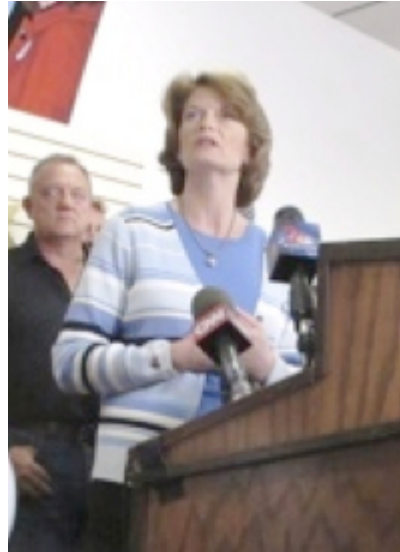




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 28, 2010

Lisa Murkowski Mounts Write-In Campaign

Alaska's GOP Senate primary produced one of the most shocking outcomes of this year's primaries when Tea Party candidate Joe Miller emerged as the victor over incumbent Lisa Murkowski. Speculation soon erupted over the possibility of Murkowski attempting to secure a nomination from Alaska's Libertarian Party in order to remain a contender.



Those rumors were soon quelled when Alaska's Libertarian Party announced that it would not switch its chosen candidate for Murkowski, declaring the decision was based on "fundamental differences." Left with no other choice (except of course to step down honorably), Murkowski has announced her intentions to mount a write-in campaign for the Alaska Senate seat.

Murkowski announced her decision to launch a write-in campaign on September 18, after being urged to do so by her supporters. Aware that the challenge with which she is faced is difficult, Murkowski attempted to remain positive as she addressed her crowd of supporters. She appealed to the Native Alaskan culture by telling her crowd of fans that there exists no word in the Aleut language for "impossible."

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Unfortunately for the incumbent, an expert on Alaska's native language, Gary Holton, corrected Murkowski, indicating that the Aleut word for 'impossible' is in fact "haangina-lix."

"It's very clear that you can say 'impossible.' Clearly, she wasn't checking her facts."

Not Murkowski's finest moment.

Murkowski states that she understands why she was defeated, and what she needs to do to assure success in the write-in campaign. "I failed as a candidate with my campaign in ensuring that Alaskans understood the urgency and why it was important that I retain this seat. And further I failed in defending any record and quite honestly allowed it to be trashed there towards the end. I will not let you down again."

The *New York Times* reports, however, that Murkowski's challenge is heightened by "the recent embrace of Mr. Miller by top Republican leaders in Washington," as well as voters' potential inability to correctly spell Murkowski's name.

Murkowski has indicated that her campaign is considering the creation of jingles, as well as the use of rubber bracelets, to help voters remember how to spell her name.

Since her announcement, Murkowski has opened an election office in Juneau, a heavily Democratic



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area, indicating Murkowski's awareness that she needs to secure Democratic, moderate, and Independent votes in order to have any hopes of winning the election.

Prior to the Alaska's primary election day, Murkowski was criticized for mounting an allegedly weak campaign against Miller. The *New York Times* noted that Murkowski largely ignored her conservative opponent "until it was too late."

Miller, on the other hand, aggressively targeted Murkowski's liberal leanings, particularly regarding abortion, state income taxes, and the federal stimulus.

According to the *New York Times*, "An anti-abortion measure on the primary ballot drew more votes than any other race. The measure's presence probably increased the turnout of conservative voters who could be expected to lean toward Mr. Miller since Ms. Murkowski supports abortion rights, a position that has long cost her support among the state's right wing."

Above all, the endorsement from former Alaskan governor Sarah Palin seemed to seal the deal for the political novice Joe Miller, who was trailing behind Murkowski throughout much of the campaign.

Andrew Halcro, Murkowski's political consultant, explained Murkowski's unwillingness to respond to Miller's aggressive campaign, and the ultimate effect that decision had on the outcome. "At the end of the day, we weren't going to give credence to his message by responding. But when somebody's whacking away at your kneecaps consistently for two weeks, you're going to start to wobble."

The final results of Alaska's primary election revealed that Murkowski was defeated by 1,700 votes. Since then, however, national attention has helped to increase Miller's popularity, and the support of the Republican establishment has helped Miller to raise money at a more rapid pace — all obstacles that Murkowski would have to overcome to stand a chance in her campaign.

Likewise, statistics reveal that the possibility of a victorious write-in campaign is unlikely. The only candidate to ever win a position in the United States Senate in this manner was Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, in 1954. Such a feat has never been accomplished in Alaska.

However, in Murkowski's favor is her transition "from establishment incumbent to renegade underdog" since the results of the primaries were announced, reports the *New York Times*. "For many, it might seem crushing to go from sitting senator to plaintive write-in, but Ms. Murkowski is using it to her advantage, painting herself as the maverick in the race."

Perhaps it is Murkowski's new face that has helped her to raise nearly \$1 million thus far, with the hopes to raise an additional \$1 million. She has found support from a variety of prominent Alaskans, including Patrick Gamble, president of Alaska's state university system.

Gamble explains, "I admire leadership. I admire competence. She has earned her way."

Joe Miller, however, believes Murkowski is showing poor sportsmanship. He notes, "She's announced her intent to sling mud, so we may end up having to have some reaction to that. Let's hope not."

Miller's campaign can expect renewed support from Sarah Palin and the Tea Party Express, whose chairman has indicated the group's intent to assist in Miller's campaign.

"We're going to bring a bunch of people back up there."

Nevertheless, Murkowski has expressed excitement at what the next few weeks will entail: "This is what makes it so exciting, because there is no playbook."



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Photo: U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, gives her concession speech on Aug. 31, 2010, at Murkowski's campaign headquarters in Anchorage, Alaska: AP Images



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