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New Hampshire: 2014, Another Republican Rout?

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Since 2006, New Hampshire has gone from being a modified one-party state to a competitive two-party state with wild swings from one party's control to the other, Democrats winning in Presidential years, Republicans in mid-term elections. This is what Republicans are hanging their hopes on for the 2014 mid-term elections. Other than Scott Brown, Republicans have relatively unknown candidates running against well-known Democrats.

The 2014 Senate Race

Incumbent Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen had raised over \$7 million (\$4 million on hand) to begin her re-election bid. Open Secrets and Most media outlets are reporting she raised \$1.5 million in the first quarter of 2014. Polls have Shaheen beating all of her Republican rivals by around 8 points. Polls have gotten closer possibly because of the more than \$1 million right wing groups, most notably Americans for Prosperity; have spent on ads against her. Shaheen has begun to air ads that are very positive and that tout her relationship with New Hampshire residents and the issue of student debt.

John E. Sununu, the Republican Nominee in 2002 and 2008 and former House Member and current State Senator Jeb Bradley both passed on entering the race.

Those entering the race include Jim Rubens, a 2-term State Senator from Hanover, and venture investor. Rubens has claimed that Shaheen was the "deciding vote to pass Obamacare" which

has been found to be mostly false by Politifact New Hampshire. He had raised \$288 thousand in the first quarter of 2014.

Karen Testerman—a Franklin resident, is a longtime social-conservative activist who founded Cornerstone Policy Research in 2000. She ran for governor in 2010, finishing third in the GOP primary. (Leubsdorf, [2014](#)) Testerman, known for her Tea Party ties, had asked supporters to sign an on-line petition asking her to run if signers reached 5000. The petition never reached that goal, but she decided to run anyway. She raised \$58,000. Testerman has subsequently withdrawn from the race.

Bob Smith is mounting a comeback. Ex-Senator Smith decided again to challenge Shaheen. He lost in the primary to John E Sununu in 2002 and ran for the Senate in Florida where he failed to gain any traction. He left both races before the primary. He had left the Republican Party in 2000 to run as an independent for president. (Blake, [2013](#)) He has raised \$218,000. in 2014.

Two lesser known figures also declared their candidacies, Andy Martin who had been involved in Illinois politics, is a Boston Broadcaster, and wrote a book against Obama, and Joe Larose, about whom there is very little information.

The biggest Elephant in the room, of course is former Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown.

Brown played coy for quite some time about whether or not he was going to oppose Shaheen. He formed an “exploratory committee”, made a “whirlwind tour” of all of the NH counties and then formally announced on April 10, 2014. Interest in Brown dominated political discourse in the Granite State. Speculation about his candidacy effectively “sucked the air out” of interest and discussions about other races in 2014. He has already begun ads—featuring his truck, now with 300,000 miles on it. His truck had been featured prominently in his Massachusetts Senate runs.

Film was done earlier during his whirlwind tour and features lots of snow scenes. It even includes some dog whistle sites like the sign from Meldrim Thompson's homestead, Mt. Cube. Younger New Hampshireites may not be familiar but the old guard Republicans will certainly connect with it. As a Massachusetts Republican, it may be difficult to please the old guard especially with his 67% party voting record while in the Senate.(The US Congress Votes Database) (by other measures it may be even lower) (Levenson, 2014). He has been able to convince Republicans that he is their last best hope of defeating Shaheen as other Republicans have not been able to gain any traction. Brown's most recent ad is about immigration, an issue that is not all that important to New Hampshire.

Brown and his wife moved into their Rye, NH vacation home in December. He has had a long history of vacationing in NH, as well as having his sister and mother living in New Hampshire. New Hampshire and Massachusetts have a complicated relationship. There is resentment on both sides even though we share sports teams and media markets as Steve People's points out. There are many Massachusetts ex-pats who have moved to NH. We rely heavily on Massachusetts for tourist dollars. But a couple of New Hampshire's favorite slurs for Massachusetts are "Massholes" and "Taxachusetts." New Hampshire's North/South orientation gives New Hampshire residents more information and interest in events in Massachusetts than in its East/West neighbors Vermont and Maine. East/West travel is still far more difficult than North/South travel. Major highways lead to Massachusetts and two-lane roads are still the only option to travel to Vermont and Maine for the most part.

Brown will have to overcome the carpetbagger image. Some feel it won't be a problem except that Brown keeps slipping and using Massachusetts in his speeches instead of New Hampshire. Another blooper which may haunt him was when asked if he had the credentials to run for

Senate in New Hampshire, and he replied, “Do I have the best credentials? Probably not. ‘Cause, you know, whatever. But I have long and strong ties to this state,” as told AP reporter Steve Peoples.

Scott Brown is very likely to take money and attention away from Charlie Baker’s Gubernatorial Bid in Massachusetts. (Phillips, 2014) Ads that Brown will run attacking Shaheen, which play in the Boston market, may stir up Democrats in Massachusetts. The National Republican “brand” is toxic in Massachusetts according to Professor Jeffrey Berry of Tufts. “We are going to see the National Republican right wing pollution all over the airwaves,” said one veteran Massachusetts GOP strategist. Brown will suck the air out of Massachusetts politics as well as New Hampshire’s!

