



Mass. Sen. Scott Brown: The Next Generation of Neocon

Massachusetts' new Republican Senator Scott Brown has taken America by media storm. Even before the ballots were counted to confirm his 52-47 percent victory over his less-than-inspiring Democratic opponent, Massachusetts' State Attorney General Martha Coakley, national media were talking about a 2012 Brown presidential run.



The day after the January 19 special election to fill the seat Ted Kennedy held for 47 years, the Drudge Report wondered in an all-caps headline, "NOW ... WILL HE RUN FOR PRESIDENT?" The Washington, D.C., newspaper [The Hill](#) reported the same day that website domains featuring "Brown" and "2012" had been snapped up by cyber-squatters. Internet blogger "Wonkette" dubbed Brown the "naked white Barack Obama," a moniker that combined his electoral potential and a photo shoot almost 30 years ago where he won *Cosmopolitan* magazine's "America's Sexiest Man" contest.

The media — and especially Republicans — have touted Brown's victory as a sort of "Massachusetts miracle" for a Republican and a portent of what is to come for Democrats in November. Massachusetts is the most leftist and most Democratic state in the union. Democrats send all 10 of the state's Congressmen to Washington, have had sent both Senators since 1972, and control the Governor's office, as well as all other state-wide offices. Democrats control both houses of the state legislature by a six-to-one margin.

No Miracle

But Brown was less of a miracle to sober observers of Massachusetts politics. Massachusetts has elected several attractive and well-spoken middle-aged Republican men to state-wide office over the past two decades. Before Deval Patrick won the governorship in 2006, Republicans had reigned over the Governor's office for 12 years: William Weld, Paul Cellucci, and Mitt Romney.

Brown also had some help from his opposition. Coakley essentially took a long vacation from the campaign trail after winning a crowded Democratic primary contest, apparently convinced she was a shoo-in for the seat. Coakley also [misspelled "Massachusetts"](#) in one of her television commercials and [told a New Bedford radio talk-show](#) host that Catholic surgeons who were unwilling to prescribe the abortion pill RU-486 "probably shouldn't work in the emergency room."

Brown also had an easy-going style and a folksy eloquence in speech. His television advertisements



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 1, 2010

pictured him in his brown barn jacket and a pick-up truck with 200,000 miles on it, evoking subtle messages of a middle-class guy who wanted smaller government. The two-term State Senator also has a famous family: His wife has been a news reporter for Boston's ABC-TV affiliate since 1993 and his oldest daughter was a finalist on the popular reality television show *American Idol* in 2006.

The election was clearly decided by the issue of President Obama's healthcare package. Brown and Coakley almost could have pooled their more-than-ample campaign war chests for a single media buy because [Coakley](#) and [Brown](#) both ran thousands of ads quoting Brown claiming that he would be the "41st vote" to kill Obama's healthcare package. The ads ran incessantly on television, radio, and the Internet. They were also part of a blitz of computerized telephone calls to likely voters' homes in the weeks before the election. Coakley thought playing Brown quotes about being the 41st vote would help her in liberal Massachusetts, while Brown guessed otherwise.

Folks, It's Just Talk

But the depth of the ideological contest ended on this narrow issue. The Brown versus Coakley contest was not a choice between a true constitutionalist and a liberal. Even on the broader issue of government healthcare mandates, ideology did not matter. Brown is a [fervent supporter of Massachusetts' healthcare mandate](#), shepherded through the Democratic state legislature by Republican Governor Mitt Romney in 2006. Massachusetts is the healthcare model that the federal government is using, particularly its mandate that will impose a fine this year of up to \$1,116 on Massachusetts taxpayers' income tax returns if the residents have not purchased health insurance. The government mandate is precisely what many Republican State Attorneys General have labeled as unconstitutional and threatened to sue in federal court to stop. If the government can force taxpayers to buy one product such as health insurance, these Republicans argue, what's to stop government from forcing them to buy a car or house of government's choosing?

