

POLIMETRIX

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Handicapping the 2006 Election: What are the odds of the Democrats winning control of the Senate?

Palo Alto, November 6, 2006 — During the 2006 election, Polimetrix has conducted a series of surveys, including a consortium of research universities and leading U.K. polling organization YouGov. On the eve of the election, Polimetrix is reporting state-by-state results from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study conducted between October 27 and November 5, 2006.

The Cooperative Congressional Election Study is led by Professor Stephen Ansolabehere of the M.I.T. Department of Political Science and includes participants from 34 universities, including Arizona State University, Brigham Young University, California Institute of Technology, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Florida State University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Michigan State University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Notre Dame, Ohio State University, Reed College, Stanford University, Temple University, University of Akron, University of California (Berkeley, Davis, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego), University of Chicago, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, University of Texas, University of Washington, Vanderbilt University, and Yale University. See <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces> for further details.

The survey contains both a pre-election interview and a post-election follow-up. This release reports the results of 20,331 interviews conducted in 32 states where the sample included at least 300 likely voters. The samples are selected from Polimetrix's PollingPoint panel and matched to a sampling frame of registered voters. The sampling error for a sample of size 400 is estimated to be approximately plus or minus 7%. This includes normal sampling error from the frame plus an adjustment for matching error.

The analysis in this release is co-authored by Stephen Ansolabehere, Samantha Luks, and Douglas Rivers.

The Senate: A 50/50 split is more likely than Democratic Control.

In the final day before the election, control of the Senate remains at issue. Currently the Democrats have 45 seats and need a pickup of six seats to gain control. Based on our poll results, only eight seats remain in play—six held by Republicans and two by Democrats. Democrats need to win six of these eight seats. What are the odds?

The Missing Polls: Montana and Rhode Island

We had fewer than 300 interviews with likely voters in both Montana and Rhode Island, which is insufficient for producing an accurate forecast. However, Republican incumbents in both of these seats are widely believed to be in trouble.

Bottom Line: Since we don't have any data to add for these races, we'll go with the odds given by InTrade: 74.5% probability of the Democrats winning Montana and a 78.0% probability of winning Rhode Island, which gives a 58% probability of the Democrats winning both (assuming the outcomes are independent). Better than even odds, but hardly a certainty.

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Vulnerable Democratic Seats: New Jersey and Maryland

Only two Democratic seats are in play at this stage. In New Jersey, Robert Menendez, who was appointed to fill the vacancy when Senator Jon Corzine became Governor, holds a 53-47 lead over State Senator Thomas Kean, Jr. In the battle to succeed retiring Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes in Maryland, Democrat Benjamin Cardin leads Republican Michael Steele 51-45. Steele, who hopes to attract votes from normally Democratic African-American voters, appears to be coming up short.

Bottom Line: Democrats hold both of these seats. Not a sure thing, but the probability is high—perhaps 80%.

Must-Wins for Republicans: Tennessee and Arizona

At the beginning of the year, both Tennessee and Arizona seemed like relatively safe seats for Republicans. The Arizona race has tightened considerably: incumbent Republican Jon Kyl now leads Democrat Jim Pederson by just 50-46, with the momentum in the Democrat's favor. In Tennessee, Democratic Congressman Harold Ford, Jr.'s bid to capture the seat held by retiring Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist appears to be coming up short. Republican Bob Corker now holds a 51-46 lead.

Bottom Line: Although both races are close enough for an upset, it appears that Republicans will hold these two seats. The chance of a Democratic pickup here is no more than 20%.

The Tossups: Missouri and Virginia

The two closest races in our sample are Missouri and Virginia. In Missouri, challenger Claire McCaskill holds a razor-thin 0.6% lead over incumbent Jim Talent, while in Virginia incumbent George Allen holds a 1.0% lead over former Navy Secretary James Webb. Both of these are well within the margin of error and, with rounding, actually end up as 50-50 ties!

Bottom Line: Anybody's guess. These races are as close to even odds as you can get, which means that the probability that Democrats pick up both seats is only about 25%. People do get two heads in two tosses all the time, but you shouldn't bet on it.

Who will control the Senate?