Shaheen challenged Brown to take the “People’s Pledge” He did in Massachusetts and lost. He has refused so far. The “People’s Pledge” requires candidates to ask out of state groups to refrain from attacking their challenger. If the groups continue to spend money attacking the competition, the candidate would have to pay an amount of money equal to the spending of the outside groups as a fine.

The New Hampshire Democratic Party began web ads attacking Brown for his ties to big oil, the Koch brothers, Karl Rove and Wall Street. A Democratic Super PAC is beginning to run \$212,000. worth of ads to help Shaheen.(Pindell, April 24, 2014)

American’s for Prosperity anti-“Obamacare” ads against Shaheen as well as House Members Kuster and Shea-Porter—ask listeners to “tell Shaheen/Kuster/Shea-Porter to fix Obamacare” Most of the complaints in the ad center around problems we have had with the roll-out of the Affordable Care Act. Since Republicans defeated legislation to set up health insurance

exchanges in New Hampshire, only one insurer, Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield stepped forward with plans meeting ACA requirements. Anthem had surveyed potential customers and they preferred narrow care networks to higher cost coverage. Anthem only negotiated with 10 of the state's hospitals—creating very narrow networks. This meant many of the insured would have to travel farther and may not have been able to keep their current doctors. Most of these issues will be fixed as it has been reported that around 5 more insurance companies will begin offering insurance plans in the next enrollment period making these attack ads' complaints moot. The Legislature also approved the extension of Medicaid which had been defeated by Republicans in the previous session which will answer some of these complaints as well. Democrats have not answered these ads, instead they have attacked Brown for some of his investments as being unethical.

House Races:

CD 1

Incumbent Carol Shea-Porter 2013-2014, 2007-2010 is running for re-election. Her challengers include Dan Innis, Dean of Business School at University of New Hampshire, and Former Representative Frank Guinta.

Early polls give Shea-Porter comfortable leads over both—Shea-Porter 44% Guinta 35% and Shea-Porter 45% Innis 29% (UNH/WMUR)

Shea-Porter has about 3 times the money that her opponents have. She is in the Democratic Congressional Committee's Frontline Program so is in line for substantial financial help from them. There has not much coverage of this race. Shea-Porter has challenged her opponents to take the "People's Pledge." Innis and Guinta refused. Innis has criticized Shea-Porter's out of

state and DCCC funding and proclaimed he supports all of our 1st and 2nd amendment rights.

(Pindell, 8 April 2014)

CD 2

Incumbent Ann McLane Kuster has filed to run for re-election. Her challengers include Former State Senator Gary Lambert and State Representative Marilinda Garcia. Bill O'Brien the controversial former House Speaker eyed a run but decided not to.

Early polling is troublesome for Kuster. Kuster 38% Lambert 31% and Kuster 34% Garcia 33%

(UNH)

Kuster didn't seem to know where Benghazi was in a town hall meeting claiming Libya is not in the middle east—making her look incompetent. She is also being pounded by anti-Obamacare ads which are misleading at best.

Garcia has Koch brother ties (Pindell, 4 February, 2014) and spoke at CPAC but her fundraising efforts are weak—she has little to show for all of her contacts. For the April quarterly file, Garcia raised \$69,000 and had \$44,000 cash on hand. (Pindell, 18 April 2014) She has been identified as one of the RNC's "rising stars." There has been a Super PAC ad asking supporters to thank her for fighting against taxes. It is odd that it does not mention she is running for the House, it just talks about state votes. It applauds her vote against a recent \$.04 per gallon gas tax hike to repair the state's highways.

Like Shea-Porter, Kuster is also a member of the DCCC Frontline Program to help vulnerable incumbents. The National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee added Lambert to their "On the Radar" list helping challengers.

Gubernatorial race

Incumbent Governor Maggie Hassan is also running for re-election. Her challengers are businessman, Engineer, retired USMC Officer Walter Havenstein and Conservative Activist and Businessman Andrew Hemingway.

The GOP was quite excited about Havenstein entering the race. The former BAE CEO though has been questioned about his eligibility to run for Governor. Candidates must be a New Hampshire resident for 7 years before running for governor. He got a tax exemption on a condo in Maryland as a primary residence through 2011. The form has been destroyed by the state of Maryland, so no one is sure what he agreed to. He was living in the condo 5 days a week and coming back to New Hampshire on weekends. (Ronayne,2014)

Hassan remains very popular with a 59% approval rating in the most recent UNH poll. In a match up with Hemingway, Hassan leads 49% to 22%, and with Havenstein 49% to 19%.

Havenstein has been running ads introducing himself and his wife to New Hampshire voters. They center on his leadership skills and their successful marriage.