Yet Brown continues to defend Romney-care as stoutly as he condemns the ObamaCare modeled after it. "In Massachusetts, I support the 2006 healthcare law that was successful in expanding coverage," Brown stressed on his website, "but I am opposed to the health care legislation that is under consideration in Congress and will vote against it." Brown's dispute is partisan, not ideological. Despite Brown's enthusiastic defense of Romney-care, Massachusetts voters have soured on it. A November 27 [Rasmussen poll last year](#) found that only 32 percent of the state's voters consider that reform a success.

National talk-show hosts who describe themselves as "conservatives" have heaped laurels on Brown as a "conservative" champion, but there's little about Brown's history or agenda that suggests conservatism. Specifically, Brown:

- is openly "pro-choice" on abortion, just like his Democratic opponent Coakley, writing on his [campaign website](#) that "this decision should ultimately be made by the woman in consultation with her doctor";
- opposed a 2008 ballot initiative in Massachusetts to repeal the state income tax that would have saved families an average of \$3,500 per year;
- backed tax increases pushed by GOP Governor Mitt Romney (which Romney labeled "fees"), such as increasing automobile registration taxes.

Brown is clearly a "borrow and spend" Republican. His response to a Project Vote Smart survey as a State Senate candidate indicated he wanted to either "maintain funding status" or increase every manner of welfare spending program while supporting no significant specific program cuts — at the



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same time claiming he would “greatly decrease” every state tax. Brown hasn’t changed his deficit-building stance since then, as he predictably describes himself as a “budget hawk who supports a temporary freeze on non-defense discretionary spending.” Non-defense discretionary spending accounts for just 18 percent of the federal budget. The “mandatory” programs are responsible for huge federal deficits. Calling for a temporary freeze is just a politically clever way of avoiding specific program cut proposals. And Brown doesn’t enumerate any spending cuts he’d favor other than “waste,” which is precisely what liberal Democrats do.

Thus, it’s no surprise that Boris Shor of the University of Chicago analyzed Brown’s record and [found](#) that “Brown’s score puts him at the 34th percentile of his party in Massachusetts over the 1995-2006 time period. In other words, two thirds of other Massachusetts Republican state legislators were more conservative than he was. This is evidence for my claim that he’s a liberal even in his own party. What’s remarkable about this is the fact that Massachusetts Republicans are the most, or nearly the most, liberal Republicans in the entire country!”

The one area where the establishment media would call Brown a conservative is his position on the so-called “war on terror.” But this so-called “conservatism” is nothing more than a neo-con war against the U.S. Constitution. Brown has been quoted as [favoring waterboarding](#) in the *Boston Globe*, which violates the Eighth Amendment prohibition against “cruel and unusual punishments.” He also supports elimination of the Bill of Rights for people the government doesn’t favor. Brown stated in a television commercial in the week before the election that “some people believe our Constitution exists to grant rights to terrorists who want to harm us. I disagree. Our laws are meant to protect this nation, not our enemies. As your Senator, I will never compromise our nation’s security.” This statement clearly puts him in the [John Yoo wing of the Republican Party](#), which asserts that rights are not distributed to all men by God. Instead of having rights “[endowed by our Creator](#),” these neo-conservatives insist rights are doled out by government, though neo-cons believe government ought not to give them to people it doesn’t like. Of course, the [Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) simply guarantees: “In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury.” It makes no exceptions for terrorists or other people government officials don’t like, pointedly using the word “all.”

But the neo-con machine has pushed the idea that Brown’s attack on the Bill of Rights that won him the election. Brown strategist Eric Fehrstrom told *National Review* “from our own internal polling, the more potent issue here in Massachusetts was terrorism and the treatment of enemy combatants.” That wasn’t what all other pollsters reported after the election; each noted that health care was the primary issue on voters’ minds.

Asked why he thought Massachusetts had sent the first Republican Senator to Washington since 1972, President Obama [replied](#) on January 20: “The same thing that swept Scott Brown into office swept me into office. People are angry, and they’re frustrated.” Obama was partly right. They are angry and frustrated... with Obama’s healthcare agenda. But for most voters it didn’t go any deeper than that. It wasn’t an informed choice of a principled constitutionalist over a lesser alternative.

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