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The Case of the Missing Moderates

When a political tidal wave hits, moderates get swept away first. That's because they tend to represent the most marginal districts. Those seats are hard to hold on to in a deluge.

It happened to Republicans in 2006 and 2008. In two back-to-back Democratic sweeps, moderate Republicans were decimated. The last remaining Republican House member from New England, Christopher Shays of Connecticut, was swept away in 2008. Out of 22 New England districts, not one is represented by a Republican. In New York, only two out of 29 House districts has a Republican Representative.

The same thing could happen to moderate Democrats this year. Stalwart liberals like Dennis Kucinich, Bobby Rush, Jerry Nadler and Jim McDermott are certain to survive. Their districts are solidly Democratic. But Democrats in marginal districts are extremely vulnerable. And most of them are moderates.

Of the 255 Democrats currently serving in the House of Representatives, 102 (40%) are members of either the Blue Dog Coalition or the New Democrat Coalition, or both. Only 38 of those moderate Democrats who are running for re-election are in non-competitive races this year.

Eleven moderate Democrats are not running for re-election. They are either retiring or running for a different office. They must have gotten the message that their seats were in trouble. Of those 11 open seats, nine are currently leaning toward a Republican takeover.

The only two that look safe for Democrats are held by African-Americans—Artur Davis's seat in Alabama, which Davis vacated to run for governor, and Kendrick Meek's seat in Florida, which Meeks vacated to run for senator.

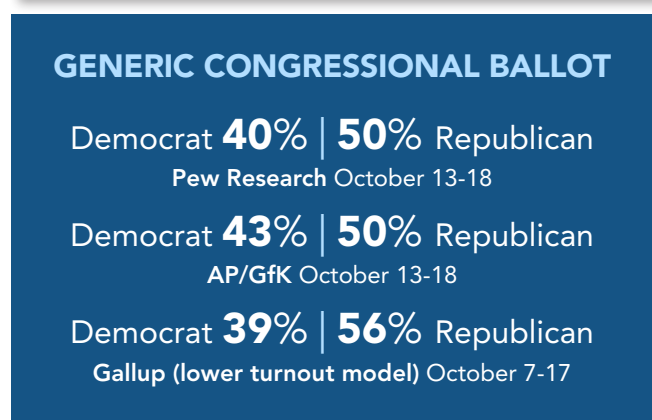
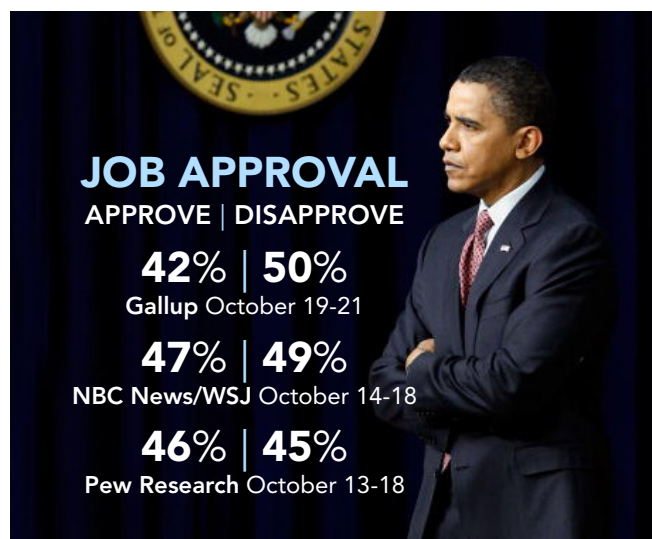
The remaining 53 moderate Democrats are in competitive re-election races. That means that more than half of all moderate House Democrats are on the defensive this year (see top 40 "Most Endangered" table on page 4).

Conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans are already trace elements. The last conservative Democrat may have been former Georgia Governor and Senator Zell Miller, who gave a fiery speech at the 2004 Republican convention endorsing George W. Bush for re-election. The last liberal Republican may have been former Rhode Island Senator Lincoln Chafee, who lost his Senate seat in 2006, endorsed Barack Obama for President in 2008 and is now running for governor as an Independent.

After this year, moderates in both parties may become scarce. When you get a wave election favoring Republicans following two wave elections favoring Democrats, the net result is that moderates in Congress start to disappear.

But hold on a minute. If moderate Democrats who represent marginal districts are defeated this year, won't they be replaced by moderate Republicans? Some of them will. Including a few like Mike Fitzpatrick of

Pennsylvania who's running to get his old seat back. By and large, however, Republican challengers in marginal districts are tilting conservative. Like Steve Chabot, who is running to reclaim his old seat in Ohio, which was won by Democrat Steve Driehaus in 2008. The National Taxpayers Union rated Chabot one of the most anti-tax Members of Congress.



