



AMERICAN VIEWPOINT®

To: Interested Parties
From: Lake Research Partners
American Viewpoint, Inc.
Women's Voices. Women Vote
Re: Understanding the 2010 Massachusetts' Special Electionⁱ
Date: January 20, 2010

Last night saw the Massachusetts penchant for contradiction rear its head again when the state that sent Senator Ted Kennedy back to Washington in five different decades selected a Republican to take his place (Republican Scott Brown 52% to Democrat Martha Coakley 47%). For the third time since November 2008, Democrats have lost an election in a state President Obama carried. The Republican win and the Democratic loss last night is a clear continuation of trends WVWV first reported on last November after New Jersey and Virginia: decreased turnout among constituencies that historically have voted for progressive candidates combined with a resounding Republican win among independents. Those trends will have a huge impact on the 2010 midterms if Republicans can sustain them and Democrats cannot reverse them.

Since 2003, Women's Voices Women's Vote (WVWV) has pioneered outreach to historically underrepresented groups in the electorate. Starting with unmarried women and expanding to younger voters, African Americans, and Latino/as, WVWV has facilitated the registration of nearly 1 million people in these demographic groups who are under registered and do not generally turn out in the numbers that they represent in the voting age population. These groups (unmarried women, people of color, and 18-29 year olds) constitute what is known as the Rising American electorate (RAE), fully 52 percent of the vote eligible population and some of the fastest growing demographic groups in the country. In 2008, their engagement was historic, but as WVWV highlighted in November of 2009, their participation dropped in both the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial elections. That trend continued last night in Massachusetts.

Important findings from the polling research include:

- **Key traditionally Democratic constituencies failed to vote, and the gap in Democrats' favor was smaller than in the past.** In Massachusetts, members of the RAE represent just under half of all eligible voters (45%), yet they continue to underperform that share at the ballot box (Current Population Survey). In 2008, in Massachusetts, members of the Rising American Electorate comprised nearly 36% of all voters who participated, 8 points less than their representation of all voters. Last night, that fell to roughly 27% of all voters – a decline of 9 points since 2008 and 18 points lower than their overall share of eligible voters.
 - The 2010 special election is not the first time, of course, that the RAE is underrepresented at the ballot box in Massachusetts. In 2004, they comprised just 38% of all voters, and in 2006 it fell to

- 34%. In 2008, there was a slight rebound to 36% - still well under the 44% of the entire eligible electorate they represent.
- The impact of lower voter turnout among the RAE in Massachusetts is noteworthy in two ways: Coakley won the RAE vote but by a smaller margin than in the past, and the RAE represented a smaller vote share than in the past. Among voters who are part of the RAE, Coakley won 56% to 43%, an advantage of 13 points. Among voters who are not part of the RAE, Brown won 55% to 44%, a disadvantage for Coakley of 11 points. In both New Jersey (+25) and Virginia (+27), Democrats experienced a bigger boost from the RAE than Coakley earned here.
 - Young voters in Massachusetts favored Brown and that drove his gains among the RAE. In Massachusetts, voters under age 40 preferred Brown by 52% to 46%. Overall, younger voters turned out at lower rates than in the past, and they tended to vote for Brown.
 - **Unmarried women, another key constituency, also saw lower participation while the strength of the marriage gap endured.** In Massachusetts, unmarried women comprise just 26% of the adult population (CPS), but in 2008, unmarried women comprised just 22% of all voters who participated. Last night that fell to roughly 18% of all voters – a decline of 5 points since 2008, continuing a trend began in 2006 when 23% of voters were unmarried women.
 - **The marriage gap was critical for Coakley**, and she won by a large measure among unmarried women (+17 points). However, her advantage among unmarried women was somewhat muted due to their decreased participation. Coakley defeated Brown among unmarried women by 58% to 41% and lost to Brown by two points among married women (Brown 51% to Coakley 49%). Coakley's advantage among unmarried women was smaller than Corzine's win in New Jersey (+20 points) but larger than Deeds win in Virginia (+6 points).
 - Men supported Brown by 57% to 41%, and Coakley won women by 52% to 48%. Notably, Brown was able to split the vote among college women (50% to 50%), a demographic group that President Obama won handily; and while Obama won unmarried women handily, Coakley earned a 17-point advantage.
 - In the end, decreased turnout by both unmarried women and the RAE combined with a closer than expected finish among those voters was a leading factor in Scott Brown's win. If Brown's success can be duplicated elsewhere and Republicans can break through among constituencies that have historically voted for Democrats, the ramifications can be huge.
 - **Independents were key.** As most publicly available polling has demonstrated over the last few weeks, independents were decisive in this election. Democrats enjoy a large registration advantage in Massachusetts, but that registration advantage is not large enough to offset huge losses among independents. Among all self-identified independents, Brown won by three-to-one (76% to 21%). His advantage was significant among both independent men (78% to 18%) and independent women (75% to 25%). Similarly, among un-enrolled voters (not registered as a Democrat or a Republican) Brown had a large lead (69% to 30%).
 - While the sample size is too small to analyze among self-identified independent unmarried women, the data among independents in the RAE is telling. Among RAE independents the ballot was 64% for

