



From the National Director



The most underreported story from the 2000 and the 2004 presidential campaigns is how Karl Rove convinced right-wing leaders to hold their fire and cool their criticism of George W. Bush as he modified his positions in order to win the election.

Rove and his sidekick Ralph Reed convinced the conservative extremists that, once elected, Bush would honor his commitment to their agenda. Bush kept that promise, and now he has made the same deal with the right wing over his plans to nominate Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez to the Supreme Court.

Karl Rove, master of shell game politics, will have two Supreme Court vacancies to fill when Chief Justice Rehnquist steps down. Rove is trying to set up Gonzalez as a moderate middle-of-the-roader. This White House gang would love to see a young ideologue, who has always been in Bush's back pocket, as the new chief justice for life.

Anyone who thinks that certain Geneva Convention provisions are obsolete, who authorizes the torture of enemy combatants, and who approves of Texas death penalty standards is obviously their kind of guy.

The administration's right hand/left hand manipulations have produced John Roberts to fill the O'Connor Supreme Court vacancy. Roberts has been confirmed for the U.S. Court of Appeals and his enigmatic record on hot button issues make his confirmation certain. He will fit right into the Bush plan for a guaranteed conservative court for a generation.

As we go deeper into Bush's second term of office, the antigovernment extremists, corporate welfare cheats, the zealots of the religious right, and the dogmatic conservative ideologues all know that an American future acceptable to them can be guaranteed by Bush's packing the court.

continued on page 4

EARLY 2006 SENATE OUTLOOK

NCEC GIRDS FOR A TOUGH CAMPAIGN IN A CRUCIAL YEAR

Republicans hold a 55–45 advantage in the United States Senate as a result of strong gains, especially in the South, fueled by President Bush's successful reelection. The stakes in 2006 could hardly be higher. As many as four vacancies could occur on the Supreme Court before President Bush leaves office in January 2009.

While it will be difficult to gain six Senate seats and a majority in the 2006 election, the ability to block extremist appointments to the Supreme Court, dangerous assaults on the environment, and a risky Social Security privatization scheme will depend upon the Democratic Party's ability to thwart the erosion of its 45-seat minority and to gain a few seats in 2006.

History suggests that 2006 may represent an election of promise for progressive forces. The president's party habitually sustains losses in the midterm election of a second term: In the modern political era (1950–2002), a president's party has never gained seats in the United States Senate. Moreover, the opposition party has captured an average of six seats in midterm elections.

While the electoral map suggests that it will, indeed, be difficult for Democrats to attain a majority, President Bush's popularity has dipped to its lowest level since he assumed office. The Iraq War, the Terri Schiavo controversy, and radical Social Security propositions threaten both President Bush and the congressional Republican Party. When Bill Clinton's approval rating dropped to the 45% level, the Republicans were able to gain nine seats in 1994.

Overall, 33 Senate seats are up for election in 2006: 18 Democrat and 15 Republican. In reality, a majority of the 33 races will be noncompetitive. Nevertheless, both parties will be forced to defend Senate seats in potentially volatile contests.

This edition of the NCEC Election Update presents an analysis of important Senate contests.

Currently, we are most optimistic about the prospect of unseating Pennsylvania Republican Senator Rick Santorum. In that race, Democratic state Treasurer Bob Casey leads Santorum in some polls. Casey, a proven statewide vote getter, shares a unified Democratic ticket with popular Governor Ed Rendell.

In Missouri, polls suggest that a strong Democratic challenger

continued on page 4

The NCEC Assessment of 2006

ARIZONA

Jon Kyl (Rep)



Arizona has become a toss-up state in recent years, and this trend will continue for 2006. Jon Kyl, Arizona's junior senator, is viewed by Democrats as vulnerable and will have to put up a good fight to retain his seat. Particularly against a well-funded opponent in state Democratic Party Chair Jim Pederson, Kyl will have a long reelection campaign ahead of him to defend this Republican-leaning seat.

2000 Senate

Jon Kyl (Rep)	1,108,196 (79.3%)
William Toel (Ind)	109,230 (7.8%)
Vance Hansen (Green)	108,926 (7.8%)
Barry Hess (Libertarian)	70,724 (5.1%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	893,522 (44.3%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,104,294 (54.8%)

Kweisi Mfume. Possible Republicans include current Lieutenant

Governor and former state party Chair Michael Steele. Even given Maryland's strong Democratic voting history, look for this race to be among the most hotly contested in 2006.

