



Written by [Brendon S. Peck](#) on December 9, 2011

Plan to Beat Bishop May Be Plan to Beat Democrats

In 2010, the torrent of anger against statist intrusion into areas Americans still consider sacrosanct swept away scores of Democratic incumbents. So strong was the enthusiasm of the Tea Party, so energized was the Republican electorate, that even deeply entrenched House Democrats were dislodged. Long time leftist titan James Oberstar of Minnesota, Ike Skelton of Missouri, and John Spratt of South Carolina were but a few who fell. In all, Republicans gained 63 seats in the House, 6 in the Senate, a majority of governorships, and 680 additional seats in state legislatures.



Despite historic success nationwide, Republicans would come up short against Congressman Tim Bishop (D-N.Y.), a liberal politician in a not-so-liberal district. His margin of victory was razor thin, though — a mere 592 votes out of almost 200,000 cast. Bishop's Houdini-esque escape act underscores the significance of a single voter's participation.

With the 2012 race on the horizon, Bishop will once again face Randy Altschuler, a successful businessman whose message of fiscal restraint, reform, and job creation should resonate with voters who've been straight-jacketed by the economy. The Democratic political machine in Suffolk County, as one should expect, takes a different view, dismissing Altschuler's appeal to NY-1 voters.

Like national Democrats, Suffolk County Democratic Chairman Richard Schaffer argues that the conditions that produced the 2010 "wave" no longer exist. As a consequence, he contends that Randy Altschuler will be far less "competitive." That the conditions are absent is a point of debate, but Schaffer's suggestion is altogether unconvincing.

Politico, hardly a shill for the Right, recently characterized the rematch as one of the most contestable in the country, a national bellwether. They maintain that an Altschuler victory would signal a shift. Namely, that Republicans will have regained the support of key suburbanites lost to President Obama in 2008. In any case, Bishop is extremely vulnerable.

Keen on avoiding last year's brutal primary battle from which Altschuler would emerge, Suffolk County Republicans, conservatives, and Tea Party activists largely coalesced behind the businessman in August. The early infusion of institutional support denies Bishop the benefit of a bruised opponent. Setting aside party divisions puts Altschuler on surer footing, and allows the party to focus on the race ahead.

With a pro-growth, job centric platform — not to mention his own record of creating jobs — Randy Altschuler can draw a sharp contrast against that of Congressman Bishop who is part of a Washington culture so loathed by voters. Indeed, Congressional job approval is at historic lows. The latest Fox News poll found that only 13 percent of Americans approve of Congress, while 82 percent disapprove. Results in the most recent CBS/New York Times poll are even worse — only 9 percent approve.



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Bishop's prospects are further shaken by a pronounced lack of enthusiasm within his own party. Consider that just 43 percent of Democrats are excited about voting in 2012, while Republicans, with 64 percent, are decidedly more passionate about ousting their liberal opposition. With a definable relationship between enthusiasm and voter turnout, the gap is cause for consternation on the Left.

Polling trends aside, it is perhaps the poor state of NY-1's economy that most undermines Bishop's reelection chances. The non-partisan analysis of the Long Island Association (LIA) makes plain the state of play: For the fifth straight month, Long Island has lost jobs. And over the last year, nearly 13,000 jobs have been lost in all — over 8,000 of which were in the private sector. Similarly, the housing market continues to struggle. Median home prices fell over 4 percent since last year, while the foreclosure crisis lingers. Consumers and businesses are burdened with higher taxes and inflation. Under these conditions, the Bishop campaign may find it difficult to gain traction with issues they deem more favorable.

While there is no denying the Congressman's vulnerabilities, it's worth keeping perspective. In fact, even with a unified Republican front, an unpopular and ineffective Congress, a dispirited liberal base, and an invigorated conservative opposition, if Bishop isn't effectively challenged on his record, he will likely be reelected — bad economy and all. For the Altschuler campaign, then, their task is two-fold: provide increasingly receptive voters with a clear case for change and force Bishop to address his record. Its exposure will betray him as a politician who, despite masquerading as a centrist, is just a reliable vote for the Left. Consider:

Bishop voted for cap-and-trade legislation, an enviro-statist scheme that would dramatically increase the cost of electricity and fuel, impact job creation and stifle growth. According to the Heritage Foundation, had the bill become law it would have reduced our nation's GDP by more than \$9 trillion between 2012 and 2035. High energy costs would be particularly damaging for NY-1 residents. For them, electricity is expensive enough already. Long Islanders pay some of the highest rates in the country.

Bishop voted for, and cosponsored, Card Check legislation — a change long sought by union leaders intent on replenishing their ranks, and their power. Had this anti-democratic bill become law, it would have eliminated the secret ballot in union elections. For his support on this and other matters, the AFL-CIO gives Bishop a rating of 98 and, as you would expect, loads of union cash.

Bishop backed the \$830 billion stimulus package, a vote he embraces still today, maintaining the economy would be in worse shape if not for its passage. We've heard that before, many, many times. But as noted Stanford economist John Taylor reminds us, "The results do not support that view."

To say that this Keynesian experiment was a failure is too kind. Years after its enactment, 13.3 million Americans remain out of work, millions more are underemployed, and GDP is anemic. Worse, America's labor force is shrinking, as many give up looking for jobs altogether, a condition seen in NY-1 as well. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that the stimulus will actually reduce GDP growth.

Yet, of all the votes cast appealing to leftists, it is Bishop's vote for ObamaCare that is the main point against him. As recent data demonstrates, the "Affordable Care Act" is already increasing healthcare costs for families. This year, premiums have gone up 9 percent, reversing a "decade long downtrend in percentage premium increases" according to the *Investor's Business Daily*. Such strain could further weaken support for an already unpopular law. Fifty-three percent of Americans now favor repeal.



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Of course, much rests on the Supreme Court. Its decision next summer on the constitutionality of ObamaCare could have a seismic political impact. Should the mandate provision be found unconstitutional, President Obama, Bishop, and other leftists will be scrambling for cover.

In the meantime, it would serve to remind constituents that their Congressman, who has voted with Democrats 94 percent of the time, is out of step with their views.

Photo of Tim Bishop

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