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## Looking to 2010

### Democrats Could Gain Dixie Senators

Democrats gained two US Senate seats in the South this year, three if **Jim Martin** (D) defeats US Sen. **Saxby Chambliss** (R-GA) in the December 2 runoff. And in two years, the GOP will have little opportunity to reverse the Democratic trend in Dixie's senate delegation. Of the nine Southern members of the US Senate up for re-election in 2010, eight are Republicans, only one, Arkansas's **Blanche Lincoln**, is a Democrat. So numbers indicate that Democrats have a major advantage going into the 2010 election.

The political battlefield may have a set of issues heavily favoring one party or the other in 2010. Much will depend on the record of incoming President **Barack Obama**, particularly the state of the economy and how he will have handled any national security problems that may arise before then. Nevertheless, some factors on the political landscape already give early indications of what might happen in two years.

Here is a thumbnail rundown of the prospects for the US Senate races in 2010.

**Alabama:** Fourth-term US Sen. **Richard Shelby** (R-AL) was re-elected with 68% six years ago. He has already announced that he's running again and looks strong.

**Arkansas:** Razorback Republicans declined to contest the major races this year, but given **John McCain**'s strong victory here (59%), the GOP is likely to come up with a respectable opponent for second-term US Sen. **Blanche Lincoln** (D), a heavily favored moderate who won with 56% in 2004. Three names getting mentioned: **Patrick Calhoun**, a Little Rock investment banker; **Tom Cotton**, a Harvard Law graduate and a US Army officer who served in Iraq and is now in Afghanistan; and former US Treasury Official **French Hill**.

**Florida:** Freshman **Mel Martinez** (R), who barely won with a 49%-to-48% margin six years ago, will face a state Democratic Party revitalized by its 51%-to-48% victory in the presidential election. An October Hamilton Campaigns (D) poll showed Martinez with an okay positive rating of 51% to 31% negative. A list of potential Democratic foes is headed by Chief Financial Officer **Alex Sink**, followed by a slew of US Reps, including **Allen Boyd**, **Kathy Castor**, **Kendrick Meek**, and **Debbie Wasserman-Schultz**. Some state



lawmakers, including state House Minority Leader **Dan Gelber** (D), are also getting mentioned. Look for a major battle here.

**Georgia:** US Sen. **Johnny Isakson** (R) was reelected with 58% last time and should be a good bet for re-election in 2010. Nevertheless, watch the December 6 runoff between US Sen. **Saxby Chambliss** (R) and ex-state Rep. **Jim Martin** (D) for clues to the Peach State's partisan mood. (Chambliss is favored.)

**Kentucky:** Lots of GOPers had hoped two-term US Sen. **Jim Bunning** (R), 77, who won by a slim 51%-49% victory in 2004, might decide to retire. But Bunning is moving full-steam ahead with plans to amass a \$10 million war chest. A number of Democrats are potential contenders, including Lt. Gov. **Dan Mongiardo**, who suffered the narrow loss to Bunning six years ago; state Attorney General **Jack Conway**; and state Auditor **Crit Luallen**. **Darlene Fitzgerald Price**, a former customs official, has already announced.

**Louisiana:** Freshman US Sen. **David Vitter** (R) won with 51% in a three-way primary in 2004. This go-round, due to revelations about his alleged patronage of prostitutes, he's likely to have a tougher time, though he fares reasonably well in opinion polls. Potential opponents include, on the Democratic side, US Rep. **Charlie Melancon**, ex-US Rep. **Chris John**, District Attorney **Paul Connick** and prominent businessman **Jim Bernhard**. One Republican, Secretary of State **Jay Dardenne**, is also getting mentioned, but probably won't run unless Vitter looks weak.

**North Carolina:** Freshman **Richard Burr** (R) won with 52% in 2004 in a tough race against well-known Democrat **Erskine Bowles**. Burr has made a good record in the Senate, but given the Tar Heel State's move toward the Democrats this year, Burr could face a strong

challenge in 2010. State Attorney General **Roy Cooper** and state Treasurer **Richard Moore**, who lost a hard-fought gubernatorial primary to **Beverly Perdue** (D) this year, are getting mentioned as possible foes for Burr.

