



Senate Races 2016 Update

By Roxanne Perugino
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In 62 days voters will cast their ballots for President and for 34 Senate seats up for re-election. Democrats remain cautiously optimistic that their party can regain control of the Senate, while Republicans fight to maintain their slim majority.

Democrats must gain five seats — or four and retain the White House — to regain control of the Senate. Democrats are defending 10 seats, while Republicans face a greater challenge, needing to defend 24 seats.

In the last [ACW update](#) regarding the Senate races, seven Republican races were identified as tossups. Based on recent analysis, eight Republican seats are now in play, with North Carolina being the newest addition. **Six of the eight Republican races are now designated as tossups. Two former races, Ohio and Florida considered tossups are now “leaning Republican.”** Democrats are facing one tossup: the Senate race in Nevada. While Republican chances are slightly better in Ohio and Florida, six tossup seats continue to be worrisome news for the Republicans.

Here are the Senate seats most likely to flip:

- 1. Illinois — Mark Kirk (R)** is the most vulnerable Senate Republican and the consensus is Illinois will be a win for Democrats this year. President Obama won the state by double digits in 2008 and 2012. Kirk faces a formidable challenge from Democratic 8th District Representative Tammy Duckworth, an Iraq war veteran who lost both legs while serving as a US Army helicopter pilot.
- 2. Wisconsin — Ron Johnson (R)** Johnson is also viewed as one of the most vulnerable senators in his rematch with former Democratic Senator Russ Feingold whom he defeated in the Republican wave of 2010. Republican groups have scaled back funding as Johnson trails in the polls. Conflicting polls, however, are a bright spot for Johnson. While one poll has him down 13 points, another has him trailing by only a few points. Nevertheless, this looks like a win for Feingold.
- 3. New Hampshire — Kelly Ayotte (R)** Ayotte likely will overcome her primary challenger in mid-September, but she faces a strong challenge in the general election from New Hampshire Governor

Maggie Hassan. Hassan has maintained a narrow lead over Ayotte. Ayotte has distanced herself from Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump but part of Hassan's strategy is to tie Ayotte to Trump. Hassan, who has been campaigning with Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton hurt her image somewhat when she dodged the question whether she thinks Clinton is trustworthy. She clarified her response later saying Clinton was trustworthy.

4. Pennsylvania — Pat Toomey (R) Toomey has withheld his support for Donald Trump and this may be a factor in his strong campaign. Still, he has experienced a dip in the polls, which is attributed to Trump at the top of the ticket. Toomey faces a strong challenge from Katie McGinty, a little-known former gubernatorial chief-of-staff, who has been helped by Clinton's consistent lead over Trump in Pennsylvania. McGinty has maintained a lead since mid-July.

5. Indiana — Open seat (R) Democratic challenger, former Senator Evan Bayh has a \$9 million war chest and the benefit of name recognition, an advantage his Republican challenger, Representative Todd Young does not have. Polls show Bayh comfortably ahead in the race to replace retiring Senator Dan Coats. Republicans paint Bayh as a Washington lobbyist who has abandoned Indiana. A CNN report found he is classified as an "inactive" voter in Indiana. Indiana gone Democratic once in 52 years. This year could be the second time for Indiana.

6. Nevada — Open seat (D) Nevada is one of Republicans' only real pick-up opportunities. The race for Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid's seat has been relatively quiet with limited polling. Reid has vowed to help keep the seat blue and elect former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto. But Representative Joe Heck is a strong Republican recruit who has kept the race a true tossup with a razor-thin margin. Heck has yet to be dragged down by Trump even in a state with a large Latino population.

7. North Carolina – Richard Burr (R). North Carolina, new to this category, is the latest state where a real battle is shaping up. According to *The Hill* newspaper, former state Representative Deborah Ross, although not the Democrat's first choice, has proven to be a strong fundraiser and has cut into Burr's lead as Democratic presidential nominee Clinton performs well in North Carolina.

8. Ohio – Rob Portman (R) If Donald Trump's presidential campaign is a drag on Republican Senate candidates, Portman is the exception. Although Clinton leads Trump by several points, Portman has a 15 point lead over Democratic candidate former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland. Portman has received four labor union endorsements that backed Strickland in his previous races.

Portman and outside groups have inundated the airwaves with ads criticizing Strickland's gubernatorial tenure, but the former governor recently hit back in his own ad that he led during the recession. This race could still be a tossup, but in reality we believe Portman will save this Republican held seat.

9. Florida — Marco Rubio (R) Both Rubio and Representative Patrick Murphy (D) handily defeated primary challengers last week and immediately proceeded to attack each other. While the race is likely to tighten up by November, Rubio currently is favored to win re-election. In his favor is high name recognition following his presidential bid. Murphy does not enjoy high name recognition and a win by Murphy would be major upset, but Rubio is looking like a winner with a 5.7 point lead. Still Florida is a swing state and the presidential race remains close with Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton ahead but well within the margin of error. Rubio may not be able to open a significant lead over the next 2 months, but currently he has the edge.