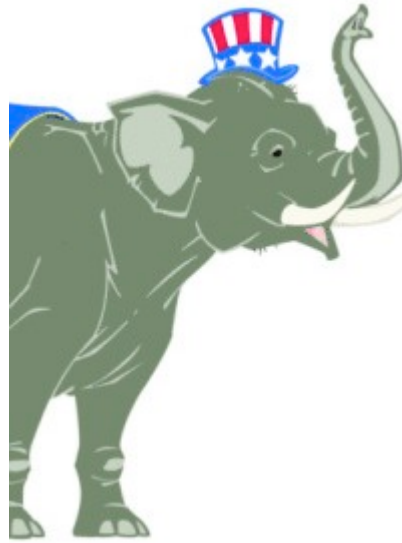




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on February 10, 2010

Republicans Eye Big Comeback this Fall

Just a little over three years since losing both houses of Congress and a mere 15 months after losing the White House to the Democrats, Republicans around the country seem to believe the party is poised for a major comeback in this fall's elections.



After winning gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey in November and the special election Senate race in Massachusetts last month, at least two political forecasters are predicting a Republican takeover of both the House and Senate this fall. Fox news analyst Dick Morris and political consultant Eileen McGann see Republicans leading in eight Senate races, with the possibility of taking the lead in two or more others. A net gain of ten Senate seats would give the Republicans, now a 41-51 minority, a two vote majority in the upper chamber.

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"If the Republican Party wins every Senate seat in which it now holds a lead, according to Rasmussen's polls, it will capture eight Democratic seats while holding all of its own," wrote Morris and McGann in an article appearing on the NewsMax web site. "The two remaining pickups, to assure control, could be in Indiana, where former Sen. Dan Coats may run against Sen. Evan Bayh, and in California. Even if Coats does not run, former Congressman John Hostettler is behind Bayh by only 44-41 percent. And, in California, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina is only 3 points behind Sen. Barbara Boxer."

Morris and McGann cite Delaware, North Dakota, Arkansas, Nevada Colorado, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Wisconsin as states where Rasmussen polls show Republican challengers leading Democratic incumbents.

Still, it is only February and the Morris-McGann survey includes races where party primaries lie ahead to determine just which candidates will be on the ballot in November. And they note that former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson has not yet said whether he will enter the race to take on three-term incumbent Russ Feingold. Thompson, a Republican who served as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the George W. Bush administration, is shown with a three percentage point lead over Democrat Feingold, according to Rasmussen's January poll, the latest taken on the potential match up,

In addition, McGann and Morris point to "strong challenges" to Democratic incumbents taking shape in the states of New York and Washington. Kirsten Gillibrand in New York, appointed last year to fill the Senate vacated by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, faces a likely primary challenge from former Tennessee Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. Should she survive that, she could be vulnerable in the November election if opposed by a strong Republican candidate. Gillibrand has taken stands on gun control and other issues that have aroused conservative opposition. In Washington, Republican



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businessman Paul Akers is expected to make a strong run against Democrat Patty Murray, now in her fourth term.

In a key race, the early polling in the anticipated Senate race in Pennsylvania show Republican Pat Toomey with a nine-percent lead over Democrat Arlen Specter, a five-term liberal, "pro-choice" Republican before changing his party affiliation last year. Specter survived a hard-fought primary with the conservative and pro-life Toomey, then a Pennsylvania congressman, in 2004. At that time, Specter had the backing of the Republican Party establishment, including President George W. Bush and Vice President Richard Cheney.

One of Senate races not mentioned by Morris and McGann is in New Hampshire. Once among the most Republican states in the nation, New Hampshire today has Democratic governor, and Democrats in the majority in both houses of the Legislature, Democrats also hold both of the state's U.S. House seats and one of its U.S. Senate seats. But Republicans have high hopes for winning back both House seats and holding the Senate seat being vacated by retiring three-term Sen. Judd Gregg. Those hopes were bolstered on Tuesday of this week by the release of a new Granite State Poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. It shows Republican Kelly Ayotte, a former state attorney general, leading U.S. Rep. Paul Hodes, 41-33 percent in that Senate race. So far, three lesser-known Republicans have also entered the race. The UNH poll shows Hodes leading Manchester attorney Ovide Lamontagne 38-29 percent, while holding 36-27 lead over Hollis businessman Jim Bender. Rye entrepreneur Bill Binnie, who began running TV ads in January, trails Hodes by just four points, 34-30. The Granite State Poll questioned 444 likely voters. The Survey Center claims a margin of error of 4.7 percent.

"Hodes faces a real uphill battle to win this seat," said UNH pollster Andrew Smith. "He is the best known candidate, a two-term incumbent, but doesn't crack 40 percent against three relatively unknown candidates and continues to trail his best known rival."

Meanwhile, former Congressman Charles Bass is eyeing a comeback, hoping to win back the Second District congressional seat he lost to Hodes in 2006. Bass, a "pro-choice" Republican who represented the district for 12 years, leads Democrat Katrina Swett, the wife of former Congressman Dick Swett, 37-30. He holds a slightly larger lead when matched against Democrat activist Ann McLane Kuster, who trails Bass 28-39 percent. Republican Jennifer Horn, a former Nashua columnist and talk show host who lost to Hodes in 2008, is also seen holding her own against the Democrats, trailing Swett by just four points, 26 to 30 percent and holding three-point edge, 28 to 25, over Kuster. Horn, a staunch conservative and pro-life mother of five, is expected to do ideological battle with Bass in the GOP primary.

New Hampshire Republicans might be rejoicing even more over the results of the UNH polling in the First District congressional race, where two-term Democrat Carol Shea-Porter trails all three of her potential Republican opponents. Former Manchester Mayor Frank Guinta leads Shea-Porter 43 to 33 percent in the poll and lesser known candidates Rich Ashooh and Bob Bestani also lead the incumbent who has been frequently criticized by the state's Republicans and the conservative statewide daily, the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, for hewing too closely to the Obama-Pelosi line.

"Again, the same bad political environment that's there for Democrats nationwide, we're seeing in the 1st District, which is a more Republican district," said Smith.

"If top New Hampshire Democrats were 'nervous' before, now they must be demoralized," National



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Republican Congressional Committee spokesman Tory Mazzalo said in a press release. "Voters in New Hampshire reject the Obama-Pelosi partisan, big government agenda that Carol Shea-Porter has gone along with every step of the way."

Morris and McGann also base their bright outlook for the GOP on the actual election result in last month's U.S. Senate race in heavily Democratic Massachusetts, where Republican state Senator Scott Brown upset the heavily favored Democratic candidate, Attorney General Martha Coakley.

"But the message of Massachusetts is that any Republican can beat any Democrat anywhere," Morris and McGann wrote. "So don't count out former Congressman Rob Simmons' race against Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal or any possible candidate against Oregon's Ron Wyden and New York's Chuck Schumer.

"The Republicans will win the Senate (and the House) — and might win it with a few seats to spare!" they predicted.



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