

FLORIDA

Sen. Marco Rubio (R) vs. Rep. Patrick Murphy (D)



Rubio **Murphy**
» The storyline: Five months ago, Rubio had dreams of a matchup with Clinton. Murphy had dreams of a matchup with a beatable Republican. Neither happened. And it could be Trump's rise to the GOP nomination for president (and not Rubio's) that is credited with saving Florida's Senate seat for the Republicans.
» Who's up? Rubio, by enough.

ILLINOIS

Sen. Mark Kirk (R) vs. Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D)



Kirk **Duckworth**
» The storyline: There was no room for error if Kirk were to hold this seat in deep blue Illinois. Then came the error. Kirk, during a debate with Duckworth last week, used his opponent's Thai heritage in a jab that went wrong. Duckworth, already respected for her military service and work in Congress, should be a lock.
» Who's up? It's Illinois. The Democrat.

INDIANA

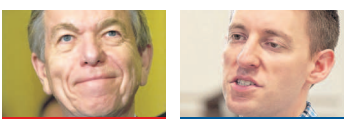
Rep. Todd Young (R) vs. Evan Bayh (D)



Young **Bayh**
» The storyline: This isn't the Indiana that Bayh knew as a governor and senator. What was supposed to be a triumphant return to the Senate by the popular Democratic politician has turned into a Republican pile-on. A 20-point lead in the polls has been wiped out. A certain gain for the Democrats is in doubt.
» Who's up? It's a tie.

MISSOURI

Sen. Roy Blunt (R) vs. Jason Kander (D)



Blunt **Kander**
» The storyline: The Democrats fielded a strong candidate in red Missouri. Kander, a 35-year-old military veteran, got national attention for an ad where he touted tougher gun laws while assembling an AR-15 — blindfolded. His strength as a candidate has moved a safe red state to a tossup.
» Who's up? Blunt, barely.

NEVADA

Catherine Cortez Masto (D) vs. Rep. Joe Heck (R)



Cortez Masto **Heck**
» The storyline: This is the Republicans' only chance to steal a seat from the Democrats, specifically retiring Sen. Harry Reid. A win by Heck here would force Democrats to win at least five of the other key races. President Obama got involved during a campaign stop, criticizing Heck for only recently withdrawing his support for Trump.
» Who's up? Both. Depends on the poll.

BATTLE FOR THE SENATE

BY JASON SNYDER • BH MEDIA NEWS SERVICE

Two years ago, Republicans wrested control of the Senate from the Democrats by winning back seats in traditionally red states that had gone blue during President Barack Obama's historic campaign of 2008.

Now, two years later, the script is flipped.

Of the 34 Senate seats that are contested this year, 24 belong to Republican senators. Seven of those Republican seats reside in states carried by Obama in 2012. Six of those belong to first-term Republicans who swept into power with the Tea Party wave of 2010. So, what's that all mean? It means they're vulnerable.

The Republican victories of 2014 give the GOP a 54-46 advantage in the Senate heading into Nov. 8. How many seats Democrats would need to win on Election Day to regain control of the chamber will depend on who wins the White House, given the newly elected vice president would break a 50-50 tie. With a Hillary Clinton victory, Democrats would need a net gain of four seats to win the majority. With a Donald Trump victory, they'd need a net gain of five seats.

Given the built-in advantages for Democrats in presidential election years with increased turnout and a more diverse electorate, it's achievable. Add in the political gymnastics these Republican candidates have had to perform to answer for their support (or lack of support) of their party's presidential nominee, and everything points to a Democratic takeover.

But this slate of Republican candidates has been resilient. Almost all of them are outperforming Trump in polling. Ohio and Florida, which were supposed to be nailbiters, are looking like Republican holds. Harry Reid's Nevada seat could actually be a GOP pickup. And Sens. Kelly Ayotte (N.H.) and Pat Toomey (Pa.) are keeping things even in blue-leaning states.

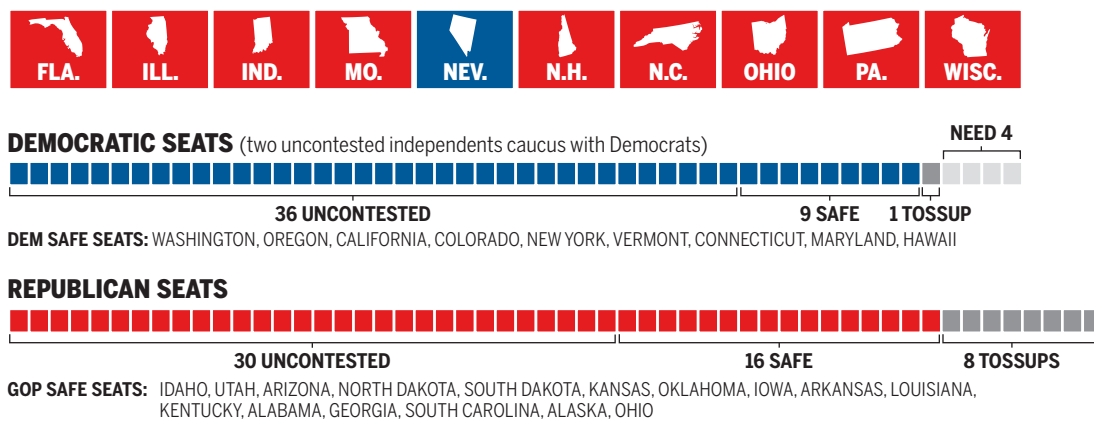
Democratic pickups in Illinois and Wisconsin look assured, though. Republican incumbents are struggling to hold onto the must-win red states of North Carolina and Missouri. And Evan Bayh has put Indiana in play.

