

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

November 3, 2010 at 8:26am

Surprise Winners? Sens. Brown, Snowe, Nelson, etc.

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Distinctly Catholic

The election of Tea Party favorites like Rand Paul and Marco Rubio to the Senate holds out the prospect of trouble for the GOP. They may have won big last night, but there is an unresolved civil war within the Republican ranks, between the Tea Party extremists and more moderate elements. Certainly, GOP Senate leader Mitch McConnell is aware of the fact that if the Tea Party candidates in Delaware and Nevada had not defeated more moderate Republicans in the primaries, he might be the new majority leader next year.

The Democrats, too, must wrestle with last night's results. Yes, they maintained their hold on the Senate, but they need to realize that this result was in large part due to the fact that only 37 seats were up for grabs. If all 100 seats were on the ballot yesterday, the Republicans would undoubtedly be in control of the upper chamber as well.

A more even partisan distribution in the Senate makes it even more difficult to achieve the magic number of 60 votes needed to avoid a filibuster in the Senate. This gives enormous power to those Senate moderates of both political parties who wish to actually govern. If Republican Senators Scott Brown, Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, and Lisa Murkowski form a coalition with moderate Democrats like Senators Ben Nelson, Tom Carper, Joe Manchin, Joe Lieberman and Kristin Gillibrand, they can deliver the necessary votes to whichever party is most willing to work with them.

Virtually nothing about the electioneering of the past months suggests there is going to be an outburst of bipartisan fervor in the coming months, but if it is going to happen, it will be because of these moderate senators from both parties who may actually be more interested in governing than posturing.

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