



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 23, 2010

## Senatorial Candidates Change Tunes to Remain Competitive

Campaigns for the 2010 midterm elections have reflected massive transformations for several of the senatorial candidates, particularly Florida Governor Charlie Crist and former speaker of the Florida House Marco Rubio, both of whom are competing for the Florida Senate seat, and Arizona Senator John McCain, the current frontrunner in the Arizona Senate race.

Of the three candidates, Crist was at the center of a highly dramatic and controversial transformation when he left the Republican Party and acquired the Independent Party label. He originally sought the GOP nomination for Florida's Senate seat until it became painfully clear that he did not stand a chance against Marco Rubio. Crist faced fierce opposition from conservatives in the state of Florida, who were unhappy with Crist's embrace of President Obama's 2009 stimulus package and deemed him as "too moderate" for Florida conservatives.



Once he came upon this realization, Crist left the Florida Republican party and embraced the Independent Party, from which he secured a nomination. Rubio was endorsed by both Florida's Republican Party as well as Florida's Tea Party organizations.

Though Crist has long been considered a middle-of-the-road politician, his leaving the Republican Party revealed a greater move to the Left. He aligned himself with Florida teachers' unions by vetoing a bill that would have tied teachers' pay to standardized test scores and vetoed a bill that would have forced women seeking abortions to have an ultrasound. Crist rejects the "Don't ask, don't tell" military policy and supports a state constitutional ban on offshore drilling.

Despite his left-leaning tendencies, Crist sees his agenda as an independent agenda, and insists, "The Independent agenda is the people's agenda."

Like Crist, however, Rubio has been forced to make some changes in order to remain competitive in the Florida Senate race. The *New York Times* writes, "Now facing intense competition for the moderate Republicans and independents who could be the keys to victory in one of the nation's most evenly divided states, Mr. Rubio is trying to show that he is more than just an insurgent protest candidate — and he is breaking with some Tea Party orthodoxy in the process."

Rubio explains his position on the upcoming elections. "The solution isn't just to paralyze government. Vote for us because you couldn't possibly vote for them? That's not enough. It may win some seats, but



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it won't take you where you want to be."

Rubio's statements ring true in the case of a variety of Republican candidates across the country. Several months ago, Fox News reported that Republicans were making use of "volatile anti-Democratic" sentiments rather than sponsoring a "pro-GOP platform." In part, this decision was necessary as the emergence of the Tea Party movement helped to articulate a divide within the Republican Party that Republican candidates have been afraid to address.

While Fox News predicts that it is the "anti-incumbent" attitude American voters are experiencing that will help secure a dramatic Republican victory in the Fall, Rubio is not so sure.

When addressing voters angered by the Obama agenda in Pensacola, Florida, Rubio declared, "I am not running for the United States Senate because I want to be the opposition to Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid. I'm running for Senate because I want to create an alternative."

Rather than avoiding outlining a particular platform, Rubio has "delivered three detailed speeches in the past week alone on education, veterans' affairs and retiree issues," reports the *New York Times*.

Likewise, Rubio has expressed his discontent over the downplaying of American exceptionalism under Democratic control, and has indicated his interest in restoring the free market and repealing ObamaCare.

However, where Rubio strays from the typical Tea Party ideologies are areas like the Arizona immigration law and revisiting the 14th Amendment, issues that Rubio has described as "not the highest and best use of our political attention."

Rubio currently maintains a small lead over Crist, according to an August 11 Rasmussen Report, but the numbers may change depending on which Democrat secures the Democratic nomination, which will be determined by the August 24 primary.

On another front, Arizona's Republican Senator John McCain appears to have undergone the greatest ideological transformation throughout his 2010 campaign.

According to ABC News, "Arizona's contest is notable for the dramatic transformation of Senator John McCain, who in years past worked across the aisle on issues like climate change legislation and comprehensive immigration reform, but after his bruising loss in the 2008 Presidential election, has taken a harder line and sided more frequently with rank and file Republicans."

McCain can attribute this makeover to the fierce Republican primary race against conservative challenger former Representative J.D. Hayworth.

Of the areas in which McCain has shown change, the most dramatic is his transformed views on immigration.

In 2008, McCain contended that he did not believe that the Mexican border required "fences and walls" and in fact, worked with the late pro-amnesty Senator Ted Kennedy on immigration reform legislation. In 2005 and 2006, McCain voted in favor of "comprehensive immigration reform," supported by President George W. Bush.

In a 2010 television advertisement, however, McCain is shown walking along the Arizona border fence with an Arizona sheriff. In the ad, McCain declares, "Complete the dang fence."

Similar to his altered views on immigration, McCain's once-favorable view of "cap and trade" has now become oppositional, indicating that the system would be a tax burden, though McCain has co-authored



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cap and trade bills in the past.

When President George W. Bush proposed his now famous tax cuts, McCain was one of the view Republicans to vote against them. Years later, McCain asserts that the tax cuts should be extended.

Despite the remarkable conversion made by John McCain throughout the course of this campaign, he insists, "I have not changed in my positions. I know how popular it is for the Eastern press to paint me as having changed positions. That's not true."

Whether the alterations made by Crist, Rubio, and McCain will prove to be successful remain to be seen. One thing that seems relatively certain is that the 2010 midterm elections will reflect a change in the American people.

Photo of Charlie Crist (left) and Marco Rubio: AP Images



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