



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 18, 2010

## Coakley-Brown Race Offers Poor Ideological Choice

The special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by the death of the late Ted Kennedy may be a bellwether of national discontent with the Democratic Party, but it's clearly not an ideological contest between big-government liberalism and a strict constitutionalism.



President Obama has definitely staked his political capital in the surprisingly competitive race, traveling to Boston's Northeastern University January 17 to ignite the moribund campaign of the Democratic nominee, Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley, who could lose to Republican State Senator Scott Brown in Tuesday's election. "Where we don't want to go now is backwards," Obama said at the Coakley rally. "I need leaders like Martha by my side so we can kick it into high gear, so we can finish what we've started."

Coakley is a charisma-impaired ideological copy of Ted Kennedy, arguing for any of a laundry list of social spending programs, higher taxes and a particularly oppressive view of abortion "rights." Coakley [told southeastern Massachusetts talk-show host Ken Pittman](#) that conscientious Catholics and Christians who oppose abortion shouldn't be allowed to work in hospitals:

Pittman: Right, if you are a Catholic, and you believe what the Pope teaches, you know, that any form of birth control is a sin. You don't want to do that.

Coakley: I know but we have a separation of church and state here Ken, lets be clear.

Pittman: In the emergency room you still have your religious freedom.

Coakley: The law says that people are allowed to have that. And so, then, if you can have religious freedom, [but] you probably shouldn't work in the emergency room.

Pittman: Wow. Okay. So if you have a religious conviction, stay out of the emergency room?

Coakley: Look, you're the one who brought the question up. I don't believe that the law allows for that.

Coakley had actually made it a campaign issue when she claimed in television advertisements that Scott Brown had supported a "conscience" clause in the state and national healthcare legislation that would allow Catholic doctors and nurses not to be forced to perform or participate in the distribution of RU-486, the abortion pill. Coakley says she would force Catholic doctors to either distribute the abortion pill or leave the profession: "I would not pass a bill — as Scott Brown filed an amendment — to say that if people believed that they don't want to provide services that are required under the law and



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under *Roe v. Wade* that they can individually decide to not follow the law. The answer to that question is ‘no.’” Because the Catholic Church runs a [large chain of hospitals](#) in Massachusetts with 12,000 employees — including 2,300 doctors — Coakley’s radical views may eventually force the closure of the hospitals that provide emergency room care to 238,000 Massachusetts residents every year.

Coakley’s radicalism has activated a lot of pro-life organizations, but the Senate race doesn’t show a lot of difference on the issue of abortion. Brown has long described himself as “pro-choice,” though on his website he avoids the phrase, choosing instead to write that “this decision should ultimately be made by the woman in consultation with her doctor.”

Coakley has been involved in a number of controversial and high-profile criminal cases as Massachusetts Attorney General, and as the Middlesex County District Attorney before that. Some of these have come back to haunt her. Dorothy Rabinowitz of the *Wall Street Journal* recently [criticized](#) Coakley for her late role in the decades-long coverup of the bogus prosecution of the Amirault family on child-abuse charges in the 1980s. While Coakley did all she could to keep the likely innocent Gerald Amirault in prison with procedural delays, she [allowed](#) an accused sex offender of a 23-month-old child to be released until trial without even seeking bail or a dangerousness hearing. In the latter case, however, the accused was a local police officer.

Because the campaign rhetoric highlights — and often exaggerates — the differences between the Republican and Democratic Parties, many Americans have become convinced that the race is an ideological one between a conservative and a liberal in the heart of Massachusetts liberalism. Nothing could be further from the truth. According to Professor Boris Shor of the University of Chicago, Brown scores to the left of “RINO” Republicans such as New York’s Dede Scozzafava, as well as the majority of his own Massachusetts Republican legislators. Shor studied Brown’s public positions and [found](#) “Brown’s score puts him at the 34th percentile of his party in Massachusetts over the 1995-2006 time period. In other words, two-thirds of other Massachusetts Republican state legislators were more conservative than he was. This is evidence for my claim that he’s a liberal even in his own party. What’s remarkable about this is the fact that Massachusetts Republicans are the most, or nearly the most, liberal Republicans in the entire country!”

Both Coakley and Brown favor government control of medicine, with Brown endorsing the Republican, Romney-care legislation that passed in Massachusetts in 2006 and Coakley favoring the national Obama-supported legislation that copies Romney’s blueprint. Both would create a mandate to buy coverage or face a civil fine. Brown notes on his website that “I believe that all Americans deserve health care coverage, but I am opposed to the health care legislation that is under consideration in Congress and will vote against it.... In Massachusetts, I support the 2006 healthcare law that was successful in expanding coverage, but I also recognize that the state must now turn its attention to controlling costs.”

The Massachusetts Senate race involves the highly telegenic Brown (who once [won](#) an “America’s Sexiest Man” contest in *Cosmopolitan* magazine) against a machine Democrat who had basically gone on vacation after winning her party’s nomination. The planets seem to be in alignment for the GOP, though even that may not be enough in the nation’s most Democratic state.

Photo of Martha Coakley: AP Images



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