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Q & A: Schneck, Stephanopoulos, Green, Dionne, Jones & Rotondaro

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 1, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

This is an unusual week, so I am doing something different for Q & A.

Today, I asked a group of experts to look into their crystal balls and predict a surprise from the results on Tuesday. Here is what the experts predict:

Professor Stephen Schneck, Director of the Institute for Policy research and Catholic Studies [1] at the Catholic University of America: One race that has not received much attention is the Oregon governor's race, which is a statistical dead heat in all polls. But I think out on the West Coast we're starting to see the beginnings of real reaction against the Tea Party message that will help some Democrats. So, the upset I predict is Democrat John Kitzhaber beating Republican Chris Dudley in a squeaker.

George Stephanopoulos, Host of ABC?s Good Morning America: I?ll take McAdams in the Alaska Senate race.

CUA Politics Professor Matt Green: If any race will offer a surprise victory for a Democrat, it may well be the Pennsylvania Senate race. Sestak remains behind in the polls, but the race has tightened up considerably; and, as Sestak showed in his primary defeat of Arlen Specter earlier this year, he has the tenacity and skill ? especially near Election Day ? to beat his opponent.?

Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne: Like you, and probably for many of the reasons you have already shared with your readers, I will be closely following Tom Perriello?s race in Virginia. If he pulls it out, his campaign will be long-studied for how a progressive candidate can stick to his principles and still win a very conservative district. I will also be keeping track of how well the Tea Party-oriented Senate candidates will do in Alaska, Delaware, Colorado, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Kentucky. If the Tea Party candidates lose in the bulk of these races, as I argued in a recent column, it will be much harder for our conservative friends to claim this election as a clear ideological mandate. If most of them win, we liberals will have lot of thinking to do and Mitch McConnell will have an extremely interesting life next year. I will be particularly interested if Joe Sestak wins in Pennsylvania, because he has run a campaign not unlike Perriello?s. Lastly -- for parochial reasons given my roots, but also because it will be a good measure of how deeply Republicans have penetrated Democratic territory -- I will be watching to see how many House seats the Republicans pick up in New England. There is not one Republican in the entire New England delegation going into the election.

Robert P. Jones, CEO of Public Religion Research Institute [2]: The Alaska senate race promises to be a drawn-out, perhaps surprising affair. GOP nominee Joe Miller, the Tea Party candidate backed by Sarah Palin, looked early on to have the edge over defeated GOP incumbent turned write-in candidate Lisa Murkowski and a comfortable lead over Democratic nominee Scott McAdams. But polls through late October show the race tightening up and Miller's edge slipping in what is now a bona fide three-way race. The wildcard: the complicated spelling of Murkowski's name, which must be written in. To complicate things further, the list of eligible write-in candidates has swelled from half a dozen or so to 150 in the last week after a conservative radio host who supports Miller urged people to register, and some have similar names. Any outcome is a story. If

Miller wins, it's another Tea Party victory over a Republican incumbent. If the write-in candidate slot has the most votes, we're sure to see every ballot scrutinized and challenged by her opponents (with hair-splitting logic attempting to discern "voter intent" reminiscent of hanging chads); and if Murkowski prevails, she'll be the first person ever to win a senate seat by write-in vote. Finally, if McAdams wins, it will be an example of the intramural GOP-Tea Party tug of war handing a seat to a long-shot Democratic candidate.

Fred Rotondaro, Chairman of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good [3]: Virginia Democratic Congressman Tom Perriello will prove that honesty and guts still matter to voters. Despite being targeted by literally millions in attack ads, he will pull off an upset and be re-elected.

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