Or Scott Rigell, who is aiming to replace Rep. Glenn Nye in Virginia. Rigell recently spoke at the Virginia Tea Party Convention. Or Michael Grimm, who has been endorsed by Sarah Palin in his race against Rep. Mike McMahon in New York City. Some young conservatives are running as outsiders in a year when incumbents are in trouble. Like Adam Kinzinger, age 32, running against moderate Democrat Debbie Halvorson in Illinois. Kinzinger has been tagged by the Republican

Party as one of their "Young Guns" ("a new generation of conservative leaders").

Among the 40 most endangered moderates running for re-election, 19 are facing Tea Party candidates (see chart, page 4). Republican challengers, even in marginal districts, are running to the right because the Republican Party—and the country—are tilting rightward. This month's Gallup poll shows 54% of likely voters identifying themselves as conservatives. That's the highest number in recent years. It is noticeably higher than in 1994, when 40% of likely voters called themselves conservatives.

In fact, moderates are becoming scarce in the electorate as well as in Congress. According to Gallup, "The composition of likely voters appears to have become more politically polarized, with the proportions of conservatives and liberals expanding since 1994 at moderates' expense." In 1994, self-described moderates were a plurality of likely voters (48%). This year, their numbers are down to 27%.

Newly elected Members of Congress are always imprinted by the circumstances of their election. The Democrats' "Watergate Class" of 1974 was deeply committed to political reform. The Republicans' "Contract with America" Class of 1994 was imprinted with hostility to President Clinton, whom they eventually impeached. New Republicans this year are likely to reflect the deeply anti-government mood of the voters. And their party's intense hostility to federal spending, bailouts and health care reform.

The Republican Class of 2010 will take office with a mandate to stop President Obama's agenda and reverse it wherever possible. That is not a mandate for moderation. And with fewer moderates in his own party, President Obama will find it harder to do what President Clinton did after Republicans took over Congress in 1994—triangulate. ■

Clinton Nostalgia

Populism is not the exclusive property of the right. The Democratic Party has a long tradition of left-wing populism aimed at country club conservatives. It's still there. It's not associated with Barack Obama. It's associated with Bill and Hillary Clinton. Which is why a wave of Clinton nostalgia is washing over the country.

Obama is an NPR Democrat. Bill Clinton is Sports Talk. Clinton's campaign speeches for Democratic congressional candidates this year are full of football analogies.

Obama is now weakest in the constituencies Hillary Clinton carried in 2008. Mainly, white working class Democrats. Some of it now, as then, may be racism. But some of it is also what those voters saw as Obama's disdainful attitude. Like when he criticized economically hard-pressed voters who "cling to guns or religion."

Last month Gallup asked Democrats whom they would support if Hillary Clinton were to challenge Obama for the nomination in 2012. Obama still prevails, 52% to 37%. Among college graduates, Obama wins handily (66% to 25%). Among non-college graduates, it's just about a tie (46% for Obama, 44% for Clinton). There's your populism.



Third Choices Making an Impact

Chart compiled by Joe Iannuzzi

Race	Democrat	Republican	Third Choice	Who Benefits from the Third Choice?
COLORADO GOVERNOR	John Hickenlooper	Dan Maes	Tom Tancredo (Constitution Party)	Hickenlooper: Tancredo is running second with Maes a distant third; Tancredo and Maes split the GOP-leaning vote.
ILLINOIS GOVERNOR	Pat Quinn*	Bill Brady	Scott Lee Cohen (Independent)	Brady: The former Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor, Scott Lee Cohen takes votes away from Quinn.
MAINE GOVERNOR	Libby Mitchell	Paul LePage	Eliot Cutler (Independent)	LePage: A longtime Democrat who served in the Carter Administration, Cutler draws votes away from Mitchell.
MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNOR	Deval Patrick*	Charlie Baker	Tim Cahill (Independent)	Patrick: Baker and Cahill split the anti-Patrick vote.
MINNESOTA GOVERNOR	Mark Dayton	Tom Emmer	Tom Horner (Ind. Party of MN)	Dayton: A former Republican Capital Hill staffer, Horner draws votes away from Emmer.
RHODE ISLAND GOVERNOR	Frank Caprio	John Robitaille	Lincoln Chafee (Independent)	No Clear Beneficiary: The Republican is running a distant third as Chafee and Caprio are locked in a tight two-person race.
TEXAS GOVERNOR	Bill White	Rick Perry*	Kathie Glass (Libertarian Party)	White: A Glass candidacy siphons votes away from Perry.
ALASKA SENATE	Scott McAdams	Joe Miller	Lisa Murkowski* (Write-In Candidate)	No Clear Beneficiary: Murkowski's write-in campaign clearly hurts Miller. If she were not running, Miller would win easily.
FLORIDA SENATE	Kendrick Meek	Marco Rubio	Charlie Crist (Independent)	Rubio: Rubio solidifies the GOP base with Crist and Meek splitting the Democratic/Independent vote.
NEVADA SENATE	Harry Reid*	Sharron Angle	"None of these candidates"	Reid: "None..." splits the anti-Reid vote and takes votes away from Angle.
WEST VIRGINIA SENATE	Joe Manchin	John Raese	Jesse Johnson (Mountain Party)	Raese: A member of the Mountain Party (West Virginia's Green Party), Johnson draws votes away from Manchin.

