

## **Kennedy's Absence Continues to Shake Up Mass. Political Scene; 2010 Shaping Up To Be Volatile Year**

*April 6, 2010*

The death of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in August 2009, after 36 years in the U.S. Senate, was expected to send shock waves through the Massachusetts political establishment – and it has, though not in ways that anyone predicted.

Last year's script had either Attorney General Martha Coakley or one of the state's ten Democratic congressional representatives winning the special Senate election to succeed Kennedy. Next, a scrum of Democrats, mostly, were expected to compete to move up the political food chain. But Coakley's stunning loss in January to Republican back-bencher Scott Brown, until then the state's most junior GOP state senator, totally changed the political calculus, energizing a moribund state Republican party and inspiring Democratic incumbents across the state to reconsider their futures.

Already, a flock of Republican and independent candidates have emerged to try to unseat Democrats, some of whom have not faced a serious challenge in years. All this takes place in the shadow of a gubernatorial contest in which a now-unpopular Democratic incumbent, Deval Patrick, expects flak from the left and serious artillery fire from the right.

Meanwhile, the political dominoes are falling most furiously within the bounds of Brown's former state senate district, and to the east along Boston's South Shore where a scramble has developed for the congressional seat of a Kennedy ally, Rep. William D. Delahunt.

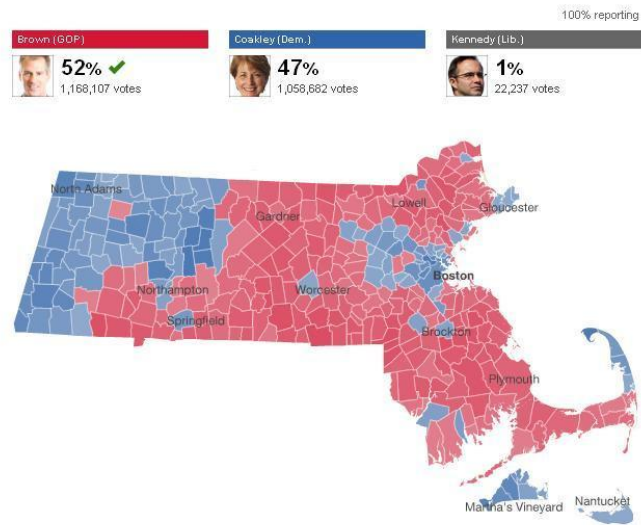
### **The Brown Effect**

Setting the stage for a most unusual political year was Scott Brown's stunning triumph over Democrat Martha Coakley in the January 19 special election.

Brown didn't win big – the surprise was that he won at all. Just few weeks before the election, Coakley boasted a 31-point lead in the polls, a lead that evaporated as outside money brought the campaign into every living room. Had Coakley been able to stave off even a fraction of the bleeding – had she, for example, held onto even just one of every twenty voters who pulled the lever for her opponent – she would be sitting in the Senate today and the press would be looking elsewhere for evidence of voters turned off by the majority Democratic party.

Brown's victory made him a national political star, the potential 41st vote against "Obamacare" and the rest of the Democratic president's political agenda. His improbable win energized conservatives everywhere, but locally his victory also resonated for a different reason: it was not a local phenomenon. Brown won wide. In

a usually reliably Democratic state, Brown beat Coakley in 230 of the state's 351 cities and towns. Massachusetts woke up on January 20 to something rarely before seen: a state map colored mostly in red, with the state's more liberal enclaves – the Berkshires, Boston-Cambridge, MetroWest and the outer reaches of the Cape and Islands – looking like, well, islands.



Source: Boston Globe

That startling graphic has riveted the attention of the state's mostly Democratic lawmakers, who now control all but 10% of the seats in both the 160-member Massachusetts House and 40-member Senate. (Pending the special election to fill his Senate seat, Brown's win reduced the GOP contingent from 5 senators to 4.) Every Democratic lawmaker is looking at his or her district with fresh eyes, startled at the inroads made in their own backyard by this heretofore little-known Republican colleague.

Some are already jumping ship. In 2008, nine Democratic House members and three Republicans declined to seek re-election; three of the nine Democrats instead ran for open State Senate seats. By contrast, this year 21 Democrats<sup>1</sup> have already announced plans to give up their seats in 2010, including one who has resigned already.<sup>2</sup> Of the 21 Democrats, six (Clark, Finegold, Harkins<sup>3</sup>, Rodrigues, Rush and Tobin) are competing to move up to the Senate, while another four (Bosley, Donelan, Driscoll and Quinn) will seek open district attorney or sheriff posts; the other ten are merely retiring. Four Republicans are also leaving the House this year, most of them in bids to seek higher office.<sup>4</sup>

Other state reps are expected to announce retirement plans before the April 27 deadline to file nominating papers.

