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The Battle for America 2010: Campaigns State-by-State, Six Weeks To Go

On-the-scene reports from battleground races and states across the country, now including New York.

September 22, 2010 - by [Bryan Preston](#)

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CALIFORNIA

Key Race: Governor, U.S. Senate

Tim Daniel reporting:

In comparison to several races across the nation, the week past saw the Golden State enjoying a near golden silence. Don't blink though — you might have missed that Meg Whitman became the [\\$119 Million Dollar Woman](#) and smashed previous self-financed political race records. Whitman's foe [accepted the endorsement of](#), then [apologized to](#), Bill Clinton, while slamming "[Pinocchio](#)."

Closer to the southern border, California's 36th Congressional District candidate Mattie Fein claimed that the Good Ol' Boys in the GOP are repeating the Christine O'Donnell phenomenon. On this point, if her recent [op-ed](#) doesn't make your blood boil, nothing will. Don't forget to watch the [PJTV](#) clip that shows part of Mattie Fein's television spot, second only to John Dennis' "[Wicked Witch...](#)" Pelosi ad up in San Francisco.

[Yet another ad comes out of Fiorina-land](#). "Failure" seems to turn Boxer's main meme of attack on its head — the Fiorina camp goes after Boxer for becoming wealthy due to corrupt political insider connections and attempts to connect the dots to the stratospheric level of unemployment in many California counties.

In Proposition 19 news: [Bees in Sacramento say no](#) and [Golden Gaters say yes](#); it's also [round two in booze v. cannabis](#). Have you placed your bets?

Speaking of inebriating agents of change, Southern California tea party activists have created a new scoring system for the candidates this November in the Golden State. Called the Mad Men Passion Index, candidates are "scored" on inebriation and excitement levels — a sliding scale of five cocktails *and* cigarettes. A flat dud or a runaway success gets a [Proposition 19](#)-inspired marijuana joint rating or a brandy-and-cigar award, respectively. [Where would you put the candidates?](#)



CONNECTICUT

Key Race: U.S. Senate

[Jane Genova reporting:](#)

“Toss-up” is how the Cook Political Report [assesses](#) the Connecticut U.S. Senate race between state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal (D) and former WWE head Linda McMahon (R). That’s based partly on a Quinnipiac poll which found Blumenthal only six points ahead of McMahon. But polls differ. The Hamilton Campaigns Democratic poll has Blumenthal ahead by 15 points. Also, as his television commercials hammer, he’s a man of the people and well-liked. Therefore, this race will continue to be exciting.

McMahon’s strengthened position, though, is palpable. For instance, last week she had the confidence to keep a distance between her campaign and the Tea Party as well as Sarah Palin. When CT’s Channel 8 News brought up those subjects, [McMahon restricted the remarks](#) to what they all had in common: focus on fiscal discipline and smaller government. End of that story. She was equally restrained about President Barack Obama’s policies, characterizing them as “different” from hers.

Simultaneously, Blumenthal was [put on the defense](#) by the president’s fundraisers last week in the state. Given that the president’s Connecticut approval rating ranges from 45 to 52 percent, his presence was seen as a risk Blumenthal shouldn’t be taking.

On the other hand, the AG needs the money to neutralize the power of McMahon’s war chest from the WWE. She can afford plenty of television commercials, which are becoming more frequent and directly attack Blumenthal. One contends his policies have raised energy costs about \$1000 a year for residents.

Anything with a dollar sign attached resonates. Those 99 weeks of unemployment benefits are running out for 21,000 still jobless. Since 2008, the state has [lost 103,000 jobs and the recovery is just starting now](#) – and slowly. Given the grim economic times, it’s not surprising that the negative publicity surrounding the WWE, including the recent death of two former wrestlers, hasn’t hurt her.

Jane Genova is a [political blogger and communications consultant](#), New Haven, CT



FLORIDA

Key Races: Governor, U.S. Senate

[Stephanie Maier reporting:](#)

The latest [Rasmussen poll](#) from September 16 shows Marco Rubio (R) leading in the Florida U.S. Senate race with 41%, outgoing Governor Charlie Crist with 30%, and Democrat candidate Kendrick Meek trailing with 23%. Meanwhile, a [Fox News poll](#) shows an even larger margin between Rubio and Crist, at 43% and 27%, respectively.

