



Latest Polls: GOP May Be Poised to Take Back Senate

With the midterm elections just weeks away, the CNN/ORC polls released Sunday show that Republicans are closing in on their opponents in three of the key states that may determine control of the Senate.

Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu leads Republican Bill Cassidy in the Louisiana primary at the moment, 43 percent to 40 percent respectively, with Republican Rob Maness currently receiving nine percent. As noted by Politico, however, if none of the candidates clears 50 percent in November, a run-off vote will take place December 6, which will have a different outcome for Cassidy:



In a head-to-head matchup, Cassidy wins by 3 points, 50 percent to 47 percent, among likely voters. Landrieu, though, leads by 6 points, 51-45, among the broader sample of registered voters. The divergent numbers highlight the importance of Democratic efforts to boost black turnout, especially for a December runoff.

Meanwhile, in the North Carolina Senate race, Democratic Senator Kay Hagan is also barely in the lead 46 percent to 43 percent by her Republican opponent Thom Tillis. Libertarian Sean Haugh currently has seven percent. Similar to Louisiana, that places the Republican in the margin of error. Tillis hopes to win the support of those backing Haugh with the help of Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, who did an ad on behalf of Tillis and plans to campaign alongside him this week.

Though Hagan is currently in the lead, Politico explained that more voters view her negatively rather than positively. "While 46 percent hold a positive view of Hagan, 47 percent hold a negative view. Tillis is viewed favorably by 47 percent and unfavorably by 40 percent," Politico reports.

In Iowa, a *Des Moines Register* poll published in Sunday's newspaper shows Republican Joni Ernst leading by six points at 44 percent in the Iowa Senate race against Democratic Senate candidate Representative Bruce Braley at 38 percent.

Democrats criticized the *Register* poll and revealed the results of their own internal poll that show the race is tied in Iowa between the two candidates at 42 percent. However, observers have noted that the *Register* poll has a good record of anticipating the margin in presidential races.

Favorability ratings reveal just how tricky the Iowa race will be. Braley is viewed favorably and unfavorably by an equal 42 percent, with 16 percent undecided. The ratings of Ernst are similar, with a



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45 percent favorable rating and 44 percent unfavorable rating. Eleven percent remain undecided.

Still, for Ernst to win the Senate seat, it is likely she will have to focus her efforts on senior citizens, among whom she is up just one point after numerous ads accused her of planning to privatize Social Security.

Polls in Colorado and Alaska also reveal potentially good news for Republicans, as they appear to have an edge. According to the *New York Times*, Republicans have a 61 percent chance of retaking the Senate, an increase from 50 percent last week.

The *Times* also reported that Republicans are “clear favorites to win at least 49 seats, including five seats currently held by Democrats: South Dakota, Montana, West Virginia, Arkansas and Louisiana.”

Therefore, Republicans need to take two of five races — Kansas, Alaska, Iowa, Colorado, and North Carolina — to win the necessary 51 seats to avoid a tiebreaking vote by the vice president.

Obama’s low approval ratings are expected to prove troublesome for Democrats in key races. In the state of Louisiana, the president’s approval rating currently stands at just 37 percent, with 61 percent disapproving of his performance. North Carolina, Obama’s approval rating is 38 percent, with 58 percent disapproving.

Democrats have unexpectedly made more money this year than Republicans. The *National Journal* reported,

Democratic candidates for Congress are crushing their Republican counterparts in small-dollar donations — outraising their GOP foes by an average of more than \$100,000 per candidate in the nation’s top races.

In total campaign fundraising, Democratic candidates are outraising Republicans among the 99 candidates in the analysis, \$1.65 million to \$1.12 million, but experts note that a major reason for that is that more Democrats are endangered than Republicans. Likewise, incumbents generally have stronger fundraisers. Analysis of incumbent figures reveals that GOP incumbents raised slightly more than Democrats, \$2.2 million to \$2.18 million.

But Gerrit Lansing, digital director for the National Republican Congressional Committee warns that “Democrats ought to be very careful about bragging too much.”

“Fundraising is just one part of the digital game,” he said. “House Republicans have seen a 300 percent increase in online fundraising this election year, heavily invested in digital voter contact, and are closing the gap every day.”

According to Republican digital strategist Vincent Harris, such a disparity “is a big deal.”

And Republicans continue to have in their favor the president’s declining popularity. As observed by Charlie Cook, a nonpartisan campaign analyst, the midterm vote serves as a referendum on the president, with the typical outcomes for the party in the White House ranging from “Bad” to “Really bad” or “Really, really bad.”

Sensing that proximity to the president can hurt the chances for Democratic candidates, many have done their best to distance themselves from Obama. “I disagree with him on guns, coal” and the Environmental Protection Agency, said Alison Lundergan Grimes, who is facing Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in a fiercely fought contest.

Whether voters will be convinced by this tactic remains to be seen.



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As with the Senate races, the president's declining popularity may prove fruitful for Republicans running for House seats. Three House Democrats — West Virginia's Nick Rahall, Georgia's John Barrow, and Minnesota's Collin Peterson — have defied the odds for a number of years, consistently holding their seats despite being in red Republican districts. But some experts believe 2014 will prove to be the year that changes.

The Cook Political Report explains that Rahall, Barrow, and Peterson are running for reelection in districts that are more Republican than any GOP-held seat is Democratic. Some believe the time for the GOP to take back those seats is now. "The case against them is reasonably simple. A strong national environment, the deep-red makeup of the districts, strong GOP challengers and Barack Obama's policies have made them truly vulnerable and these races enticing," said Dan Conston, spokesman for the Congressional Leadership Fund. "If we win, we'll never have to compete for these seats again."

Sensing potential Republican victories, Democrats plan to spend a lot of money to protect these three seats. Over \$2 million has been earmarked for Rahall, who is believed to be in the most trouble because he is the only one of the three who voted in favor of ObamaCare. Additionally, Democrats will be spending \$435,000 for Barrow and \$320,000 for Peterson.

"Nick Rahall is in a pretty bad shape right now," said Andy Seré, spokesman for Jenkins. "West Virginians have begun to realize that his 38 years of seniority in Washington have done nothing to help him.... If you're a long-term incumbent and you're losing ground, that's not good."



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