

State-by-State Analysis of the 2006 Gubernatorial Elections

McKenna Long & Aldridge's Government Affairs strategists have been closely monitoring the 2006 gubernatorial elections across the country. While every person, ourselves included, has personal opinions and preferences about these electoral contests, we understand that the outcomes of these elections will have an impact on business and public policy issues of importance to our clients and friends. The following report reflects our team's joint analysis of these races.

Republicans currently control 28 of the governorships, but with 36 gubernatorial elections this fall, Democrats have a chance to take control of a majority of statehouses in the November elections. This is due to a combination of more Republican governorships that are up for election (22 Republicans versus 14 Democrats), more open Republican seats (8 Republicans versus 1 open Democrat), and national political trends.

Given the number of term-limited and retiring governors, there will be a minimum of 9 new governors (Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, and Ohio). Given the current status of the elections, it appears that there likely will be at least several more, in addition to a number of states where party control will switch.

The chart below summarizes the status of each of these races at this point in time. Note that of the 14 states where there is no race in 2006, 8 are controlled by Democrats and 6 are controlled by Republicans. Note also that the italicized states currently have Republican governors.

Safe Democrat	Lean Democrat	Toss-Up	Lean Republican	Safe Republican
(8)	(4)	(9)	(7)	(8)
Arizona	<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Arkansas</i>	<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Alabama</i>
Kansas	Illinois	Iowa	<i>California</i>	<i>Connecticut</i>
New Hampshire	<i>Ohio</i>	Maine	<i>Florida</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
New Mexico	Pennsylvania	<i>Maryland</i>	<i>Georgia</i>	<i>Idaho</i>
<i>New York</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>	<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Nebraska</i>
Oklahoma		Michigan	<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>S. Carolina</i>
Tennessee		<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>Texas</i>	<i>S. Dakota</i>
Wyoming		Oregon		<i>Vermont</i>
		Wisconsin		

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Toss-Up States

Arkansas

Attorney General Mike Beebe (D) is facing former Congressman and former head of the Drug Enforcement Agency Asa Hutchinson (R) in what likely will be a close race. Beebe is a veteran Arkansas politician, is a strong fundraiser and is benefiting from the fact that Republicans have controlled the Arkansas governor's mansion for over a decade. Nevertheless, Hutchinson has impressive credentials, and should not be underestimated. Polls show Beebe currently has a small lead.

Iowa

The race to replace Tom Vilsack (D) is between Secretary of State Chet Culver (D) and Congressman Jim Nussle (R). Culver ran strong in a close primary, but will have his hands full taking on the eight-term Congressman. Polls show the race is very tight.

Maine

Incumbent Governor John Baldacci (D) faces a tough race against State Senator Chandler Woodcock (R), whose polling numbers have recently been boosted by independent expenditures on his behalf.

Maryland

Incumbent Governor Bob Ehrlich (R) faces a very difficult reelection campaign in this solidly blue state. He is being challenged by Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D) who escaped a bruising primary when his opponent dropped out of the race for medical reasons in June. Polls show O'Malley has a lead over Ehrlich, but Ehrlich has a large war chest and is personally popular, which could enable his campaign to reverse the current position.

Massachusetts

Lt. Governor Kerry Healey (R) is facing Deval Patrick, former Assistant U.S. Attorney General for Civil Rights under President Clinton, in the race to succeed Mitt Romney (R), who chose not to run for reelection. Massachusetts is a blue state that has had a Republican governor for nearly 16 years, and Patrick led Healey in pre-primary polls. However, this represents his first run for elective office, and he is viewed as very liberal, so this race is not over yet.

Michigan

Incumbent Governor Jennifer Granholm (D) has had a challenging tenure, and she is one of the Democrats most vulnerable incumbents. Her recent lead over business executive Dick Devos (R) in recent polls is within the margin of error. Devos has run ads claiming his business experience is what the state needs. This likely will be a very close election.

Minnesota

Incumbent Governor Tim Pawlenty (R) is in a very close race in his bid for a second term. Polls show he is running neck and neck with Attorney General Mike Hatch (D). The Independence Party is fielding a candidate, Peter Hutchinson, who is polling in the single digits.

Oregon

Incumbent Governor Ted Kulongoski (D) narrowly won his party's primary, and will face attorney Ron Saxton (R), who also narrowly won his party's primary, in the general election. Kulongoski received a boost when a formidable independent candidate decided against entering the race, which would have likely siphoned Democratic votes from Kulongoski. The incumbent governor has a small lead in polls, but given Saxton's moderate credentials, the race is not over.

Wisconsin

Incumbent Governor Jim Doyle (D) has had to deal with a tough economy and faces perhaps the most difficult reelection campaign of any Democratic Governor. He is facing Congressman Mark Green (R), and polls show this race is quite close, with Doyle having a recent lead that is within the margin of error.

Lean Republican

Alaska

Incumbent Governor Frank Murkowski (R) has had a turbulent tenure as governor, and was defeated in the August Republican primary, where he finished third. The winner of the primary, former Mayor of Wasilla and former Chairman of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, Sarah Palin, will take on former two-term Governor Tony Knowles (D) in the general election. While Knowles was a popular governor, Alaska is a heavily Republican state, and Palin showed such strength in the primary that she should be considered the favorite to win.

California

Despite the fact that California is a blue state and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has suffered some political defeats, State Treasurer Phil Angelides (D) continues to be viewed as an underdog. Schwarzenegger has shown himself to be a skilled and durable politician, and his movement to the political middle since the defeat of the ballot initiatives he supported has increased his support from moderate voters. Angelides may be hurt from leftover bad feelings from a bruising primary, negative publicity from his career as a developer, his vow during the primary to raise taxes on the wealthy, and from being outspent by Schwarzenegger. This race could still shift, but for now Schwarzenegger is polling ahead.

