



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 28, 2018

GOP Expands Senate Majority as Hyde-Smith Wins in Mississippi

Republican Cindy Hyde-Smith defeated Democrat Mike Espy as the last of the mid-term Senate elections was decided in a run-off election on Tuesday evening. With 99 percent of precincts reporting, Hyde-Smith had 53.9 percent of the vote to Espy's 46.1 percent. Hyde-Smith is the first female to be elected to the Senate from the state.



Hyde-Smith had been appointed by Governor Phil Bryant to fill the seat vacated by Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) in April. Cochran resigned due to health issues. The election win means that she can serve the remainder of Cochran's term, which expires in 2021.

This means that Republicans will now hold a 53-47 edge in the Senate.

"I want everyone to know, no matter who you voted for today, I'm going to always represent every Mississippian. I will work hard and do my very best to make Mississippi very proud," Hyde-Smith told supporters after declaring victory on Tuesday night.

Espy told supporters, "While this is not the result we were hoping for, I am proud of the historic campaign we ran and grateful for the support we received across Mississippi."

Hyde-Smith survived a last-minute smear campaign by Democrats declaring that she had attended a segregationist high school. Yearbook photos from the Lawrence County Academy surfaced in the final days of the campaign. One [photo](#) shows Hyde-Smith among a group of cheerleaders posing with the school's mascot — a Confederate soldier — with the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, more commonly known as the Confederate Flag. The photo was from Lawrence County Academy's 1975 yearbook, *The Rebel*.

Eager to avoid a repeat of the Roy Moore fiasco in Alabama where Republicans lost a reliable Senate seat due to allegations of sexual misconduct by Moore, President Trump took great interest in the Mississippi race, having been to the state for two rallies in the final days of the campaign. The president took to [Twitter](#) to congratulate Hyde-Smith on the victory, saying, "Congratulations to Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith on your big WIN in the Great State of Mississippi. We are all very proud of you!"

Earlier this month, [video surfaced](#) of Hyde-Smith at a campaign stop joking about a supporter saying, "If he (the supporter) invited me to a public hanging, I'd be on the front row." Democrats and the mainstream media quickly jumped on the comment, claiming it brought to mind Mississippi's history of lynching.

Espy responded to Hyde-Smith's comments. "Those comments that we heard ... are very disappointing, they're hurtful and they're harmful. They're hurtful to the base of Mississippians who are people of good will and they're harmful because they tend to reinforce the stereotypes that have held back our



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state for so long, that have cost us jobs and have harmed our economy.”

Hyde-Smith’s comment was a spontaneous, throw-away remark in the middle of a campaign that probably shouldn’t have been made, but it pales in comparison to Espy’s history of scandal and ethical issues, which the media largely ignored.

Lost in the myriad of Clinton scandals in the 1990s is Espy’s embarrassing use of his position as agriculture secretary to line his pockets. He was forced to resign from Clinton’s cabinet in 1994 over allegations that he improperly received gifts and payouts from companies trying to curry his favor in his position as ag secretary. Espy was indicted on 30 felonies in connection with his time in the Clinton White House in 1997, but escaped conviction when the court concluded there was not enough evidence of a quid-pro-quo to convict.

While the media double standard in cases such as these is annoying, it is far from unexpected. If roles were reversed and Espy had been the Republican and Hyde-Smith the Democrat, the reporting on the candidates’ respective scandals would have been far different. As a white Republican female, Hyde-Smith is far lower on the victimhood hierarchy than African-American Democrat Espy.

Hyde-Smith’s victory is another notch in the belt for the Trump coalition. Despite losing the House in this year’s mid-terms, the GOP now has a firm grip on the Senate. With its advise-and-consent role and hundreds of federal judges still waiting to be confirmed, the Senate is, arguably, the more important chamber for Trump to hold on to.

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