Brown to 35% for Coakley (Note: based on small sample size). Among Non-RAE Independents, 81% voted for Brown and 16% voted for Coakley. RAE Democrats supported Coakley by 82% to 16% for Brown.

- In a Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research poll after the 2008 election, RAE-independents supported President Obama by 18 points over John McCain. However, among all other independents McCain won by 11% - a gap of 29 points.
- **Voters chose Scott Brown in the midst of holding divided emotions about the country's direction and the pace of change.**
 - **Overall, most voters feel Obama and the Democrats are taking the country in the right direction (51%), but four in ten (43%)** feel the Democrats are taking things in the wrong direction. Similarly, as WVW reported from New Jersey last year, voters there also tended to believe that Obama and the Democrats were taking the country in the right direction (also 51%).
 - Members of the RAE were especially strong in their belief that Obama and Democrats are taking the country in the right direction (61%). Only 30% felt things were moving in the wrong direction.
 - The change of pace also is a factor with half of voters (52% supporting the notion that change takes time and things are beginning to move in the right direction), but four in ten (41%) express disappointment with the pace of change. In New Jersey, 52% of voters felt change takes time and things are beginning to move in the right direction, similar to the 51% who said so in Virginia. The RAE was also more sympathetic to the notion that change takes time (54%).
 - Forty-six (46%) of voters said their vote was mainly to show support for health care reform rather than to show opposition to it (35%). However, in a special election in Massachusetts, in a race to succeed Senator Ted Kennedy, a champion of health care reform, less than a majority of respondents stated that their vote was to show support for health care reform. Independents sent a clearer signal on the issue, with 44% stating their vote was mainly in opposition to reform and 30% saying it was mainly in support.
 - Notably, Coakley voters were stronger in their support for reform (80% said their vote was mainly in support of reform) than Brown voters were in opposition to it (65% said their vote was mainly in opposition to reform).
 - Issues mattered, and while Coakley won among voters who rated health care reform a "10" on an importance scale (Coakley 53% to 47% for Brown), Brown won among voters who said the same for jobs and the economy (Brown 55% to 44% for Coakley) and won bigger among voters who highlighted taxes and spending (Brown 70% to Coakley 29%).

In sum, this election turned to Brown for a few reasons. Issues were important and while Coakley won health care voters, Brown won among jobs and economy voters and tax and spend voters. Importantly, constituencies that have voted strongly Democratic in recent elections (the RAE and unmarried women) stayed home, and their support for Coakley was lower than it was for Democrats in other states (and higher for Brown than other Republicans). Finally, Brown surged among both independent men and women, and the Democratic registration advantage was not big enough to overcome his 3:1 win among independents.

ⁱ On January 18th and 19th, 2010 Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint conducted a bipartisan election eve survey in Massachusetts on behalf of Women's Voices Women Vote. The survey reached 600 voters who said they intended to vote (Monday calling) or said they did vote (Tuesday calling). The margin of error on a sample of this size is +/-4.0 percentage points.