



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on January 11, 2010

Republican Brown Gaining in Mass. Senate Race

Even in the Republican Tsunami of 1994, the Grand Old Party did not really come close to taking the U.S. Senate seat ordained in perpetuity for the Kennedy family and its political heirs. But the last prince of Camelot is dead, and while Martha Coakley no doubt knew the late Senator and may even have been a friend of Ted Kennedy, Martha Coakley is no Ted Kennedy.



So even though Coakley had been considered a shoo-in for the January 19 special election to fill the Massachusetts senate seat left vacant by the Senator's death last summer, recent polls indicate Republican Scott Brown is gaining on his better-known opponent. And in a special election in January, with turnout expected to be low, Kennedy's political detractors, seeing at long last a chance to win the seat, may turn out in greater proportion than the late Senator's admirers, who may be tempted to stay home because they take the election for granted. And because, it may be repeated, Martha Coakley is not Ted Kennedy.

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She is, however, the state's Attorney General, and she used her name recognition to cruise to an easy win over U.S. Rep. Mike Capuano and others in the December 8 Democratic primary. But according to the *Washington Post*, she has since drawn criticism from Party strategists, both in Massachusetts and nationally, for allegedly not doing enough to organize and motivate her supporters in a political climate that, even in die-hard Democratic Massachusetts, is no longer friendly to the Democrats and the Party's agenda.

GOP excitement was fueled in recent days by the latest polls in the race. Two automated polls — a controversial methodology — showed the contest within single digits, and a *Boston Globe* poll released Sunday showed Coakley and Brown tied among those "extremely interested" in the race. "Although Coakley carries a sizable 15-point advantage in the *Globe* (overall) poll, and leads on most issues," the *Post* reports today, "special elections are low-turnout affairs and are notoriously difficult to poll accurately, allowing both sides to spin the numbers."

Not only Republicans, but unaffiliated conservative organizations, sensing blood in the political water, have mobilized with attacks on Coakley. The American Future Fund is reportedly spending more than \$400,000 on ads knocking Coakley on the ever-present issue of taxes and reports suggest there is more



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where that came from. Democrats, sensing the urgency of the situation, have announced that former President Bill Clinton will be campaigning for Coakley in Massachusetts on Friday. Democrats are also sending out a fundraising e-mail seeking donations to help "fight back against swiftboat attacks" in the race — a reference to ads featuring Navy swiftboat veterans attacking the character of Democratic Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts during his 2004 presidential bid.

According to the *Post*, two factors are commonly cited as reasons why the race has been tightening: the "national issue landscape and Coakley's less-than-inspiring general-election campaign."

"People are angry — way too many are out of work, everyone is scared about the economy, [and] they don't want their taxes to go up," a Massachusetts Democrat told the Washington paper. "It's not surprising that the out-of-power party could gain some momentum, even in Massachusetts."

Critics may be underestimating the difficulty for Coakley, who is running as the political heir of the Senator who had held the seat for nearly half a century and as an ally of the administration and congressional party now in power. She is being urged at the same time to campaign as a "change agent." Balancing the themes of continuity and change could be a tall order for one who has not had to run on national issues before.

Holding on to the seat is crucial for Democrats, who need every one of the 60 votes they now have in the Senate to be able to shut off Republican filibusters against the Democrats' healthcare legislation and other key components of the Obama administration's agenda. For the Kennedy family, close friends, and political allies of the late Senator, enactment of a national healthcare program is an essential part of the Senator's legacy, an effort for which he devoted much of his political career and which he described often as "the cause of my life." Republican candidate Brown has pledged to vote against the Democrats' healthcare plan as well as the administration's "cap-and-trade" legislation to reduce carbon admissions that many believe is contributing significantly to global warming, or "climate change."

Even a narrow victory in the bluest of blue states would add to momentum Republicans claim that popularity has swung their way since Obama and the Democrats took over a little more than one year ago. And the symbolism of a Republican capture of the seat held by the Kennedys for more than 60 years would surely be a morale-boosting talking point for the Republicans nationally.

The seat was won by John F. Kennedy in 1952, when the young Congressman and PT Boat hero in World War II defeated Henry Cabot Lodge, the descendent of a prominent Republican family and a fixture in the foreign policy establishment represented by the Council of Foreign Relations, an organization dedicated to bringing about a one-world government. A friend of the Kennedys occupied the seat for two years after JFK went to the White House and his brother and campaign manager, Robert F. Kennedy, became the U.S. Attorney General. In 1962, Edward Kennedy, barely meeting the minimum constitutional requirement of 30 years of age, ran for and won the seat, clearly playing on his White House connections, boasting in campaign ads that "Kennedy can DO MORE for Massachusetts."

He easily won election that year and had only one close call since, one that may or not be meaningful for Republicans nationally as 2012 approaches. In 1994, Republican Mitt Romney appeared to briefly hold a lead over the five-term Senator, only to falter and fade when summer turned to autumn. Romney, who later was elected to and served a single term as the state's Governor, sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 before conceding the nomination to Arizona Sen. John McCain. He is expected to seek the 2012 nomination, despite lukewarm support from Party conservatives.

Brown, a youthful 50, is a state Senator, representing the Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex District since



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2004. A self-proclaimed believer in small-government, free-market conservatism, Brown is a practicing attorney with a concentration in family law. He is a 1977 graduate of Wakefield High School and was graduated from Tufts University and Boston College Law School.

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