2000 Senate

Paul Sarbanes (Dem)	1,230,013 (63.2%)
Paul Rappaport (Rep)	715,178 (36.7%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	1,334,620 (55.8%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,025,460 (42.8%)

MICHIGAN

Debbie Stabenow (Dem)



Although Debbie Stabenow built loyal constituent support during her first term in office, Republicans have her as a fallible target in 2006. Possible Republican opponents include Rev. Keith Butler, a former Detroit city council member, and Jane Abraham, wife of former Senator Spencer Abraham, whom Stabenow defeated for her seat. Early polling indicates Stabenow will be able to successfully defend this seat, but nothing is being taken for granted given Michiganders' potential for swing voting.

Although Debbie Stabenow built loyal constituent support during her first term in office, Republicans have her as a fallible target in 2006. Possible Republican opponents

include Rev. Keith Butler, a former Detroit city council member, and Jane Abraham, wife of former Senator Spencer Abraham, whom Stabenow defeated for her seat. Early polling indicates Stabenow will be able to successfully defend this seat, but nothing is being taken for granted given Michiganders' potential for swing voting.

2000 Senate

Debbie Stabenow (Dem)	2,061,952 (49.5%)
Spencer Abraham (Rep)	1,994,693 (47.9%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	2,476,950 (51.2%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	2,311,116 (47.8%)

FLORIDA

Bill Nelson (Dem)



In 2000, Bill Nelson soundly defeated his opponent to cruise to an election victory. However, given Florida's recent voting history, this state has become a hotbed of swing voting and means Nelson will need to protect a seat many are increasingly considering a toss-up. Nelson's Republican opponent will likely be Representative and former Secretary of State Katherine Harris, although Representative Mark Foley also intends to run. In a state where Republican candidate Mel Martinez defeated Betty Castor by 1.1% in 2004, look for this race to also be one of the closest and most divisive in the country.

2000 Senate

Bill Nelson (Dem)	2,989,487 (51.0%)
Bill McCullum (Rep)	2,705,348 (46.2%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	3,553,183 (46.8%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	3,963,918 (52.3%)

MINNESOTA

Mark Dayton (Dem) / Open Seat



As was the case with the 2004 election, the 2006 Senate race is expected to be very close. Mark Dayton's retirement announcement left many Democrats rushing to enter what is now a full field of potential successors. 2004 congressional nominee Patty Wetterling and Hennepin County Attorney Amy Klobuchar have made early names for themselves in the crowd of Democrats, while Republican Representative Mark Kennedy, armed with strong fund-raising ability, currently seems to be the best GOP answer.

As was the case with the 2004 election, the 2006 Senate race is expected to be very close. Mark Dayton's retirement announcement left many Democrats rushing to enter what is now a full

2000 Senate

Mark Dayton (Dem)	1,181,553 (48.8%)
Rod Grams (Rep)	1,047,474 (43.3%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	1,445,014 (51.1%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,346,695 (47.6%)

MARYLAND

Paul Sarbanes (Dem) / Open Seat



After 30 years of serving in the Senate, Paul Sarbanes announced his retirement, which led to a mad rush by hopefuls to enter what is now a very crowded candidate field. Early potential Democratic candidates include Representative Ben Cardin and former Representative and NAACP President

After 30 years of serving in the Senate, Paul Sarbanes announced his retirement, which led to a mad rush by hopefuls to enter what is now a very crowded candidate field. Early potential

MISSOURI

Jim Talent (Rep)



In 2002, Republican Jim Talent managed to eek out a victory over incumbent Jean Carnahan. With strong Bush reelection support in 2004, this seat is Republican-leaning, but strong Democratic challengers will require Talent to put up a good fight. With potential experienced Democratic candidates including former Lieutenant Governor Joe Maxwell and state Auditor Claire McCaskill, this race will be closer than many expect.