**Oklahoma:** US Sen. **Tom Coburn** (R), an idiosyncratic conservative with some strong supporters, says he hasn't decided whether he will run again next time. If he does run, he's the early favorite. If he doesn't, Gov. **Brad Henry** (D) leads the list of potential Democratic successors, and a long line of Republicans is likely to form.

**South Carolina:** **Jim DeMint** (R) won his US Senate seat in 2004 with 54% in a hard-fought battle with state Superintendent of Education **Inez Tenenbaum** (D). He's established himself as a leader in the upper chamber's conservative bloc. If he succeeds in persuading Minority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY) to abandon the seniority system and put him on the Finance Committee, he'll be that much stronger. Either way, DeMint will be favored, but Palmetto State Democrats are feeling feisty after their stronger-than-usual showing this year and may mount a significant challenge.

### Dixie's Vulnerable House Seats

At least a year will probably have to pass before the 2010 political climate begins to develop, so speculation about Republican or Democratic gains are obviously imprecise. We do know a few things, however. First, it is usually -- not always, but usually -- the case that the out-of-power party gains US House seats at the first mid-term election of a new president. We also know that freshmen members of the House are at the most vulnerable point in their careers; they haven't had time to develop a record of service that identifies them in the voters' minds as public officials, rather than mere candidates. And



third, we know when a member of congress is re-elected with 55% or less of the vote, he or she is likely to face a tougher challenge in the next election.

The first two factors suggest that Republicans are likely to have more opportunities to make congressional gains in the South next year. Not only will the new president be a Democrat, but eight of Dixie's Democratic US Representatives are freshmen, to five Republicans.

The third factor -- winning by 55% or less -- cuts both ways. Ten Southern Democratic members of Congress won their seats with 55% of the vote or less. But eight Dixie GOPers also garnered 55% or less.

The biggest factor in 2010 will be the record of the Obama Administration. If he is successful in putting the nation's economy on sounder footing, and if his foreign policy and defense initiatives aren't followed by one or more terrorist attacks in this country, then Democrats are likely to run well in the South, either gaining a few House seats or holding their losses in the region to a minimum.

On the other hand, if the economy is still a mess, or if Obama's policies -- such as tax increases -- prove unpopular, or if the terrorists are perceived as gaining under the new administration, then the GOP is in a good position to make substantial US House gains.

Below are separate lists of Southern Democratic and Republican US House members who are potentially vulnerable next year, along with their tenure in office and their share of the vote in 2008.

### Democrats

Alabama 2 (Dothan, etc.)  
Freshman **Bobby Bright** (D) 50.3%

Alabama 5 (Huntsville, etc.)  
Freshman **Parker Griffith** (D) 52%

Florida 8 (Orlando, etc.)  
Freshman **Alan Grayson** (D) 52%

Florida 22 (Ft. Lauderdale, etc.)  
2<sup>nd</sup> term **Ron Klein** (D) 55%

Florida 24 (Orlando, etc.)  
Freshman **Suzanne Kosmas** (D) 57%

Mississippi 1 (Tupelo, etc.)  
2<sup>nd</sup> term **Travis Childers** (D) 54%

North Carolina 8 (Concord, etc.)  
Freshman **Larry Kissell** (D) 55%

Texas 17 (Waco, etc.)  
10<sup>th</sup> term **Chet Edwards** (D) 53%

Virginia 2 (Virginia Beach, etc.)  
Freshman **Glenn Nye** (D) 52%

Virginia 5 (Charlottesville, etc.)  
Freshman **Tom Perriello\*** (D) 50.01%

Virginia 11 (Northern Virginia)  
Freshman **Gerald Connolly** (D) 53%

\* Perriello's victory has not been certified.