Here's a look at the 10 key races that will determine which party will control the Senate.

The race to 50 ... or 51

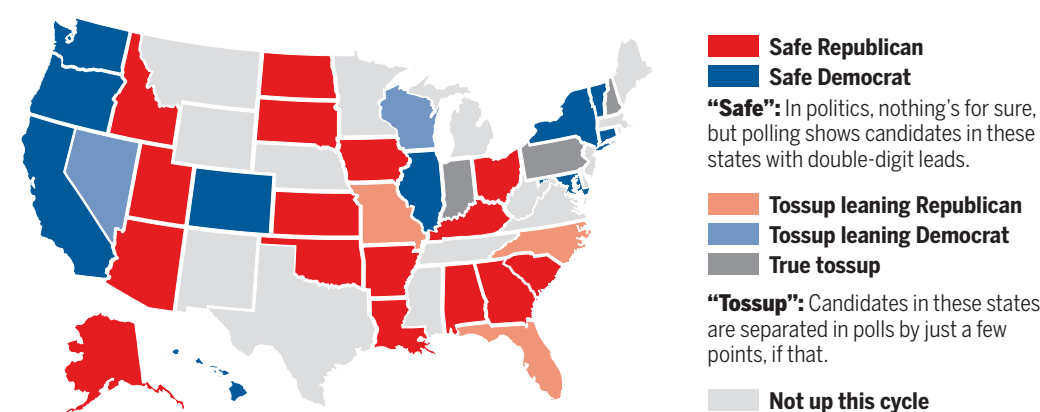
Short of a major Election Night surprise, control of the U.S. Senate will come down to 10 key races.

THE KEY RACES (Republican seats in red; Democratic seat in blue)



Where they're leaning

Based on recent polling, here's where the key races stand in the 34 contested Senate races.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R) vs. Gov. Maggie Hassan (D)



Ayotte **Hassan**
» The storyline: Two popular women being weighed down by the unpopularity of their parties' nominees. Ayotte has had to walk back her support of Trump. Hassan has struggled to answer questions about whether she trusts Clinton. If there's one race that is likely to tip the balance of the Senate, it's this one.
» Who's up? Who knows?

NORTH CAROLINA

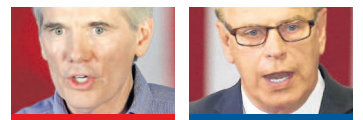
Sen. Richard Burr (R) vs. Deborah Ross (D)



Burr **Ross**
» The storyline: This wasn't supposed to be close. Burr, the early favorite, is trying to fend off a charge by Ross. Burr shares the ballot with two unpopular Republicans — Trump and Gov. Pat McCrory, who still faces fallout from his decision to sign HB2, a state bill blocking local anti-discrimination laws.
» Who's up? Burr, narrowly.

OHIO

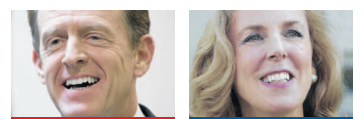
Sen. Rob Portman (R) vs. Ted Strickland (D)



Portman **Strickland**
» The storyline: This was supposed to be close, but it's not. The Republican incumbent is popular in the Buckeye State. And it's become evident in this race that Strickland's 2010 defeat in the governor's race was no fluke. Long expected to be a battle between two Ohio heavyweights, this will be a GOP hold.
» Who's up? Portman by a mile.

PENNSYLVANIA

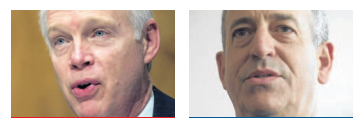
Sen. Pat Toomey (R) vs. Katie McGinty (D)



Toomey **McGinty**
» The storyline: Toomey's a 2010 Tea Party candidate who's shifted to the center over his term, even bucking the NRA on proposed gun legislation after Sandy Hook. He's stayed mum on whether he supports Trump, knowing he'll need a coalition of pro- and anti-Trump voters.
» Who's up? Nobody. The RealClearPolitics average has McGinty up 0.2 points.

WISCONSIN

Sen. Ron Johnson (R) vs. Russ Feingold (D)



Johnson **Feingold**
» The storyline: If there's one race that best exemplifies the story of the 2016 Senate fight, it's this one. The same two men, a different story. Ron Johnson rode the Tea Party wave of 2010 to victory over then-Sen. Russ Feingold. But this time, it's Feingold who will benefit from the higher voter turnout of a presidential election year.
» Who's up? Feingold, comfortably.