

# Congressional Elections Deliver **A Progressive Mandate**

**VOTE FOR CHANGE**

A large crowd of people is gathered at night, illuminated by a bright sign that reads "VOTE FOR CHANGE". The crowd is dense and extends into the background, with many people looking towards the camera. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the glowing sign.

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## Congressional Elections Deliver a Progressive Mandate

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### SUMMARY

Twenty-nine out of the 31 Democratic congressional candidates who won seats previously held by Republicans in the House and Senate were real progressives who campaigned and won on progressive platforms. Voters didn't just elect Democrats, they elected progressive Democrats.

The 2008 election means a strong, 38-vote swing to the left in the House of Representatives and a 12-vote swing to the left in the Senate, compared to the current already-Democratic Congress. (When six progressives replace six conservatives, it creates a swing of 12 when members of Congress vote.)

The election of so many new progressive Democrats to the House and Senate represents a clear mandate for progressive change. In 2006, some commentators cited the victory of Heath Shuler, D-N.C., to argue that Democrats won because they campaigned as moderates or conservatives, not progressives. That argument cannot be made in 2008.

*Note: Although their issue positions are listed in the chart included in this report, the numbers in this report do not include Democrats whose races remain too close to call: Mark Begich (Arkansas Senate), Jim Martin (Georgia Senate) and Al Franken (Minnesota Senate).*

### STUDY FINDINGS

The Campaign for America's Future (CAF) researched the issue positions of U.S. House and Senate candidates in competitive races. *Needless to say, the economy was the overwhelming issue in the minds of voters.* In order to compare candidates across the nation, CAF selected six major economic issues that distinguish progressives from conservatives and moderates:

- quality, affordable **health care** for all;
- the **Employee Free Choice Act**, to remove obstacles to labor organizing;
- **progressive tax legislation** similar to Obama's (tax increase for the rich, cuts for the rest);
- a **trade position** that opposes NAFTA-style trade agreements;
- **opposition to Social Security privatization**; and
- a focus on developing **clean energy sources** over "drill baby drill."

Of the 25 Democrats who won U.S. House seats previously held by Republicans, 15 support the progressive position on all six issues, and another eight support the progressive side on five of the six issues. Subtract the four races where Republicans took Democratic seats (Florida 16th, Kansas 2nd, Louisiana 6th and Texas 22nd) and it's a reliable net gain of 19 votes (a swing of 38 votes) for progressive **economic** legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Of the six Democrats who won U.S. Senate seats previously held by Republicans, five support the progressive position on all six issues, and the other one supports the progressive side on five of the six issues. It's a solid net gain of six votes (a swing of 12 votes) for progressive legislation in the Senate.

## METHODOLOGY

This report analyzes elections where Democrats won Republican seats in the U.S. House and Senate. The study focuses on those seats because they demonstrate the *strong ideological shift* from the outgoing 110<sup>th</sup> to the incoming 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

To determine the ideology of Democratic and Republican candidates who are not currently members of Congress, CAF examined campaign web pages, newspaper articles, published interviews, television and radio commercials posted on the Internet, and endorsements from allied labor, health and trade organizations. Where candidates were incumbent members of Congress, CAF also researched floor votes on the issues.

The six issues examined were:

- **Health care:** A progressive candidate supports universal health care (usually “quality, affordable health care for all”).
- **Trade:** A progressive candidate supports “fair” rather than “free” trade, and oppose NAFTA-style agreements.
- **Energy:** A progressive candidate favors ending U.S. dependence on foreign oil primarily by creating and expanding new and clean energy production (rather than “drill, baby, drill”).
- **Workers Rights:** A progressive candidate favors the Employee Free Choice Act.
- **Taxes:** A progressive candidate favors an income tax cut for the middle-class and an income tax increase on the very top income earners.
- **Social Security:** A progressive candidate opposes private accounts as part of a Social Security reform.

In this analysis, an incoming member of Congress who favors the progressive position on at least five of these six issues is considered to be a solid progressive.

## RESULTS

*The 2008 election was a mandate for progressive economic change.* It was, in fact, a sea-change election that marked a turn from the failed philosophy of the past decades, an end of the Reagan era. 2008 marks the rejection of trickle-down economics and the embrace of policy designed to bring prosperity from the bottom up.

Democrats won 25 U.S. House seats and 6 Senate seats previously held by Republicans. Of those 31 winners:

- 29 promoted health coverage for all Americans (of those, 16 signed the HCAN statement);
- 28 favored fair-trade instead of free-trade (NAFTA-style) agreements;
- 30 promoted a green economy, on that ends our reliance on foreign oil, creates and expands new and clean energy production;
- 30 favored the Employee Free Choice Act which lowers procedural barriers for workers to unionize (of those, 30 were endorsed by AFL-CIO);
- 25 promoted a fair tax system for the middle-class similar to the Obama plan; and
- 29 explicitly rejected the privatization of Social Security.