In 2002, Republican Jim Talent managed to eek out a victory over incumbent Jean Carnahan. With strong Bush reelection support in 2004, this seat is Republican-leaning, but strong Democratic

challengers will require Talent to put up a good fight. With potential experienced Democratic candidates including former Lieutenant Governor Joe Maxwell and state Auditor Claire McCaskill, this race will be closer than many expect.

2002 Senate Special

Jean Carnahan (Dem)	913,778 (48.7%)
Jim Talent (Rep)	935,032 (49.8%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	1,259,132 (46.1%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,455,677 (53.3%)

MONTANA

Conrad Burns (Rep)



In 2000, Conrad Burns won a close race over now Democratic Governor Brian Schweitzer. Although Montana has traditionally been a Republican-leaning state, Democrats made large strides in 2004, taking the governor's race and control of the state Senate and House. Now holding most statewide offices, Montana Democrats look to ride this momentum into the 2006 Senate contest. Democratic candidates include Jon Tester, state Senate president, and John Morrison, state auditor, both of whom will give Burns a serious challenge. With Montana Democrats on a roll, Burns has an arduous reelection campaign effort ahead of him.

In 2000, Conrad Burns won a close race over now Democratic Governor Brian Schweitzer. Although Montana has traditionally been a Republican-leaning state, Democrats made large strides in 2004, taking the governor's race

and control of the state Senate and House. Now holding most statewide offices, Montana Democrats look to ride this momentum into the 2006 Senate contest. Democratic candidates include Jon Tester, state Senate president, and John Morrison, state auditor, both of whom will give Burns a serious challenge. With Montana Democrats on a roll, Burns has an arduous reelection campaign effort ahead of him.

2000 Senate

Conrad Burns (Rep)	208,082 (50.6%)
Brian Schweitzer (Dem)	194,430 (47.2%)

2004 President

John Kerry (Dem)	173,710 (38.6%)
George Bush (Rep)	266,063 (59.1%)

NEBRASKA

Ben Nelson (Dem)



Ben Nelson's reelection chances surged when his strongest competitor was appointed secretary of agriculture. With popular Representative and former Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne forgoing a Senate run to focus on a gubernatorial bid, state Attorney General Jon Bruning seems to be the Republicans' best challenge to Nelson. Given

Ben Nelson's reelection chances surged when his strongest competitor was appointed secretary of agriculture. With popular Representative and former Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne forgoing a Senate run to focus on a gubernatorial bid, state Attorney General Jon Bruning seems to be the Republicans' best challenge to Nelson. Given

Battleground Senate Races

the state's strong reelection support of Bush and its voters' Republican lean, Republicans

will be aggressively targeting Nelson in attempts to oust him. He will need to put up a good fight to retain this seat.

2000 Senate		
Ben Nelson (Dem)	353,093	(51.0%)
Don Stenberg (Rep)	337,977	(48.8%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	254,328	(32.6%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	512,814	(65.8%)

NEW JERSEY

Jon Corzine (Dem)



New Jersey's 2006 Senate race is filled with uncertainty due to Jon Corzine running in this year's gubernatorial election. If elected, Corzine will appoint a successor to finish the

one-year remainder of his term. New Jersey's new label as a purple state aside, Corzine's successor would possess an incumbency advantage heading into the 2006 reelection in a state Kerry/Edwards carried by 53%. Currently, possible Corzine replacements include

Representatives Bob Menendez, Frank Pallone, and Rob Andrews.

2000 Senate		
Jon Corzine (Dem)	1,511,237	(50.1%)
Bob Franks (Rep)	1,420,267	(47.1%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	1,911,275	(52.9%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,669,791	(46.2%)

NORTH DAKOTA

Kent Conrad (Dem)



In 2004's election, North Dakotans solidly supported Bush at the polls. For the 2006 election, it looks like Conrad's strongest opposition will be current Governor John Hoeven, as former Governor Ed Schafer will likely not run. Conrad receives very high marks of approval from his constituents, recently scoring the third-highest approval rating of all U.S. senators. Even with North

Dakota's Republican-leaning voters, buoyed by his 71% approval rating, there is a good likelihood Conrad will hold on to his seat.

