

REPUBLICAN MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP



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Overview

General election campaigns are moving into high gear with the passing of Labor Day and the conclusion of nearly all of the primary election contests. Congressional experts forecast many volatile races, regardless of the outcome of the Presidential election contest. Democrats in the Senate are attempting to build their majority into a “veto-proof” 60 seats, with Republicans having to defend nearly twice as many seats as do the Democrats. In the House, Democrats are going after 10-15 Republican seats, according to party spending reports, but only using their funds to defend four incumbents.

Democrats generally lead on the fundraising side, allowing the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to spend \$3.6 million on targeted House races compared to only \$107,000 for the House Republican Campaign Committee. And, according to a recent Rasmussen Reports poll, the national generic vote for Congress is 44% for the Democrats and 38% for the Republicans.

Maine

An early September Research 2000 poll gave **Senator Susan Collins** a 57% - 38% lead over opponent Congressman Tom Allen. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee has apparently moved this race to low priority, providing only token funding to the Allen campaign.

Senator Collins continues to work hard and visit all parts of Maine, using most of the last two months to tour the state by bus. In August, during the bus tour, she received endorsements from the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, the Maine Troopers Association, the Maine Association of Police and the Maine Ambulance Association.

Nevada

Congressional Quarterly recently changed their rating on the Republican held 3rd District seat of **Congressman Jon Porter** from “Leans Republican” to “No Clear Favorite.” Former candidate for governor, Democrat Dina Titus, is waging a strong campaign to unseat three-term Congressman Jon Porter, who survived a 2006 challenge with less than 50 percent of the vote. According to CQ, the 3rd District is a classic swing district that covers the suburbs of Las Vegas. Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore carried the 3rd District with 48 percent of the vote in 2000 while President Bush won with 50 percent of the vote in 2004. Since then, the Democrats have made voter registration gains that give their party the edge.

Congressman Porter has a cash advantage in the race. According to the candidates' pre-primary reports, Porter raised \$2.3 million and had \$1.2 million on hand by July 23 while Titus raised \$663,000 and reported \$593,000 on hand. But Titus raised more money than Porter has in the months since she entered the race. Porter was recently endorsed by BIPAC, the Business-Industry Political Action Committee.

New Hampshire

Former **Congressman Jeb Bradley** won his primary in the effort to regain his seat representing the 1st District. Bradley remains very well-known in the district despite his 2006 loss to now incumbent Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter. Bradley ran in the primary both on his record, which earned him a reputation as one of the more centrist House Republicans, and on his adoption of a theme popular in this campaign year, that he is a reformer who can change Washington.

Congresswoman Shea-Porter, a social worker who ran heavily on her opposition to the Iraq War in 2006, faced no opposition in the Democratic primary. Republicans argue that her win by nearly 3 percentage points over Bradley two years ago was something of a fluke caused by the anti-Republican sentiments that infused that campaign year, as Democrats also captured the state's other U.S. House seat and control of the state legislature. The eastern New Hampshire district has a strong Republican presence — President Bush was favored in the district's 2004 vote by a 3 percentage-point margin — and has blue-collar communities that preferred Bradley in past races.

But, according to Congressional Quarterly, Congresswoman Shea-Porter's incumbency in a House Democratic majority appears to give her at least a small edge heading into the post-primary sprint to the general election. CQ Politics rates the race "Leans Democratic."

New York

Congressman Randy Kuhl recently began his second television ad, attacking opponent Eric Massa for his negative ads. "Aren't you tired of politics as usual," the ad begins. "So why is Eric Massa starting his campaign with dishonest negative attacks that one newspaper (the Rochester Daily Messenger) labeled exaggerated to the point of absurdity? The truth is Randy Kuhl puts the needs of our community first."

One news report described the Kuhl ad as illustrative of what Democrats and Republicans have said behind the scenes about Kuhl. He is more aggressive in this campaign than he was in 2004 and 2006.

Congressman Kuhl recently detailed his views on energy policy, which included support for alternative energy initiatives and expanded drilling for oil. Kuhl said he is now making energy his prime campaign topic because nothing "of greater importance is facing Americans today." Comparing the three main points of his energy plan to a "three-legged stool" that needs all three legs to work, Kuhl said the major points are: extend tax credits for development of wind, solar, nuclear and hydrogen energy sources; tax incentives for development and use of

alternative-fuel vehicles; and open up offshore drilling.

Oregon

A recent profile on Oregon's Senate race by Congressional Quarterly shows the challenges faced by incumbent **Senator Gordon Smith**. The war in Iraq is even less popular in Oregon than it is nationally," said Bill Lunch, a political science professor at Oregon State and longtime analyst of the state's politics. But Oregon also is home to a sizable conservative constituency that keeps Republicans competitive. The GOP finds favor in the sprawling and mainly rural part of the state east of the Cascade Mountains and in the heavily forested regions to the south. Lunch concludes that demographic changes have shifted the state in a more Democratic direction, adding, "There is less resource extraction — fewer farms and tree-fellers — and more high-tech workers."

The wild card is the state's large number of independent voters. While Democrats made up 43 percent of the state's registered voters at the end of April and 33 percent were Republicans, 20 percent were unaffiliated. Those sorts of numbers benefited Smith, a relatively centrist Republican, in the Senate elections he won in 1996 and 2002. In recent years, he has broken more and more often with Bush and the conservative Republican leadership — most prominently on the war in Iraq, to which he strongly stated his opposition in late 2006.

But Smith will need to attract every swing voter he can in his contest against Democrat Jeff Merkley, the state House Speaker, who appears likely to give the incumbent his toughest race since his initial run for the Senate, a January 1996 special election he narrowly lost to current Senator Ron Wyden. (Smith rebounded and won the other Senate seat in the regularly scheduled general election later that year.) Congressional Quarterly rates the race "Leans Republican."

Peter Wong, writing in an Oregon Statesman Journal story entitled "Campaigning Outside Partisan Lines," took note of Senator Smith's recent address on senior health issues. "Government has a vital and important role to play, but not the only role," Smith said. "There are many private and personal initiatives that equal the pursuit of happiness, far more than just government delivery of its programs."

Addressing later Democratic attacks, Smith described his campaign strategy as follows. "From day one to today, I have operated in a bipartisan and constructive way to find solutions to today's problems," Smith said. "If Oregonians want that, I'm willing to do it another six years. If they want a hyper-partisan senator, they can elect Jeff Merkley.