



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 14, 2010

Mass. Senate Race: It's Going to be Close!

From obscurity to prominence to possible victory, Massachusetts State Senator Scott Brown's campaign for Teddy Kennedy's seat in a special election on Tuesday, January 19, is receiving national attention. From a 30-point underdog, Brown has campaigned for the seat — which he says “With all due respect, it's not the Kennedys' seat, it's not the Democrats' seat, it's the people's seat” — with his pledge: “I will send this [Obama healthcare] bill back.” And in so doing he has closed the gap so that several prominent pollsters are saying the race is too close to call.



Success in keeping the seat in the Democrats' control has galvanized Martha Coakley, deemed to be a shoo-in just a couple of months ago, to call for reinforcements. The DNC is spending \$500,000 on ads attacking Brown this weekend, and former President Bill Clinton will visit the state on Sunday to support her bid. And there is every good chance that President Obama will come to her aid prior to the election.

The panic is palpable. Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), while calling Brown a “far-right tea-bagger Republican,” went on to say: “It would be bad enough to lose this seat — and Democrats' 60th vote in the Senate — right before the final health care reform vote. But it would be even worse for the decisive ‘no’ vote to come from Ted Kennedy's old seat.”

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The *Wall Street Journal* agrees: “What an irony it would be if the race for Kennedy's successor in Massachusetts denied Democrats the 60th vote [they need] to ram their federal takeover [of national healthcare] into law.”

There is more involved than just securing, or denying, the final vote needed for that pending legislation. Even if Brown loses to Coakley, the apparent closeness of the race presents [“a scary prospect for Democrats ... on their home ideological turf.”](#) According to the *Guardian*, “The Republicans would hail a good showing by their candidate as a morale booster and a sign of the vulnerability of more winnable seats in the November midterm elections. If Brown were to pull off an upset in Massachusetts, it would damage Democratic Party plans for a final vote on Barack Obama's healthcare bill by removing the party's 60-40 Senate majority and complicate the remainder of his legislative programme for the year.”

A win by Brown would be even more remarkable since the Republican National Committee and the GOP's Senate campaign committee aren't directly supporting Brown. This raises questions about whether the Republicans think Brown can win, or whether they are afraid of reminding voters that he is a Republican.

Brown has [distanced himself](#) somewhat from the Republican Party, calling himself instead a “Scott Brown Republican.” His claims as a independent have been challenged not only by the Service



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Employees International Union who, in a recent ad, stated that “Brown calls himself independent, but voted with Republican leadership 96 percent of the time,” but also by a third-party candidate who reminded voters that while Brown is calling for lower taxes, he repeatedly voted to override Governor Romney spending vetoes while in the State Senate.

[There are rumors](#) that, even if Brown pulls the upset, the Democrats will delay the vote count long enough to push through Obamacare with the vote of Senator Paul Kirk, appointed to fill Kennedy’s seat last summer.

[On Monday, January 11](#), Rasmussen Reports said, “If Coakley is truly right around the 50% mark, then the race is hers to lose, and Brown’s best possible scenario is a very narrow victory. But in a special election, turnout is typically much lower and always much harder to project. With just over a week to go, it is possible that a candidate mistake could dramatically shake up the race. [At this moment] the dynamics of the race still make it likely that Massachusetts voters on January 19th will send another Democrat to Washington.”

Rasmussen updated their findings [on Tuesday](#), noting that the election had “gotten tighter, but the general dynamics remain the same [for a Coakley victory].”

[On Tuesday, the Rothenberg Political Report](#) noted, “We still believe that the Democratic nature of the state and the latest Democratic attacks [on Brown] make Coakley a narrow favorite to hold the open seat. We’re moving the race from “**Clear Advantage** [for Coakley]” to “**Narrow Advantage.**”

[On Thursday, Rothenberg updated](#) their position with this announcement:

Democratic desperation and other compelling evidence strongly suggest that Democrats may well lose the late Senator Edward Kennedy’s Senate seat in Tuesday’s special election. Because of this, we are moving our rating of the race from Narrow Advantage for the Incumbent Party to **Toss-Up**.

Whatever the shortcomings of the Coakley campaign (and they certainly exist), this race has become about change, President Obama and Democratic control of all of the levers of power in Washington, D.C. Brown has “won” the “free media” over the past few days, and if he continues to do so, he will win the election.

Late Democratic efforts to demonize Republican Scott Brown, to make the race into a partisan battle and to use the Kennedy name to drive Democratic voters to the polls could still work. But the advertising clutter in the race works against them, and voters often tune out late messages, which can seem desperate.

Republican political consultant [Charlie Manning](#) said “a visit from a president with tanking numbers would make Coakley look desperate. It’s sort of like trying to bail out a boat that’s already sinking. I don’t think they can fool the voters of Massachusetts this time.”

It’s going to be close!

Photo of Scott Brown: AP Images



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