In the 40-member Senate, seven Democrats (Buoniconti, Menard, Morrissey, O'Leary, Panagiotakos, Tucker and Walsh) and one Republican (Tisei) have already announced

<sup>1</sup>Allen, Bosley, Clark, Donelan, Driscoll, Finegold, Flynn, Grant, Greene, Guyer, Harkins, Harkins, Lantigua, Quinn, Rice, Rodrigues, Rush, Spellane, St. Fleur, Tobin and Wallace.

<sup>2</sup>William Lantigua quit the Legislature after his election as mayor of Lawrence.

<sup>3</sup>Harkins actually does not have to surrender her House seat to run for Senate in the May 2010 special election. However, she has given no indication that she will try to stay in the House if she loses the Senate race.

<sup>4</sup>Evangelidis, Hargraves, Perry and Polito.

plans to leave this year. In addition, a Republican vacancy (Brown's) and a Democratic one (Galluccio's) will be filled by special election in May. Therefore, a minimum of 10 Senate seats will change hands this year, compared to 6 in 2008.

The other face of the Brown effect is the increase in the number of candidates challenging incumbents. In 2008 only 12 Democratic House members faced Republican opponents, while 10 faced independent challengers (some of whom were from the left). This year an eye-popping 42 Democratic incumbents<sup>5</sup> (not including those who have announced plans to retire) have drawn at least one Republican opponent so far; four others face independent<sup>6</sup> or third-party<sup>7</sup> challengers. Eleven incumbent Democratic state senators this year have also drawn Republican challengers already<sup>8</sup>, vs. three in 2008.

While some of these challengers will undoubtedly drop out or fail to qualify for the ballot, the number of Republican hopefuls is far higher than usual, clearly inspired by Scott Brown's successful campaign.

### **First, More Special Elections**

The first indication of whether Brown's election truly portends a change in the Massachusetts electorate will come in May, when two special elections will be held to fill vacant state senate seats. The one to watch is Brown's, where Democratic state representative Lida Harkins of Needham is among the Democrats squaring off against a Republican House colleague, Richard Ross of Wrentham. Harkins must first beat back an outsider Democrat, emergency physician Peter Smulowicz, also from Needham.

The Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex district was held by a Democrat until Brown took office in a 2004 special election. In recent years it has been trending Republican, however. Because Ross has followed in Brown's political footsteps, from Wrentham selectman to state rep, and he will no doubt have the new senator's endorsement, this race will be watched closely.

Also on in May 11 is an election to fill the seat of former Cambridge state senator Anthony Galluccio, who went to jail as a result of a probation violation in a hit-and-run accident. A crowded field has formed in this race, but only of Democrats.

Another special election will be held in June in the 16th Essex House district, where new mayor William Lantigua formerly served as state rep. Former interim mayor Marcos Devers, a Democrat, has Lantigua's endorsement and is expected to prevail in this largely urban Democratic district.

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<sup>5</sup>Aguiar, Alicea, Ashe, Atsalis, Benson, Bowles, Callahan, Calter, Campbell, Canavan, Canessa, Creedon, D'Amico, Donato, Dwyer, Fagan, Falzone, Gobi, Gregoire, Koczera, Koutoujian, Kujawski, L'Italien, McCarthy, McMurtry, Miceli, Murphy, J, Naughton, Patrick, Peake, Puppolo, Richardson, Rogers, Sandlin, Speliotis, Spiliotis, Stanley, Sullivan, Torrisi, Turner, Walz and Welch.

<sup>6</sup>Curran, Dykema and Hogan.

<sup>7</sup>Pignatelli.

<sup>8</sup>Baddour, Brewer, Candaras, Eldridge, Fargo, Jehlen, McGee, Murray, Pacheco, Petruccelli and Spilka.

## The Delahunt Factor

In all the talk last year about potential political repercussions from Sen. Kennedy's passing, one major factor was overlooked: the years of quiet persuasion that kept his longtime friend Rep. William Delahunt, 68, from quitting Congress.

With Kennedy gone, Rep. Delahunt this month announced that his seventh term will be his last. What had been a safe Democratic congressional seat – Delahunt drew 62% of the vote to wallop two challengers in 2006, and ran unopposed in 2008 – suddenly became the focus of Republican efforts to show that the Sen. Brown's victory was not a fluke.

Bear in mind that it has been 16 years since the GOP won any congressional House seat in Massachusetts. But in breaking the much-longer Senate drought, Scott Brown captured 61% of the votes in Delahunt's district, winning 29 of the 42 cities and towns. This mostly suburban district also includes the highest percentage of registered Republicans (15%) among the state's ten congressional districts. Still, this being Massachusetts, there are few Republican officeholders with significant name recognition throughout the district, which stretches from Delahunt's hometown of Quincy to the furthest reaches of Cape Cod.