Assuming the parties hold onto their other seats (or any loss in New Jersey or Maryland is offset by a pickup in Tennessee or Arizona), the Democrats still need an inside straight: win all four of Missouri, Virginia, Montana, and Rhode Island. This is about a one-in-seven chance—it could happen, but the odds are against it.

Much more likely, in our opinion, is a Senate evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans with Vice President Dick Cheney breaking ties.

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Polimetrix Senate Polls

State	Democrat	Republican	Other
Arizona (n = 798)	Pederson 46%	Kyl 50%	
California (n = 1015)	Feinstein 61%	Mountjoy 29%	
Connecticut (n = 401)	Lamont 44%	Schlesinger 5%	Lieberman 48%
Florida (n = 1005)	Nelson 60%	Harris 34%	
Maryland (n = 802)	Cardin 51%	Steele 45%	
Massachusetts (n = 799)	Kennedy 67%	Chase 27%	
Michigan (n = 800)	Stabenow 55%	Bouchard 40%	
Minnesota (n = 501)	Klobuchar 57%	Kennedy 39%	
Missouri (n = 802)	McCaskill 50%	Talent 50%	
Nevada (n = 402)	Carter 42%	Ensign 53%	
New Jersey (n = 500)	Menendez 53%	Kean 47%	
New York (n = 1011)	Clinton 70%	Spencer 26%	
Ohio (n = 1003)	Brown 58%	DeWine 40%	
Pennsylvania (n = 1005)	Casey 56%	Santorum 40%	
Tennessee (n = 502)	Ford 46%	Corker 51%	
Texas (n = 1004)	Radnofsky 29%	Hutchison 65%	
Utah (n = 402)	Ashdown 34%	Hatch 66%	
Virginia (n = 802)	Webb 50%	Allen 50%	
Washington (n = 804)	Cantwell 57%	McGavick 43%	
West Virginia (n = 301)	Byrd 67%	Raese 33%	
Wisconsin (n = 502)	Kohl 69%	Lorge 24%	

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Polimetrix Gubernatorial Polls

State	Democrat	Republican
Alabama (n = 505)	Baxley 42%	Riley 58%
Arizona (n = 798)	Napolitano 57%	Munsil 41%
California (n = 1015)	Angelides 42%	Schwarzenegger 52%
Colorado (n = 500)	Ritter 60%	Beauprez 40%
Connecticut (n = 401)	DeStefano 32%	Rell 64%
Florida (n = 1005)	Davis 42%	Crist 54%
Georgia (n = 804)	Taylor 42%	Perdue 59%
Illinois (n = 800)	Blagojevich 61%	Topinka 39%
Iowa (n = 301)	Culver 54%	Nussie 46%
Kansas (n = 501)	Sebelius 61%	Barnett 39%
Maryland (n = 802)	O'Malley 50%	Ehrlich 48%
Massachusetts (n = 799)	Patrick 61%	Healey 32%
Michigan (n = 800)	Granholt 55%	DeVos 43%
Minnesota (n = 501)	Hatch 49%	Pawlenty 45%
Nevada (n = 402)	Titus 44%	Gibbons 51%
New York (n = 1011)	Spitzer 69%	Faso 24%
Ohio (n = 1003)	Strickland 62%	Blackwell 35%
Oregon (n = 502)	Kulongoski 54%	Saxton 46%
Pennsylvania (n = 1005)	Rendell 61%	Swann 37%
South Carolina (n = 399)	Moore 44%	Sanford 56%
Tennessee (n = 502)	Bredesen 63%	Bryson 31%
Texas (n = 1004)	Bell 28%	Perry 43%
Wisconsin (n = 502)	Doyle 53%	Green 43%

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About Polimetrix

Polimetrix offers a unique solution for opinion measurement using a combination of web surveys, large-scale databases, and cutting edge statistical techniques. Polimetrix conducted over two million interviews during the 2004 election year through its PollingPoint portal. Representative samples of respondents are drawn from the PollingPoint panel and interviewed on the Internet to collect data with accuracy, speed and efficiency. The company was founded in 2004 and is based in Palo Alto, California. It currently has a staff of eighteen experts in survey research, political science, statistics, and information technology. It is backed by Alloy Ventures, a leading early-stage venture capital investor. Find out more at: www.polimetrix.com.

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