

Corporate America puts its money on Biden and the Democrats

Part two

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This is the second part of a two-part article. The first part can be read [here](#).

With Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden holding an apparently comfortable lead over Trump in the polls, much of the media attention has shifted to the question of which party will be in control of the Senate after November 3. The Republicans currently have a three-seat majority, 53-47, so the Democrats must gain a net of three seats if Biden wins, as a Vice President Kamala Harris would then have the tie-breaking vote in the Senate. The Democrats must gain four seats if Biden loses, but that combination is highly unlikely, since a Biden defeat would signify a broader Democratic debacle.

In the Senate, the Democrats have outraised Republicans by a margin of more than 50 percent, \$767 million to \$500 million, despite the Republicans holding 23 of the 35 seats being contested November 3. In the 16 seats considered competitive (two held by Democrats, 14 by Republicans), the Democratic lead is \$643 million to \$415 million. The average Democrat has a \$40 million war chest, while the Republican, usually an incumbent, averages \$26 million.

More so than Biden, the Senate candidates have benefited from a flood of small-dollar donations over the internet, which expresses, in a distorted way, the popular hatred of the right-wing policies of Trump and the Republicans. But corporate and billionaire cash also plays a significant role. Both small-dollar and large-dollar donations have fueled a record-breaking third quarter of fundraising for the Democrats, with many challengers doubling or tripling the amount raised by the Republican incumbents.

Ordinarily, incumbent senators have a huge fundraising advantage over their challengers, and this applies particularly to Republican incumbents, who usually have closer ties to wealthy donors. But in 2020 this is not the case, and the disparities are remarkable. There are at least eight Democratic challengers who have outraised their Republican opponents. Three of these Democrats have raked in more than \$80 million apiece, an astonishing total for an election in a single state.

Democrat Jaime Harrison reported raising \$86.9 million in South Carolina, compared to \$59.4 million for three-term Senator Lindsey Graham. The combined total of \$146.4 million in a relatively small state, where only 2 million people voted in 2016, means an expenditure of better than \$70 a vote.

In an even smaller state, Kentucky, Democrat Amy McGrath has raised \$84.2 million for her uphill contest against Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has raised \$53.4 million. In Arizona, Democratic challenger Mark Kelly has raised \$82.8 million and leads

in the polls against the incumbent Republican, appointed Senator Martha McSally, who has raised \$50.9 million.

Several other Democratic challengers, while raising smaller total amounts, have a much larger percentage edge over Republican incumbents. In Iowa, businesswoman Theresa Greenfield has raised \$40.4 million against the \$21.8 million raised by first-term incumbent Joni Ernst. In North Carolina, former Army paratrooper Cal Cunningham has raised \$43.4 million for his race against first-term incumbent Thom Tillis, who has raised \$20.9 million. In Maine, Sara Gideon, the Democratic leader of the state legislature, has raised \$63.6 million for her campaign against three-term incumbent Susan Collins, who has raised less than half that sum, \$25.2 million.

In Colorado, opinion polls suggest that the contest is a runaway, and political action committees supporting the Democratic candidate, former Governor John Hickenlooper, have pulled out, regarding his victory over first-term Republican Senator Cory Gardner as a certainty. Hickenlooper has outraised the incumbent by \$36.7 million to \$25 million. And in Montana, Governor Steve Bullock has raised \$38.1 million for his challenge to first-term incumbent Steve Daines, who has raised \$24.5 million. In Alaska, millionaire orthopedic surgeon Al Gross leads incumbent Republican Dan Sullivan, \$13.9 million to \$9.3 million.

The most lopsided financial disparity is in Kansas, where no Democrat has been elected to the US Senate in a century, but polls show a close race between former Republican state senator Barbara Bollier, who switched to the Democrats only two years ago, and Republican Congressman Roger Marshall, to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Republican Senator Pat Roberts. Bollier has raised \$20.7 million, nearly four times the \$5.5 million raised by Marshall.

Georgia has both Senate seats at stake, because of the resignation of Senator Johnny Isakson for health reasons. The Democrats, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, have raised \$46 million between them, while the two Republican incumbents, Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, both multi-millionaires, have raised \$45.2 million.

In only one state is there a seeming Republican financial advantage in a contested race. Senator John Cornyn of Texas has the edge over his Democratic challenger, Mary Jennings Hegar, and that is not an overwhelming one, \$29.6 million to \$20.6 million. And even this apparent advantage is illusory. The Silicon Valley-based political action committee Future Fund is pouring \$28 million into the Texas race to support the Democratic candidate, more money than Hegar has raised herself. This advertising blitz will benefit not only Hegar, but

also a group of Democratic candidates for the House of Representatives and a Democratic effort to gain control of the lower house of the Texas state legislature.

