

We began with a senate race best defined as one nobody could be bothered to watch, for it was an all-but-inevitable solid Republican hold in a state as red as when it was infamously labeled "Bleeding". Then the Democratic candidate, Shawnee County District Attorney Chad Taylor, dropped out, turning a rigged one-man race with two spectators into a two-man legitimate contest. The costliest contest in Kansas history, no less (HuffingtonPost.com). In my opinion, that ballot switch-up was this race's "surprising outcome" - it just happened a little early.

Today, the Sunflower State is a true toss-up, with outcomes as politically centered as the state is geographically (270toWin.com). The race has only grown closer in the past several weeks, with recent polls typically giving both candidates a mid-40s percent chance of victory.

In the past, we had seen surges on both sides, with Independent Greg Orman at a dramatic 10 points ahead (immediately after Taylor's name was off the ballot for good) or incumbent Senator Pat Roberts maintaining a 52% chance for a few days now (Bing.com). No longer. At this point, all we can say for sure is that, no matter who wins, it will be very close:

1. "Orman and Republican Sen. Pat Roberts are tied at 46% each, according to the Monmouth University survey of 429 likely voters. The survey, which was conducted October 16-19, has a margin of error of plus-or-minus 4.7 percentage points" (CNN.com)
2. "The probability of a Roberts win stands, based on this estimate, is exactly 50 percent" (HuffingtonPost.com)
3. "The latest KSN News Poll, conducted by SurveyUSA exclusively for KSN-TV, released Tuesday shows Independent Greg Orman and Republican Senator Pat Roberts nearly tied. Orman has a slight lead at 44 percent to Roberts' 42 percent. Ten percent of the voters (including 21 percent of younger voters) remain undecided. That is up from 7 percent in the KSN News Poll conducted just three weeks ago. The margin of error is +/- 4.0 percent" (KSN.com)

Speaking more generally, I suspect that voter turnout will be especially high in this cycle, regardless of who wins and regardless of the number of undecided voters. Voters are more keen to vote when they feel they can make a difference, as we have discussed earlier in the semester. Here we have a close election, in a close chamber-control battle, in the last cycle before an open White House.

Kansas voters have the potential to unseat a longtime incumbent, if they choose - an unusual opportunity. Kansas voters have the potential to act as collective kingmakers, sending forth an independent to choose which of the two warring parties should hold the Senate majority, if they choose - an unusual opportunity. Kansas voters have the potential to shape the political climate of the country for the next presidential election, if they choose - an unusual opportunity.

Most importantly, Kansas voters are well-aware of their potential, as their election has most definitely been nationalized. Moreover, it is the rhetoric from the Roberts campaign and its army of stumpers that is to blame: the GOP has been ceaselessly insisting that this election will be one of the key majority-determining ones. Kansans have been told they will assuredly make a difference by voting in this election; if we assume that most citizens believe this, we can safely assume that voter turnout will be higher than normal, despite this cycle lacking a presidential race.

In the end, I humbly submit my prediction: Independent Greg Orman will narrowly win, securing a victory no larger than a couple of percentage points. In addition to the aft-mentioned KSN findings, ElectionProjection.com also suggests a two point lead. This may be due, in part, to Orman's message holding out against the onslaught of Roberts's attempts to paint him as a liberal Democrat in disguise. Videlicet, the former is running a dissatisfaction-with-the-current-state-of-governmental-affairs

campaign, which is a message that studies show many Americans agree with. Even if he is not the ideal candidate for many, he still appears as the best chance at unseating decades-long-incumbent/embodiment-of-establishment Roberts, an increasingly popular notion. That is only magnified by the overall view of the Republican Party's actions in Kansas. As *Rolling Stone* puts it: "Extremist Republicans turned their government into a lab experiment of tax cuts and privatization. And now they may be losing control of one of the reddest states in the nation." Finally, in the words of *The Washington Post*: "Republicans have only three seats in any danger -- Kansas, Georgia and Kentucky... Sen. Pat Roberts (Kan.) remains in serious danger and, if one Republican incumbent loses, it will probably be Roberts."

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