*Incumbent

MOST ENDANGERED BLUE DOGS AND NEW DEMS

Sorted by Most Endangered



Representative	District	Blue Dog	New Dem	GOP Opponent	Tea Party	Member % '08	Obama % '08	Rothen	Cook	Sabato
Kathy Dahlkemper	PA-03			Mike Kelly		51%	49%			
Frank Kratovil, Jr.	MD-01			Andy Harris		49%	40%			
Betsy Markey	CO-04			Cory Gardner		56%	49%			
Suzanne Kosmas	FL-24			Sandra Adams		57%	49%			
Bobby Bright	AL-02			Martha Roby		50%	37%			
Travis Childers	MS-01			Alan Nunnelee		54%	37%			
Steve Driehaus	OH-01			Steve Chabot		52%	55%			
Glenn Nye	VA-02			Scott Rigell		52%	50%			
Debbie Halvorson	IL-11			Adam Kinzinger		58%	53%			
Walt Minnick	ID-01			Raul Labrador		51%	36%			
Jim Marshall	GA-08			Austin Scott		57%	43%			
Lincoln Davis	TN-04			Scott DesJarlais		59%	34%			
Chris Carney	PA-10			Thomas Marino		56%	45%			
Harry Mitchell	AZ-05			David Schweikert		53%	47%			
Earl Pomeroy	ND-AL			Rick Berg		62%	45%			
Michael Arcuri	NY-24			Richard Hanna		52%	50%			
Gabrielle Giffords	AZ-08			Jesse Kelly		55%	46%			
John Boccieri	OH-16			Jim Renacci		55%	48%			
Mark Schauer	MI-07			Tim Walberg		49%	52%			
Zack Space	OH-18			Bob Gibbs		60%	45%			
Scott Murphy	NY-20			Christopher Gibson		50%*	51%			
Patrick Murphy	PA-08			Mike Fitzpatrick		57%	54%			
Ron Klein	FL-22			Allen West		55%	52%			
Allen Boyd	FL-02			Steve Southerland		62%	45%			
Baron Hill	IN-09			Todd Young		58%	48%			
John Adler	NJ-03			Jon Runyan		52%	52%			
John Salazar	CO-03			Scott Tipton		62%	48%			
Bill Foster	IL-14			Randy Hultgren		58%	55%			
Stephanie Herseth Sandlin	SD-AL			Kristi Noem		68%	45%			
Ben Chandler	KY-06			Garland Barr		65%	43%			
Leonard Boswell	IA-03			Brad Zaun		56%	54%			
Kurt Schrader	OR-05			Scott Bruun		54%	54%			
Sanford Bishop, Jr.	GA-02			Mike Keown		69%	54%			
Gene Taylor	MS-04			Steven Palazzo		75%	32%			
Charlie Wilson	OH-06			Bill Johnson		62%	48%			
Jason Altmire	PA-04			Keith Rothfus		56%	44%			
Gary Peters	MI-09			Rocky Raczkowski		52%	56%			
Martin Heinrich	NM-01			Jonathan Barea		56%	60%			
Jim Himes	CT-04			Dan DeBicella		51%	60%			
Joe Donnelly	IN-02			Jackie Walorski		67%	54%			

* Elected in a 2009 special election.

All Representatives featured here are members of either the House Blue Dog Coalition, the House New Democrat Coalition or both. In addition to the 40 most endangered, there are 51 other Blue Dog and/or New Democrat members running for re-election, 13 of them in competitive races. There are 11 incumbent Blue Dog and/or New Democrat members not running for re-election, 9 of which are likely to go Republican, 3 to Tea Party candidates. Tea Party affiliations are as determined by The New York Times.

Races Handicapped by: **The Rothenberg Political Report**; **The Cook Political Report**; and **Sabato Crystal Ball**. All Race Ratings Updated 10/22/10.