2000 Senate		
Kent Conrad (Dem)	176,470	(61.5%)
Duane Sand (Rep)	110,420	(38.5%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	111,052	(35.5%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	196,651	(62.9%)

OHIO

Mike DeWine (Rep)



The 2004 election placed Ohio in the national spotlight. With DeWine's approval ratings hovering near the bottom of all senators, there could be a viable opportunity for a closely contested race in

2006. State Senator and 2004 Senate candidate Eric Fingerhut as well as Representatives Sherrod Brown and Tim Ryan all top the list of potential

Democratic challengers.

Jerry Springer, TV show host and former

Cincinnati mayor, has also indicated an interest in the race, but it remains to be seen whether he will run.

2000 Senate		
Ted Celeste (Dem)	1,595,066	(35.9%)
Mike DeWine (Rep)	2,665,512	(59.9%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	2,741,153	(48.7%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	2,859,742	(50.8%)

PENNSYLVANIA

Rick Santorum (Rep)



Pennsylvania's Senate race will be one of the best chances (if not the best chance) for Democrats to remove a Republican incumbent from office. An early look at polling shows

Santorum trailing by a widening margin in a face-off with the leading Democratic contender, state Treasurer Robert Casey Jr. Santorum has an increasing disapproval rating, partly due to his controversial stances on the Terri Schiavo case and support for President Bush's Social Security plan, and is being labeled as too extreme for Pennsylvanians. Early signs indicate a large potential for a Santorum defeat and Senate seat pickup for Democrats.

2000 Senate		
Ron Klink (Dem)	2,154,908	(45.5%)
Rick Santorum (Rep)	2,481,962	(52.4%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	2,938,095	(51%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	2,793,847	(48.5)

RHODE ISLAND

Lincoln Chafee (Rep)



Beset by mediocre approval ratings and a Democratic-leaning electorate, Lincoln Chafee is among the more vulnerable Republican Senate incumbents for 2006. Office hopefuls

from his own party include Cranston Mayor Stephen Laffey, who could prove

to be a challenge in the primary. Secretary of State Matt Brown and former Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse have announced their candidacies for the Democrats. This race marks a very real opportunity for Democrats to pick up a seat.

2000 Senate		
Bob Weygand (Dem)	161,023	(41.2%)
Lincoln Chafee (Rep)	222,588	(56.9%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	259,760	(60.6%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	169,046	(39.4%)

TENNESSEE

Bill Frist (Rep) / Open Seat



With Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist retiring in 2006 to possibly run for president, the 2006 Tennessee Senate race could shape up to be one of the tightest of the year.

For Democrats, Representative Harold Ford Jr. has very preliminarily been tapped as an early front-runner, while current state Senator Rosalind Kurita also has thrown her hat into the ring. Representative Ed Bryant is the leading Republican contender; former Representative Van Hilleary, Chattanooga Mayor Bob Corker, and state GOP Chair Beth Harwell are also all running.

2000 Senate		
Jeff Clark (Dem)	621,152	(32.2%)
Bill Frist (Rep)	1,255,444	(65.1%)
2004 President		
John Kerry (Dem)	1,036,479	(42.5%)
George W. Bush (Rep)	1,384,374	(56.8%)

“Having NCEC state of the art campaign technology made every appeal of my campaign more effective. It's impossible to overstate the importance of NCEC in my close Senate victory. With NCEC I won.”

*Senator Debbie Stabenow
Democrat, Michigan*

“Senate Outlook” continued from page 1

could unseat conservative Republican Jim Talent, who won a 2002 race by a scant 50%–49% margin. 2004 gubernatorial aspirant Claire McCaskill is mentioned as a leading candidate.

Maverick Rhode Island Republican Lincoln Chaffee faces a potentially ruinous Republican primary. If he survives that race, he will face a difficult reelection from either of two Democratic challengers.

A rising star in the Democratic Party, Rep. Harold Ford is a strong contender to succeed Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader, who has decided to forgo reelection in Tennessee.

A Democratic challenger, Jim Pederson, has emerged as a threat to Republican John Kyl’s reelection in Arizona, while Republican Conrad Burns also faces a stiff challenge in Montana. A strong Democratic challenger may also emerge in Ohio.

Winning at least a few Republican seats is of critical importance, as several Democratic senators are in jeopardy.