### Republicans

Alabama 3 (Anniston, etc.)  
4<sup>th</sup> term **Mike Rogers** (R) 53%

Florida 15 (Space Coast, etc.)  
Freshman **Bill Posey** (R) 53%

Florida 16 (West Palm Beach, etc.)  
Freshman **Tom Rooney** (R) 60%

Florida 25 (Metropolitan Miami, etc.)  
4<sup>th</sup> term **Mario Diaz-Balart** (R) 53%



Kentucky 2 (Bowling Green, etc.)  
Freshman **Brett Guthrie** (R) 53%

Louisiana 6 (Baton Rouge, etc.)  
Freshman **Bill Cassidy** (R) 48%

South Carolina 2 (Lexington, etc.)  
4<sup>th</sup> term **Joe Wilson** (R) 54%

Texas 10 (Austin, etc.)  
3<sup>rd</sup> term **Michael McCaul** (R) 54%

Texas 22 (Sugar Land, etc.)  
Freshman **Pete Olson** (R) 52%

**Obama Divides Dixie**

The first African American elected president of the United States received a significant share of the electoral votes of the Old Confederacy. **Barack Obama** carried Virginia, Florida and North Carolina, all recent mainstays of the Dixie Republican Party. But **John McCain** was able to count on most of the GOP’s Southern base. Obama won 55 electoral votes in the South, to McCain’s 113.

Obama’s victory was historic, both for the nation and the South. As the first African-American to win the presidency, he is likely to transform the role of race in American politics and in the national culture. That three Southern states supported Obama shows that even in the nation’s most race-conscious region, the desire to put a racist legacy behind us was strong on Election Day. Thus, Obama has an opportunity to make an impact on American race relations similar to that of **John F. Kennedy** who, as the first Roman Catholic president, was a major factor in removing the anti-Catholic prejudice that until then had marked U.S. politics, especially in the Protestant South.

The African-American vote, a major factor in Obama’s southern strategy, was a help to Obama and other Democrats, but the Deep

South states, which have the highest percentage of black voters, remained in the Republican column.

State	Obama	McCain
VA	52%	47%
FL	51%	48%
NC	50.2%	49.8%
GA	47%	52%
SC	45%	54%
TX	44%	56%
MS	43%	56%
TN	42%	57%
KY	41%	57%
LA	40%	59%
AL	39%	60%
AR	39%	59%
OK	34%	66%

**Obama’s White Support in Dixie**

Obama’s appeal to Dixie’s white voters varied state by state, according to exit polls, which are rarely accurate with any degree of precision. In five Southern states, Obama won more of the white vote than Kerry did four years ago: North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Texas and Kentucky. His increase among whites was especially significant in North Carolina, where Obama received the votes of 35% of whites to Kerry’s 27%; in Virginia where Obama got 39% of whites to Kerry’s 32%; and in South Carolina where Obama got 26% of whites to Kerry’s 22%.

But that’s only part of the picture. In Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi, Obama ran substantially behind Kerry among whites. And in four other states -- Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma and Tennessee -- Obama’s share of the white vote remained the same as Kerry’s in 2004.



## Turnout Records

Five Southern states had record high voter turnouts this year: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. However, nationwide, when all the votes are counted -- probably in early December -- it appears that the turnout in 2008 will end up about the same as it was in 2004, or perhaps one percentage point higher, somewhere between 60.7% and 61.7%. That's according to voting-stats guru **Curtis Gans** of American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate. The lower-than-forecast turnout was due mainly to a 1.3 percentage point decline in Republicans who went to the polls. Meanwhile, Democrats voted in greater numbers -- some 2.6 percentage points more than in 2004. In any case, it looks like the largest turnout since 1964.

## Republican Leadership Shakeup

House Minority Leader **John Boehner** (R-OH) is favored to keep his post in his contest with US Rep. **Dan Lungren** (R-CA). But others have already resigned, or are facing stiff competition for their jobs. US Rep. **Roy Blunt** (R-MO) is not seeking re-election to his number two post. US Rep. **Eric Cantor** (R-VA), a rising GOP mover-and-shaker, is expected to succeed Blunt. US Rep. **Adam Putnam** (R-FL), deemed an up-and-coming young (34) leader of the GOP, stepped down as chairman of the House Republican Conference; he is likely to be replaced by US Rep. **Jeb Hensarling** (R-TX). And the battle to head up the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) has been hotly contested, with Boehner publicly endorsing US Rep. **Pete Sessions** (R-TX) for the job, even after current chair US Rep. **Tom Cole** (R-OK) announced he would seek re-election. In Cole's favor, GOP losses in US House races were less than expected.

