

Election Time: CA-Senate

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 29, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

UPDATE (10/25): The Real Clear Politics Polling average has Boxer leading Fiorina by 2.5 percent, with almost all polls showing a slight lead for Boxer. But, most polls are within the margin of error and the Cook Political Report and RCP both rate the race as a "toss-up." Nate Silver's model at fivethirtyeight.com nonetheless only gives Fiorina a 19% chance of taking the seat based on both the large number of polls conducted in this race and the nearness to election day.

Neither candidate has run a particularly noteworthy ad, nor produced a defining debate moment, and it is difficult to think at this late date any news would affect this race in particular. California is a blue state that, despite being hit hard by the recession, would need more of a reason to vote Republican this year.

ORIGINAL POST: If you wanted to decide whether or not to live in California, and drew up two columns, one with the "pros" and other with the "cons," I suppose that earthquakes would top the list of cons. (And proximity to great wineries the list of pros.) But, the second best reason to not live in California is the lousy choices the voters get in statewide elections. I can understand this for the governorship, a job that has become undoable over the years as Sacramento has fallen prey to a host of voter initiatives that have so circumscribed the legislature, there is little to be done about the fiscal mess the state faces. But, why does the largest state in America have such lousy candidates for its U.S. Senate seat?

The incumbent, Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer revealed that side of her that voters like least about politicians in a now famous exchange during a Senate hearing. The officer addressed Boxer as "ma'am" and she asked that he refer to her as "Senator" because she had worked so hard to get the post. Yuck.

Boxer is also one of the most ridiculous pro-choice champions in either house of the national legislature. She repeats the old, and intellectually lazy, trope about how she doesn't believe government should legislate on a matter that should be left to the woman to decide, a position that rigs the game. If the issue is only about a woman's privacy, then of course no one can tell her what to do with her body, but the privacy claim ignores the reality that another person's rights are involved, those of the unborn child. She opposes any and all efforts to limit the right to abortion, including the Hyde Amendment, which has the great value of expressing the ambivalence about abortion that many Americans feel. For Boxer, there is no ambivalence. She is all for tolerance, except when the views and beliefs of religiously minded citizens are at issue.

Carly Fiorina, her GOP opponent, is no fire-breathing Tea Partyer. In fact, she beat out a Tea Party candidate to get the GOP nod in a primary. But, Fiorina is something worse, the most obvious example of a kind of candidate whose resume in business is presented as a qualification for public office. The skills and competencies needed to run a large, modern corporation may be of some use for an executive position in the government but they have little to commend themselves for a legislative position. It is her ideas that matter, and her knowledge of government, and her public philosophy, and her willingness to compromise and negotiate. A CEO does not have to work with 99 others, of equal rank, to give effect to her ideas. A CEO does not have to deal with issues of public justice and social morality. A CEO does not have to possess a public philosophy. What we know from

Fiorina's resume as a CEO is that she has a large personality and a certain kind of effectiveness, but one that may or may not be suited to the halls of Congress.

Indeed, Fiorina's decisions as CEO are the biggest reason Boxer appears to be pulling ahead in the race. Boxer has run ads pointing out that Fiorina cut jobs at her company. Now, those job cuts may have been justified for business reasons, but the business culture that sees labor as a commodity has rightly earned the scorn of millions of middle class Americans whose detestation of big business is scarcely less than their disgust with big government. If you live by the capitalist sword, be prepared to die by the capitalist sword.

The amount of money being spent in the California race is staggering. As of the last reporting deadlines with the FEC at the end of June, Boxer had raised \$19 million and Fiorina had raised \$10 million. Boxer did not have a primary challenger, so she had some \$10 million cash-on-hand at the time while Fiorina had dropped below \$1 million. In the governor's race, Meg Whitman has spent \$100 million on her race!

It will be curious to see if the Republican "Super PACs" and the RNC throw money into the race. The recent polls make it unlikely. The RealClearPolitics [average of polls](#) [1] has Boxer up by 6 points and they rate the race "Lean Dem." The Cook Political Report still has the race as a Toss-up. I suspect Boxer will win, but I am hardly happy about it.

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[1] http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2010/senate/ca/california_senate_boxer_vs_fiorina-1094.html