In the wake of Delahunt's announcement, nearly 20 names of potential candidates surfaced, from a TV traffic reporter to a young Kennedy (Joe III).

Before going to Congress, Delahunt long served as Norfolk County district attorney, and his successor in that post, William Keating (D), is a leading contender for the Democratic nomination. But most of the congressional district is outside Norfolk County; indeed, Keating does not currently live in the district, but owns a vacation home on Cape Cod. (He also recently bought a small house in Quincy and has established it as his mailing address.) By contrast, all of state senator Robert O'Leary's constituents live in Delahunt's district, but only in the more liberal precincts at its far southeast tip.

On the Republican side, accountant Ray Kasperowicz (R) is the only remaining candidate who was bold enough to mount a campaign against incumbend Delahunt before he dropped out. But now the Republican race seems to be shaping up as a grudge match between the GOP Old Guard, represented by former state treasurer Joseph Malone, and the new more socially conservative wing represented by state representative Jeffrey Davis Perry.

Both parties will choose their standard-bearer in September primaries. Hoping to play spoiler in the November general election are two independents: liberal activist and Cape motel owner Peter White and conservative former Democratic state rep Marianne Lewis.

Keating, O'Leary and Perry all had to give up their seats to make this race, which has triggered a domino effect across southeastern Massachusetts. Two Democrats, State Senator Morrissey and State Representative Joseph Driscoll, will surrender their seats to battle for Keating's job; Rep. Stephen Tobin (D) will try to move up to Morrissey's. Three Democrats and two Republicans are currently battling for O'Leary's current seat, and a gaggle of current and former Quincy officials are scrambling to win Tobin's.

## **The Gubernatorial Maelstrom**

Stoking the embers in an already heated electoral season is an unusually large and contentious race for the governor's office.

Many saw Gov. Deval Patrick's 2006 "outsider" campaign as a blueprint for Barack Obama's historic 2008 presidential run, but today Patrick's image has been battered, and his re-election is far from certain. Indeed, a recent Public Policy Polling survey tagged Patrick as the nation's least popular governor, viewed unfavorably by 59% of likely Massachusetts voters and favorably by only 22%. His main Republican rival is Charles Baker, who served as secretary of administration and finance under former Republican governor William Weld.

Baker has been embraced by the state's business community. But he spent a decade as CEO of one of the state's largest health insurers, Harvard Pilgrim Health – today an awkward platform from which to launch a political campaign. Before that, as a state official his fingerprints were all over Boston's "Big Dig," highway construction project, whose massive cost overruns threaten Baker's reputation as a prudent and conservative manager of the state's finances.

Moreover, both Patrick and Baker face primary challenges, and both must contend with independent or third-party candidates to the right and left in November. Grace Ross, who ran against Patrick as the Green-Rainbow Party candidate in 2006, will challenge him as a Democrat this year; Dr. Jill Stein will then step into Ross's old shoes as the Green-Rainbow standard-bearer. Patrick's own state treasurer, Tim Cahill, has left the Democratic Party to compete for his boss's post as a conservative-leaning independent. Complicating matters further, convenience store magnate Christy Mihos, who ran for governor as an independent in 2006, has returned to the Grand Old Party and is competing to deny Baker the Republican nomination.

The good news for Baker is that Mihos's campaign seems to be imploding. The Cahill campaign remains a huge threat to the Republicans, however, because even an unpopular Democratic governor can win re-election if two conservatives split the anti-incumbent vote.

## **Other Statewide Races**

Treasurer Cahill's decision to run for governor means that his current position will be open in the November 2010 election. Democratic Party official Steven Grossman will line up against Boston city councilor Stephen Murphy for their party's endorsement in this race. The winner will likely face Republican state rep Karyn Polito.

Emboldened by Sen. Brown's win, Republicans have also put up candidates for other constitutional offices. In the race to succeed retiring state auditor Joseph DeNucci, former turnpike authority board member Mary Connaughton will compete for the Republican nomination against former Libertarian Party candidate Kamal Jain. (A third GOP candidate, Earle Stroll, was just disqualified for submitting apparently falsified nominating papers.) The winner of that contest will face one of three Democrats: former Secretary of Labor Suzanne Bump; Worcester County sheriff Guy Glodis; and former White House official Michael Lake.

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin this year will also face a Republican challenger, Woburn city clerk William Campbell. And Attorney General Martha Coakley, fresh off an embarrassing Senate loss to Scott Brown, is being challenged by Republican gadfly Jack E. Robinson, whom Brown trounced in the Republican primary on his way to his Senate victory over Coakley.