What's \$10 million between friends? A lawsuit, that's what. Crist's problems in the polls may stem from his controversial decision to defect from the Republican Party in favor of independent status, a move that haunts him further since a Florida judge's ruling on September 15 denied the Crist campaign's request to dismiss a lawsuit alleging that the governor-turned-senatorial candidate refuses to refund up to \$10 million dollars in GOP donations since his change of party status. The case will be heard at a yet undecided date to determine whether Crist should return the funds.

In the governor's race, Rick Scott (R) has a [statistically insignificant lead](#) over state CFO Alex Sink (D), 47% to 45%, respectively.

The strategic tit-for-tat grows as Sink continues the tactic of running negative television campaign ads, reminding voters of Scott's negative ads that accuse Sink of being an extension of Obama politics.

Florida's Chamber of Commerce [endorsed](#) Rick Scott as their favored candidate, while the latest look at Alex Sink's [campaign page](#) shows a preponderance of anti-Scott headlines, comprising the first three out of four stories on their front page. Time will tell if the negative campaign strategy creates a gap in the currently tight race.



ILLINOIS

Key Race: U.S. Senate

[Bill Baar reporting:](#)

Last week Illinoisans found Alexi Giannoulias twice [endorsing](#) Libertarian Mark Labno as the only pro-life, pro-gun alternative to the moderate Mark Kirk.

Then on Monday Giannoulias foretold, with a Christine O'Donnell-like sorcerer's prediction (or was it a Chicago bookmaker's?), that Rove's dirty dollars were about to ... *flood the Chicago media market with more than \$300,000 in negative, false television ads.*

Kirk said Giannoulias's Rovian forecast was a revelation to him, and seemed to be [consulting](#) the oracles himself for advice on that DREAM Act: while Giannoulias says he supports the DREAM Act, Congressman Kirk is undecided.

Last week also saw Kirk's [first Spanish language ad](#) wherein he spoke Spanish while magically never uttering the words *mafia banquero*.

Illinois Green Party candidate LeAlan Jones added to our theater-in-the-prairie, [complaining](#) that NBC was blacking him out from the first Giannoulias-Kirk debate despite Jones' polls:

As the only African-American running this historically African-American U.S. Senate seat, I have been polling as high as 14% with 30% in Illinois' sizable African-American community. These are unprecedented levels for a Green Party candidate in a federal campaign.

And yet, your network is deliberately excluding me from this debate while it has been eager to cover the Tea Party and their "all-American" candidates.

As for the all-Americans, over the weekend five thousand plus conservatives, Republicans, Libertarians, and Tea Party activists united in mission at [Right Nation 2010](#).

Historian Gordon Wood's Americans of the [middling sorts](#) (with one dressed the part despite Glenn Beck's plea to stop the costumes because mainstream media always [lasers in on him](#)) cheered Beck and a host of other speakers. Americans for Prosperity's Phil Kerpen played Kirk's [lame-duck killer](#) strategy to the crowd. Channeling Illinois Review's Chris Robling's excellent [analysis](#) of the evening:

Phil Kerpen of Americans for Prosperity praised Mark Kirk. Phil noted that due to unelected senators, Mark is one of three Goppers poised to take office in time to thwart lame Democrat quacking after the election.

Mark's name brought a fair number of claps and only a few boo's, which I took as a victory for the capital-M Moderate. If Mark holds the conservatives, he will partake in what appears now to be an extraordinary tally and the Senate will be a better place.

My card reader's advising Kirk holds these limited-government, middling-sorts of Americans, and gains more. There's no GOP establishment left to fight in the Illinois GOP anyways. Kirk wins by five points or better is my bet. Now off to that bookmaker.

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Bryan Preston has been a leading conservative blogger and opinionator since founding his first blog in 2001. Bryan is a military veteran, worked for NASA, hails from Hot Air, was producer of

the Laura Ingraham Show and, most recently before joining PJM, was Communications Director of the Republican Party of Texas.

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