Florida

After serving as governor for two terms, Jeb Bush (R) is ineligible to run again. Attorney General Charlie Crist (R) is favored in the general election over Congressman Jim Davis (D), though given Florida's demographics and the experience of Davis, the race could tighten. Crist has a substantial funding edge over Davis.

Georgia

Governor Sonny Perdue (R) continues to have a significant lead over Lt. Governor Mark Taylor (D), and enjoys a large fundraising advantage. Though Taylor is a proven and veteran campaigner, his campaign has not closed the gap since the July primary. Perdue's win in 2002 was the biggest upset in the country among governors. It will take a similar effort by Taylor to prevail in 2006.

Nevada

Congressman Jim Gibbons (R) is facing Senate Minority Leader Dina Titus (D) in the race to succeed term-limited Governor Kenny Guinn (R). Polls show Gibbons has a single-digit lead.

Rhode Island

Incumbent Governor Don Carcieri (R) is facing Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty (D) in his reelection campaign. Rhode Island is a very Democratic state that has had a Republican governor for over a decade, but Carcieri is still viewed as the favorite in what likely will be a close contest.

Texas

Incumbent Governor Rick Perry (R) is being challenged by Congressman Chris Bell (D), State Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn (I, former Republican), and singer/cowboy Kinky Friedman (I). Polls show Perry is not popular (he is polling around 40%), but given the strong Republican leanings of Texas, the fact that Perry is well-funded, and the fact that he only needs to receive a plurality of the vote, his reelection seems likely. At one time it appeared that Strayhorn had a chance of winning, but her campaign has stagnated.

Lean Democratic

Colorado

Former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter (D) is taking on Congressman Bob Beauprez (R) in the race to succeed incumbent Governor Bill Owens (R). Ritter's strengths include his moderate credentials, his Denver base, and the recent gains of Democrats in Colorado. Beauprez is a veteran politico who is expected to wage a tough campaign. Recent polls show Ritter with a lead, but with a large number of

undecided voters.

Illinois

Governor Ron Blagojevich (D) is polling well ahead of his opponent, state treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R). Topinka, a moderate, has not been as strong a candidate as some thought she would, and Blagojevich has a fundraising advantage.

Ohio

The race to succeed term-limited Bob Taft (R) is between Congressman Ted Strickland (D) and Ken Blackwell (R). Strickland is waging an aggressive campaign, and it appears that Blackwell's association with the unpopular outgoing governor, in addition to voter fatigue with many years of Republican rule, is helping Democrats. Recent polls show Strickland with a decent lead, but this race could tighten, as Blackwell is well-funded and this is a swing state.

Pennsylvania

Lynn Swann (R), a former NFL player for the Pittsburgh Steelers, is challenging incumbent Governor Ed Rendell (D) in his reelection bid. Swann only trails Rendell by single digits in a recent poll. Given Rendell's proven ability to raise money, campaign tirelessly, and connect with voters, he is favored to hang on to his narrow lead, though the race will likely remain close.

Safe Democratic

Arizona

Incumbent Governor Janet Napolitano (D) has been an effective and relatively popular governor. She currently has a significant lead over her opponent, attorney Len Munsil (R).

Kansas

Incumbent Governor Kathleen Sebelius (D) is heavily favored in her race against State Senator Jim Barnett (R).

New Hampshire

Incumbent Governor John Lynch (D) has a huge polling lead over his opponent, State House Member Jim Coburn (R).

New Mexico

Incumbent Governor Bill Richardson (D) has a large lead over challenger John Dendahl (R), a former chair of the State Republican party, in what is not expected to be a close race.

New York

The highly popular but controversial Attorney General of New York, Eliot Spitzer (D), is expected to roll to an overwhelming victory in the November over former State Assembly Minority Leader John Faso (R).

Oklahoma

Though Oklahoma is a conservative state, incumbent Governor Brad Henry (D) has a large lead over Congressman Ernest Istook (R).

Tennessee

Incumbent Governor Phil Bredesen (D) appears to be headed for an easy reelection over State Senator Jim Bryson (R).

Wyoming

Governor Dave Freudenthal (D) does not appear to be in any danger of losing to his opponent, Ray Hunkins (R), a former marine and law enforcement officer.

Safe Republican

Alabama

After defeating State Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore in the primary, incumbent Governor Bob Riley (R) should comfortably win reelection over Lt. Governor Lucy Baxley.

Connecticut

Governor Jodi Rell (R) leads her opponent, New Haven Mayor John DeStefano (D), by a large margin.

Hawaii

Linda Lingle (R), the incumbent Governor, has a large lead over all the potential Democratic challengers, who will be chosen in a late-September primary.

Idaho

Congressman Butch Otter (R) is expected to cruise to victory over his opponent, newspaper publisher Jerry Brady (D).

Nebraska

Incumbent Governor Dave Heineman (R) should easily defeat David Hahn (D), an attorney and businessman.

South Carolina

Incumbent Governor Mark Sanford (R) should easily win reelection in this very conservative state.

South Dakota

Incumbent Governor Mike Rounds (R) should have no trouble winning reelection over former State Representative Jack Billion (D).

Vermont

Incumbent Governor Jim Douglas (R) is not expected to face a difficult race against Scudder Parker (D), a former State Senator.

For more information on these contests or if you would like to discuss how the outcomes may affect public policy issues of concern to you, please contact [Eric Tanenblatt](#), [Keith Mason](#), [Marcia Hale](#), [Jeff Miller](#), [Lawton Jordan](#) or any of the strategists in our [National Government Affairs practice](#).

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