write-in ballot.

Fagan explained, "I'm tired of letting the government break the law day after day after day. We sit around and do nothing. This is an honorable thing to do. If the government says it's going to assist Lisa Murkowski legally, we are going to make it as hard as possible to do that."

Similar ploys were encouraged by Dan Reihl at Andrew Breitbart's BigGovernment.com, which were then promoted by Conservatives for Palin.

While Fagan's plan witnessed an addition of approximately 150 names to the list, it clearly did not succeed in thwarting Murkowski's write-in campaign.

[MSNBC](#) reports that after two weeks of hand counting 103,569 write-in ballots in Juneau, "the unofficial count put Murkowski ahead by more than 10,000 votes."

While Joe Miller is down, he has declared that he is not out yet. Miller refused to concede just yet, citing



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“irregularities in the counting.”

Miller explains, “Less than 1 percent of the vote now separates my and Lisa Murkowski’s total. If there is a recount and a consistent standard is applied to all the ballots, who knows what the difference would be.”

“We want to pursue this to ensure there is integrity and a consistent standard,” Miller explains.

[USA Today](#) writes, “Miller’s math only works if he’s successful in throwing out 8,153 write-in votes his campaign has challenged because of misspellings or other anomalies. Discounting those votes still gives Murkowski 92,715 undisputed votes — a lead of 2,247.”

Charles “Chip” Gerhardt, a lawyer for the National Republican Senatorial Committee to oversee the vote-counting for Miller, notes, “The math may ultimately work against Joe Miller, but if all of those ballots aren’t counted for her, it might put us in a recount scenario.”

According to Miller’s spokesperson, Randy DeSoto said that Miller will announce his decision of how he specifically plans to proceed after discussing his options with his legal team.

He adds, “Given how close the vote totals are, Miller needs to be given the same opportunity of having all of his ballots inspected and counted by hand to ensure every vote cast for him is counted.”

Gail Fenumiai, director of Alaska’s Division of Elections, indicates, “Recounts are done using the optical scan equipment, not by hand.”

If Miller does elect to move forward with a recount, however, he may do so with limited support as the Alaska Republican Party has said, “We call on Joe Miller to respect the will of the voters and end his campaign.”

The [Associated Press](#) reports that Miller’s loss has greater political implications than merely a loss for Miller. The AP claims Miller’s loss is a “political poke in the eye” to Sarah Palin, who heavily supported Miller in both the GOP primary, as well as the Senate race. The AP adds that Palin invested more time and money into Miller’s campaign than she did for any other Tea Party candidate, and that his loss is “a rebuke for Palin on her home turf by voters who know her best,” as well as “an embarrassment as Palin considers a White House bid.”

[USA Today](#) reports that Palin and Murkowski “have a history of bad blood,” as Palin defeated Murkowski’s father, Frank, in the 2006 bid for governor.

The “bad blood” continues as Senator-elect Murkowski said earlier this week that she did not believe Palin had the “intellectual curiosity” to be president. She also declared that she would not support Palin’s bid for president, if that was the route Palin pursued.

Photo: U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski declares victory in the Alaska Senate race, exactly two months after announcing her long-shot write-in campaign, Nov. 17, 2010 in Anchorage: AP Images



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