## CANDIDATE STANDINGS

### Chart Legend

“Yes” means the candidate supports the progressive position. “No” means s/he opposes the progressive position. “?” means it is not clear from sources on the Internet whether the candidate supports or opposes the progressive position.

“AFL” means the candidate was endorsed by the AFL-CIO.

“GTW” means the candidate was identified as a progressive on trade by Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. See their detailed report “Election 2008: Fair Trade Gets An Upgrade” at <http://www.citizen.org/documents/ElectionReportFINAL.pdf>

“HCAN” means the candidate signed a statement declaring support for the Health Care for America Now! coalition’s progressive principles for health care. HCAN representatives got 133 House candidates and 16 Senate candidates to sign their statement. Twelve Democratic winners of Republican seats embraced HCAN’s principles. HCAN includes hundreds of national and grassroots groups working for “quality, affordable health care for all.” HCAN spent more than \$3 million running a TV ad, mail, and phone campaign in six congressional districts and in New Hampshire. For more about HCAN, see <http://healthcareforamericanow.org/page/s/which>.

Races that were too close to call as of publication time are shaded.

### House candidates

State-District	Winner	Health Care	Trade	Energy	Workers Rights	Taxes	Social Security	Winner Score	Loser (Inc = Incumbent)	Loser Score
AL-02	Bobby Bright (D)	No	Yes GTW	No	?	?	Yes	2	Jay Love (R)	2
AZ-01	Ann Kirkpatrick (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	?	Yes	5	Sydney Hay (R)	0
CO-04	Betsy Markey (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Marilyn Musgrave (R-Inc)	0
CT-04	Jim Hines (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Chris Shays (R-Inc)	2
FL-08	Alan Grayson (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	?	5	Ric Keller (R-Inc)	0
FL-24	Suzanne Kosmas (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Tom Feeney (R-Inc)	0
ID-01	Walt Minnick (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	?	?	4	Bill Sali (R-Inc)	0
IL-11	Debbie Halvorson (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Marty Ozinga (R)	2
MD-01	Frank Kratovil (D)	Yes	?	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Andy Harris (R)	0
MI-07	Mark Schauer (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Tim Walberg (R-Inc)	0
MI-09	Gary Peters (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Joe Knollenberg (R-Inc)	0
NJ-03	John Adler (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Chris Myers (R)	0
NC-08	Larry Kissell (D)	No	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Robin Hayes (R-Inc)	1
NM-01	Martin Heinrich (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Darren White (R)	0
NM-02	Harry Teague (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	?	Yes	5	Ed Tinsley (R)	0
NV-03	Dina Titus (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	?	Yes	5	Jon Porter (R-Inc)	0
NY-13	Michael McMahon (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Bob Stranieri (R)	0
NY-25	Dan Maffei (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Dale Sweetland (R)	0
NY-29	Eric Massa (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Randy Kuhl (R-Inc)	0
OH-01	Steve Driehaus (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Steve Chabot (R-Inc)	0
OH-16	John Bocchieri (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Kirk Schuring (R)	1
PA-03	Kathy Dahlkemper (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Phil English (R-Inc)	0
VA-05	Tom Perriello (D)	Yes	?	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Virgil Goode (R-Inc)	1
VA-02	Glenn Nye (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	No	Yes	5	Thelma Drake (R-Inc)	0
VA-11	Gerry Connolly (D)*	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Keith Fimian (R)	1

## Senate candidates

State	Winner	Health Care	Trade	Energy	Workers Rights	Taxes	Social Security	Score	Loser	Score
CO	Mark Udall (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Bob Schaffer (R)	0
NC	Kay Hagan (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Elizabeth Dole (R-Inc)	1
NH	Jeanne Shaheen (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	John Sununu (R-Inc)	1
NM	Tom Udall (D)	Yes	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Steve Pearce (R)	0
OR	Jeff Merkley (D)	Yes HCAN	?	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Gordon Smith (R-Inc)	1
VA	Mark Warner (D)	Yes HCAN	Yes GTW	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	6	Jim Gilmore (R)	0
AK	Mark Begich (D)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Ted Stevens (R-Inc)	0
GA	Jim Martin (D)	Yes	?	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Saxby Chambliss (R)	0
MN	Al Franken (D)	Yes	?	Yes	Yes AFL	Yes	Yes	5	Norm Coleman (R-Inc)	1

## FOOTNOTES

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## **Maryland**

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