In the Senate, Minority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), who won a close (53%-47%) re-election battle, was re-elected to his influential post. And the decision by US Sen. **Norm Coleman** (R-MN) to drop out of the contest for chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee and throw his support to US Sen. **John Cornyn** (R-TX) sealed Cornyn's election to the post. Coleman, who had been favored for the job earlier, said he will concentrate on winning re-election to his seat in Minnesota, where he has a 206-vote lead over comedian **Al Franken** (D) and must survive a recount. Cornyn, who raised major money for his re-election bid this year, will serve through the 2010 election cycle. The chair for the past two years has been US Sen. **John Ensign** (R-NV).

## Virginia: McAuliffe Files for Governor

**Terry McAuliffe**, a former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, filed on November 10 to run for governor of Virginia in next year's election. McAuliffe, 51, has been a resident of McLean, a Washington, DC, suburb, for the past 20 years. A wealthy businessman (banking), McAuliffe served as chairman of **Hillary Clinton**'s presidential campaign and has long been a key fundraiser for Democrats. He is expected to make a formal announcement on January 7. In next June's Democratic Primary, McAuliffe will face Del. **Brian Moran**, brother of Congressman **Jim Moran** (D-VA), and state Sen. **Creigh Deeds**, a losing candidate for attorney general in 2005. The only Republican expected to run for governor is Attorney General **Robert McDonald**, from the GOP's conservative wing.

## Texas: Strayhorn Files for Mayor

**Carole Keeton Strayhorn** has filed papers to run for mayor of Austin in the May 2009



election. Strayhorn, 69, served as mayor from 1977 to 1983. She enters a crowded field running to succeed Mayor **Will Wynn**, who is not seeking re-election. Strayhorn, a former state comptroller and a former Republican, ran for governor in 2006 as an independent, finishing third in a five-way race, with 18% of the vote. She is the mother of **Scott McLellan**, former press secretary to **President Bush**, who wrote a book critical of the Bush Administration and later endorsed Obama.

### GOPers' Calamity Cures

US Sen. **Jim DeMint** (R-SC) blamed GOP losses in the House and Senate on "a failure of Republicans to keep their conservative promises." He also said that "Republicans must admit the Wall Street bailouts were a trillion-dollar bust, and immediately fight for free-market solutions." US Sen. **Tom Coburn** (R-OK), in a statement on the day after the election, praised both **John McCain** and **Barack Obama** and said his party "would be wise" to accept the President-elect's offer to work together. He added, however, "Had the Republican Party not governed as the party of socialism-lite for the past 12 years, our candidates' concerns about the excessive spending on the other side would have had more relevance." Another Southerner, US Sen. **Bob Corker** (R-TN) urged his party to "put partisanship aside as we try to solve the many challenges facing our country."

### Virginia: Perriello Declares Victory.

Human rights lawyer **Tom Perriello** (D) has declared victory in his bid to unseat six-term incumbent **Virgil Goode** (R) in Virginia's 5<sup>th</sup> District (Charlottesville, etc.). In the unofficial returns, with all precincts reported, Perriello led by 745 votes out of some 314,832 cast.

When the results are officially certified on November 24, Goode has ten days to request a recount. So far, Goode has not conceded.

### Grits

? **Texas:** US Sen. **Kay Bailey Hutchison** (R-TX) still hasn't committed to a campaign for governor in 2010, though she is widely expected to run, even if she has to run in a primary against Gov. **Rick Perry** (R), who says he will seek re-election.

? **Oklahoma:** US Rep. **Dan Boren** (D-OK), has poured water on speculation that he might run for governor of the Sooner State in 2010, when Gov. **Brad Henry** (D) will be term-limited. Boren, a moderate Democrat, indicated he will stay in the US House

? **South Carolina:** State GOP Chairman **Katon Dawson** has been criss-crossing the nation campaigning to become the next chairman of the Republican National Committee. He could have tough competition, especially from African American **Michael Steele**, a former Maryland state GOP chairman and a former lieutenant governor.

? **Florida:** GOPers are pushing their popular Gov. **Charlie Crist** (R) as a major Republican leader in the post-2008 era. Says one insider (R), "During all eight years of **Jeb Bush**'s administration, he had good (approval) numbers. Charlie Crist has always had higher numbers than Bush... He's a center-right conservative and green on energy."

? **Social Conservatives, Where Are You When We Need You?** *The Miami Herald* reports that residents of Caliente Resorts, a nudist colony north of Tampa, want to set up a clothing-optional polling site.