Senator Mark Dayton’s retirement in Minnesota has added a level of unpredictability to a race that was already considered highly marginal. Republicans have been gaining strength in Minnesota, winning a Senate seat and the governorship in 2002. This year, Sixth District Rep. Mark Kennedy is the consensus Republican Senate candidate.

In several “red states” carried by President Bush in both 2000 and 2004, Democratic senators face stiff challenges.

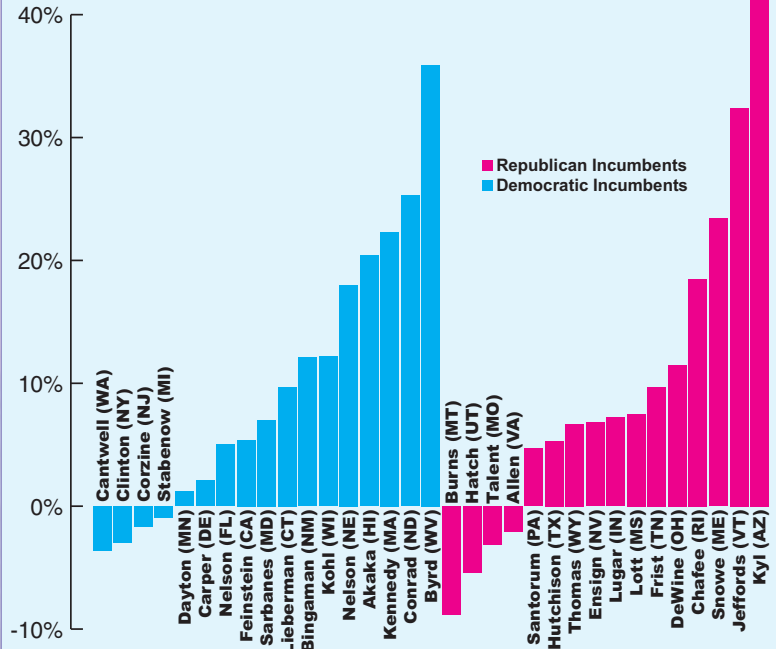
North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad will likely win reelection, unless popular Governor John Hoeven decides to challenge him. The White House is exerting enormous pressure on Hoeven to enter the Senate race.

In fast-growing Florida, Democratic Senator Bill Nelson could be opposed by Rep. Katherine Harris, who was more responsible than any other individual for Al Gore’s dubious defeat in the 2000 presidential election. George W. Bush carried Florida by almost 400,000 votes in 2004, signaling the impact of fast-growing Republican exurbs.

Democrat Ben Nelson faces a tough reelection battle in Nebraska, one of the most Republican states in the nation. Although former Governor Mike Johanns declined to run, a strong Republican challenge is still anticipated.

Other potentially marginal Democratic seats include Maryland and Washington. In Maryland, Senator Paul Sarbanes is retiring and Republicans may recruit an attractive candidate, Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele. In Washington, freshman Senator Maria Cantwell won by a scant 2,000 votes in 2000. Following a highly controversial

2006 Senate Incumbents and the 2004 Presidential Vote



A good indicator of vulnerability is the comparison of an incumbent senator’s vote to candidates in other competitive races - in this case to 2004 President. Democratic senators Cantwell (WA), Clinton (NY), Corzine (NJ) and Stabenow (MI) ran behind Kerry’s 2004 vote while on the Republican side, Senators Burns (MT), Hatch (UT), Talent (MO) and Allen (VA) ran behind Bush’s 2004 vote.

gubernatorial contest, Republicans are highly energized for the contest against Cantwell.

Another Democrat, Debbie Stabenow, narrowly won the 2000 Michigan Senate contest against Bush Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and could face a strong challenge in 2006.

The bottom line: both parties must defend a number of close marginal seats, and a Democratic majority will require a major effort. NCEC will play a crucial role.

“Director” continued from page 1

NCEC is helping to lead a broad spectrum of organizational support for moderate nominees to fill Supreme Court vacancies, but don’t hold your breath. The only way these dangerous, undemocratic extremists who hold sway over our lives and our future will be stopped in their pursuit of power is at the polls.

Political control means having a majority vote. We must stop this right-wing juggernaut now. The precious liberties and personal freedoms we surrender may never be regained.