### Whither the Republicans?

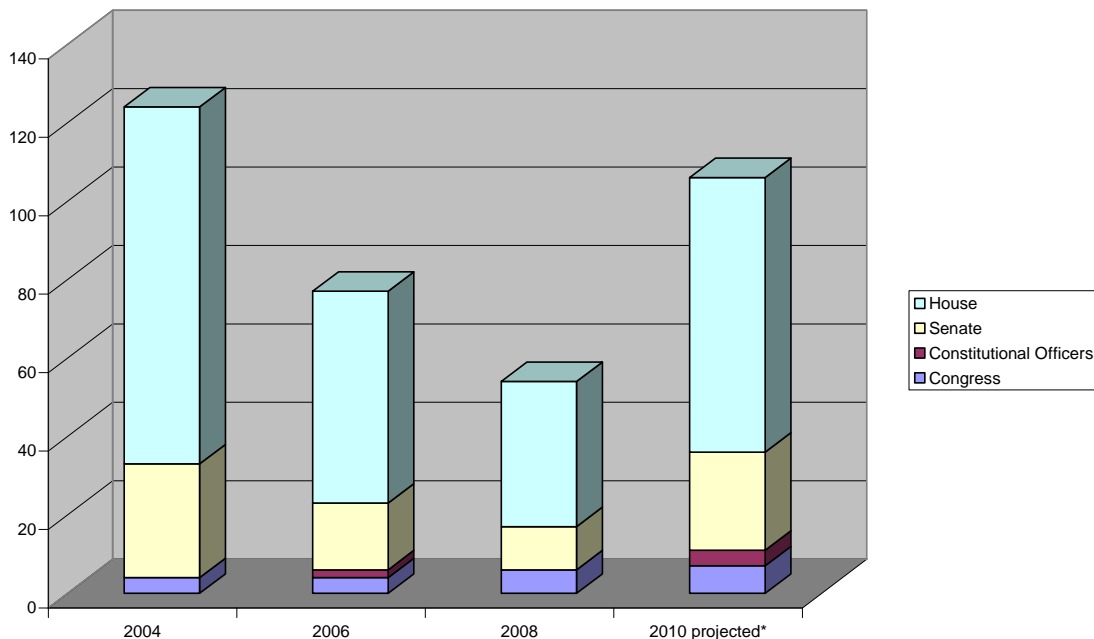
So which is it: is this the year that Republicans come roaring back in Massachusetts, or is the Brown Effect just a mirage that causes the GOP to further cripple itself through overconfidence?

Surely, it's a giddy time for Republicans here. Gone is the woeful talk about the challenge of recruiting Republican candidates, replaced by optimism about the prospect of recapturing the governor's office and a healthier slice of the state legislature.

Brown's Senate win, however, was in a single contest fueled by massive amounts of out-of-state campaign contributions. The same amount of money will not be available to spread around to Republican candidates in the November election, nor can it be used as effectively in local legislative contests as it was in a single statewide U.S. Senate race.

And there will be a lot of candidates competing for party support this year – nearly twice as many as in 2008. Take away the 11 Republican incumbents running unopposed and you're still left, at latest count, with 95 races, out of which only 3 feature Republican incumbents. If the public mood tacks sharply pro-Republican – or strongly anti-incumbent – the GOP stands to win big across the state. Otherwise, however, the party will find itself spreading its precious resources among a bunch of political neophytes up against entrenched, experienced Democratic incumbents.

Mass. Electoral Contests with Republican Candidates, 2004-10



\*As of April 1. Party candidates have until April 27 to disclose plans to run for office.

In its more sober moments, Massachusetts GOP officials must be pondering the lessons of 2004, when governor "Mitt" Romney tried to rebuild the party by recruiting more than 100 Republican candidates statewide in an effort to reduce Democratic control of the Legislature. That effort backfired miserably. Republicans actually *lost* three seats, and none of the candidates who lost in 2004 have yet rebounded to win office in the years since. Moreover, charges of favoritism in the allocation of party resources among Republican candidates divided and weakened the state party itself.

Will that happen again? With the departure of Scott Brown to Washington (and pending the election of his successor in the state senate), Republicans now occupy only 20 seats (10%) in the 200-member Massachusetts Legislature. Of these, 6 are held by Republicans who are not standing for re-election.<sup>9</sup> Even if, as many predict, Republicans recapture the governor's office by denying Gov. Patrick's re-election bid, it may not be enough to boost the fortunes of downticket Republicans and prevent a further erosion of the slim Republican presence in the Massachusetts House and Senate.

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<sup>9</sup>Sen. Richard Tisei is running for lieutenant governor; Rep. Jeff Perry is running for Congress; Rep. Karyn Polito is running for treasurer; Rep. Richard Ross is giving up his House seat in an effort to move up to the Senate; and Rep. Lewis Evangelidis is running for Worcester County sheriff. Rep. Robert Hargraves is retiring.