New Hampshire House and Senate

The last mid-term election in 2010 brought Republican control back to the House, Senate and Executive Council with a vengeance. Any Democratic gains which were made in the 2006-2009 period were wiped out. Most of this was reversed in the 2012 election; the Senate remained in Republican hands however. The difference in votes amounted to around 120,000 fewer votes cast in 2010 than 2012. Republicans enjoyed the Tea Party emergence and having more reliable voters than Democrats in 2010. Democrats seemed particularly demoralized in 2010. This does

not bode well for the 2014 mid-terms for the Democrats. The ACA is not popular in NH and may prove a good whipping boy for the Republican candidates, although voters seem tired of the subject. Mediating factors are that the Tea Party has lost much of its steam and their dominance of the legislature was very unpopular and the Democrats learned their lesson in 2010. The Retirement of 6-term Republican Senator Bob Odell puts the Senate majority up for grabs according to James Pindell. (18 April 2014) .

Speaker Terie Norelli has decided to not run for reelection. Her husband is retiring, so it might be because of him or Republicans are claiming it is because she knows they will take over the House in the next session. Norelli's retirement does make this possibility more likely.

Issues and Events

Medical Marijuana was passed by the House but then defeated in the Senate. Governor Hassan pledged to veto it.(Solomon, 2014) Gambling lost again, legislators tried one and two casinos, both lost and the Gas Tax is going up by 4 cents per gallon, (MacKenzie, 2014)

April 12 saw the "Freedom Summit" come to New Hampshire. Led by Senator Ted Cruz, it was a showcase for Tea Party aligned candidates. It was held in Manchester and sponsors included Citizens United, the Americans for Prosperity Foundation (founded by the Koch Brothers).

Republican presidential hopefuls of the past, present and future were on the schedule to speak: Sens. Rand Paul, (R-Ky), a frequent visitor, and Mike Lee, (R-Utah), former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Rep. Marsha Blackburn, (R-Tenn) and Donald Trump.

Other notables who have visited the state include Marco Rubio, Joe Scarborough, and on the Democratic side- Rep. Joaquin Castro (D, TX) and Vice President Joe Biden, mostly for fundraising.

The Northern Pass Project continues to be controversial. The Project has proposed the running of high tension wires across the state to bring power from hydro- Quebec. Lines would now follow already established electric lines but the towers needed would dwarf the existing ones. The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests has purchased as much land in the planned route as possible, but the Northern Pass project has announced they will just go around them and that they are going forward with their plans. US Department of Energy officials held hearings throughout New Hampshire last fall. Public Service of New Hampshire's clout has weakened over the legislature and the final ok is not a foregone conclusion. New Hampshire Magazine has an excellent report done in collaboration with New Hampshire Public Radio in its January 2014 edition.

The Death Penalty remains—the House passed a bill repealing the death penalty but the Senate vote was a tie, so the death penalty remains. The battle over the death penalty was viewed as a show down between Governor Hassan and Senator Kelly Ayotte . Ayotte made her career based upon getting the death sentence for cop killed Michael Addison. Addison is the first to be sentenced to death since 1939. Only 26 people have been put to death in New Hampshire. The last person to be put to death was hanged. New Hampshire has no death chamber and it will cost

at least \$1.7 million to build one. New Hampshire's death penalty law is a narrow one, applying to only six specific circumstances. (Death Penalty Information Center)

Medicaid Expansion was passed. Around 50,000 poor adults will be covered. It uses federal Medicaid funds to buy private health coverage for adults making less than 138 percent of the federal poverty limit, about \$15,856 a year for a single adult.(Love, 2014) It will be funded by federal funds until 2017 and after that must be reauthorized as federal funding is withdrawn.

The North Country suffered a huge blow with the death of Executive Councilor and County Commissioner Raymond S.Burton on November 12, 2013. Burton was the champion of the North Country, working tirelessly for 35 years as Executive Councilor. He was first elected in 1976, lost his seat in 1978 and returned for good in 1980. Burton was a moderate Republican who followed his heart supporting things like Medicaid Expansion. Burton was not a politician; he was “a family member” as Governor Hassan pointed out at his Memorial Service at Plymouth State University. Burton ran an internship program for New Hampshire college students—he had over 120 students who had interned with him, most coming from Plymouth State University his alma mater. Ben Leubsdorf wrote a moving tribute to Ray in the Concord Monitor.

Conclusions

Republicans have many unknown candidates running against better known Democrats.

Democrats are going to need to make it clear that most of the problems with the ACA are either already solved or are soon to be solved. Democrats must do extensive get out the vote efforts to overcome the typical slump in Democratic voters going to the polls in mid-term elections.

The Primary is not until September, so beyond candidates showing up at local parades and fairs, there doesn't seem to be that much interest in the elections at this point. The novelty of Scott

Brown has evaporated and other than ads for and against Brown and Shaheen, little attention is being paid to other races.

NH Incumbents Hassan, Shaheen, Kuster and Shea-Porter should be able to hold on to their seats. Control of the House will be impacted by the Republican gerrymandering of House districts and the Senate is a toss-up. It appears we will still be in for grid lock and infighting.

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