Of the two Democrat seats in the Senate which are at greatest risk on November 3, one confirms and one represents an exception to this pattern. In Alabama, incumbent Democrat Doug Jones has outraised his Republican challenger, former football coach Tommy Tuberville, by \$24.9 million to \$7.5 million, but he is nonetheless considered a distinct underdog in the conservative state. In Michigan, Senator Gary Peters is a slight favorite over Republican challenger John James, a former paratrooper, and he holds only a narrow fundraising lead, \$35.7 million to \$33.9 million. Only three incumbent Republican senators have raised more money than James, who is being promoted by the Senate Republican leadership and Trump as an African American face to disguise their reactionary politics.

Finally, there is the not-insignificant question of what corporate America is buying through this flood of cash into the coffers of the Democratic Senate candidates. The beneficiaries of this corporate largesse are a collection of political reactionaries deeply committed to the defense of American imperialism abroad and big business at home. They differ only at the margins with their right-wing Republican opponents.

Of the candidates already listed, four have military-intelligence backgrounds as their principal credential: Mark Kelly is a career military pilot and former astronaut; Amy McGrath a retired Marine fighter-pilot; Mary Jennings Hegar flew helicopters for the US military in Afghanistan; Cal Cunningham was an Army Ranger, and still teaches new Rangers every year as a reserve officer. These four are the Senate equivalents of the CIA Democrats who played such a prominent role in the Democratic takeover of the House of Representatives in 2018.

Other top Senate Democratic challengers include South Carolina's Jaime Harrison, a longtime corporate lobbyist; Theresa Greenfield in Iowa, a millionaire businesswoman; Al Gross in Alaska, a millionaire surgeon whose father was state attorney general; Montana Governor Steve Bullock and former Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, both failed presidential candidates who ran in the right-wing "lane" that produced Biden instead; and Barbara Bollier, who was a Republican state senator in Kansas until switching parties in 2018.

In the House of Representatives, now firmly controlled by the Democrats, 232-197, with five vacancies and a Libertarian, the Democrats are expected to increase their numbers, although by less than the 41 seats they gained in 2018. Republican hopes of retaking control, which would require a net gain of 21 seats, have virtually collapsed, as nearly all the first-term Democrats who won Republican-held seats in 2018 are considered likely victors this year.

The Democrats hold a smaller edge in fundraising for the House of Representatives than in the Senate, having raised \$772 million through September 30 according to FEC filings for the 435 seats, compared to \$653 million for Republican candidates.

The overall total is less significant, however, because the vast majority of House seats are in districts whose boundaries ensure the victory of one party regardless of how much money the other party spends. Republicans will spend \$7 million, for example, in support of businesswoman Kim Klacik against Democrat Kweisi Mfume, in the Baltimore district held by the late Elijah Cummings, and \$9.4 million to back millionaire investor Lacy Johnson against Democrat Ilhan Omar in Minneapolis. Both Mfume and Omar will win reelection easily despite being heavily outspent.

The more important figure is how much is raised in more closely contested races, fewer than 100 of the 435 seats in the House. In these contests, there are 85 Democrats who have raised more than \$3 million, compared to only 50 Republicans. This includes a number of challengers for Republican seats, including Wendy Davis and Gina Ortiz Jones in the 21st and 23rd congressional districts of Texas, with \$7.2 million and \$5.9 million respectively, and Nancy Goroff and Tedra Cobb in New York's Second and 21st congressional districts, with \$5.1 million and \$5.5 million respectively.

In 41 congressional districts where first-term Democrats are defending seats captured from Republicans in 2018, the fundraising is lopsided in favor of the Democrats: \$216.5 million to \$98.2 million. Only two of the 41 Democrats have less campaign cash than their Republican challenger.

An especially financially advantaged subset is the group of 11 new Democratic representatives with military-intelligence backgrounds, whom the WSWS identified in 2018 as the CIA Democrats. In their 11 reelection contests, the CIA Democrats have raised \$62.5 million. Their 11 Republican opponents have raised only \$21.4 million.

All 11 CIA Democrats are favored to win reelection, and they will be joined by at least one military-intelligence candidate who won his primary in the heavily Democratic Fourth Congressional District in Massachusetts, and is a prohibitive favorite, Jake Auchincloss. Several more such candidates are likely to win on November 3: Jackie Gordon in the Second Congressional District of New York; Dan Feehan in the First Congressional District of Minnesota; Sri Preston Kulkarni in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas; and Gina Ortiz Jones in the 23rd Congressional District of Texas.

The result of the election is likely to be a greatly strengthened group of CIA Democrats, including Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, first elected in 2014 and the founder of the VoteVets political action committee that has been responsible for recruiting and funding many of the military-intelligence candidates in the last two elections. Together with the 11 elected in 2018 and another half dozen or so in 2020, this would make a "caucus" of nearly 20, enough to exercise considerable influence in the new Congress and in a future Biden administration.

Concluded



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