



## Will Alaska's Lisa Murkowski "Pull an Al Franken"?

Alaska's leading GOP Senate primary contender Joe Miller, an Iraq war veteran, voiced concerns last week that his opponent, Lisa Murkowski, will "pull an Al Franken." By that, Miller means that Murkowski may launch a lengthy legal battle to save her Senate seat.



In November 2008, Al Franken engaged in a protracted legal battle for the Senate seat of incumbent Norm Coleman. Coleman was initially declared winner by a narrow margin, prompting Franken to call for a series of recounts. Eventually, in June 2009, after an eight-month legal battle, the Minnesota Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Franken's victory should be certified. Minnesota's Governor declared Franken to be the winner, providing Democrats with a 60-vote filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

While Coleman had the option to appeal the decision with the United States Supreme Court, he opted against it, concerned that any further legal challenge would hurt his state.

With Murkowski trailing behind Miller by 1,700 votes, a potential legal challenge is possible. According to the Alaska Division of Elections, as of Saturday, the organization has yet to count 23,000 votes, of which 14,000 are absentees and 9,000 are disputed ballots, reports the *Los Angeles Times*. None of the votes will be counted before Tuesday.

However, the *Anchorage Daily* predicts that Murkowski is unlikely to receive the necessary 56 percent of the uncounted votes.

Miller accuses Murkowski and the National Republican Senatorial Committee of potentially setting the stage for a legal dispute by "meddling" in the Senate race.

In an interview with Fox Business Network, Miller explained, "We are looking right now to make sure that the election — that the votes — are accounted for fairly, without any type of game play." He added, "It concerns us any time somebody lawyers up and tries to pull an Al Franken, if you will. We are very concerned that there may be some attempt here to skew the results."

Miller specifically indicated concern over the lawyer, Sean Cairncross, who works for the GOP Senate campaign committee and who headed to Alaska to assist Murkowski.

"You know we are concerned. We've got, I think, some game play going on here with the National Republican Senatorial Committee meddling in our primary election," contends Miller. Noting that Murkowski continues to consider staying in the Senate race on the Libertarian ticket, Miller believes that the National Republican Senatorial Committee should not provide further resources on



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 30, 2010

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Murkowski's behalf.

Murkowski, on the other hand, calls Miller's concerns "paranoia." She asserts, "We want to make sure that every Alaskan's vote counts in this election. Mr. Miller shouldn't be afraid of what the voters will have to say about this race."

National Republican Senatorial Committee spokesman Brian Walsh declared, "We've made clear to both campaigns that whichever candidate is chosen as the nominee, they will have our full support."

Alaska's GOP Senate primary is a prime example of Tea Party candidates coming up against establishment Republicans, in what has been dubbed by Democrats as "infighting."

Miller's position is closely aligned with that of the Tea Party movement, calling for less reliance on the federal government and greater reliance on the states. In an interview with CBS's *Face the Nation*, Miller said, "The government is going bankrupt. I don't think anybody can deny it. I think the answer to this is to basically transfer the responsibilities and power of government back to the states and the people. That is really the only answer, I think, out of this crisis."

According to *The Hill*, "The primary campaign was contentious and drew national attention in its final days due to Palin's involvement. Murkowski was critical of Palin for writing a Facebook note calling her [Murkowski] part of the problem in Washington and referencing the fact that she was appointed to the seat by her father, then-Gov. Frank Murkowski, who was unseated by Palin in 2006."

If the uncounted ballots prove Miller to be the winner, he still must contend with the possibility of a three-way race that may not bode well for him.

The *Los Angeles Times* reports, "A survey released Sunday by the Democratic-affiliated Public Policy Polling firm showed Miller leading Democratic nominee Scott McAdams, mayor of Sitka, 47 percent to 39 percent. Murkowski would lead McAdams 60 percent to 28 percent. In a three-way race, Murkowski would lead with 38 percent to Miller's 34 percent, with McAdams trailing at 22 percent."

Photo of Senator Lisa Murkowski: AP Images



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