

## Updated State-by-State Analysis of the 2006 Gubernatorial Elections

In September, McKenna Long & Aldridge's Government Affairs strategists published an analysis of the 36 gubernatorial elections that will be held this fall. Since that time, the dynamics of a number of races have changed, and this revised analysis reflects recent developments. As noted previously, while the individual views and preferences of our strategists vary, this analysis represents the consensus view of the MLA Government Affairs team.

As we noted in our first report, Republicans currently control 28 of the nation's governorships. It now appears likely that Democrats will control a majority of the statehouses after the November 7th elections. Republicans are defending more seats, have a greater number of retiring governors and have been hurt by national political trends in recent weeks. It should be noted, however, that while recent national political news has not favored Republicans, prospects for Republicans may improve if news coverage shifts to other topics.

The chart below summarizes the status of each of these races. The italicized states currently have Republican governors; the status of the states in bold has changed since the last report.

### CONTACTS

If you would like more information, please contact any of the McKenna Long & Aldridge attorneys or public policy advisors with whom you regularly work. You may also contact:

**Eric Tanenblatt**  
Sr. Managing Director  
404.527.8114

**Keith Mason**  
Partner  
404.527.4930

**Marcia Hale**  
Managing Director  
202.496.7806

**Jeffrey Miller**  
Managing Director  
916.832.2498

**Lawton Jordan**  
Associate  
404.527.4922

Safe Democrat (10)	Leans Democrat (4)	Toss-Up (7)	Leans Republican (7)	Safe Republican (8)
Arizona	<b>Arkansas</b>	Iowa	<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Alabama</i>
Kansas	<i>Colorado</i>	Maine	<i>California</i>	<i>Connecticut</i>
New Hampshire	Illinois	<i>Maryland</i>	<i>Florida</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
New Mexico	<b>Massachusetts</b>	Michigan	<i>Georgia</i>	<i>Idaho</i>
<i>New York</i>		<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Nebraska</i>
<b>Ohio</b>		Oregon	<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>S. Carolina</i>
Oklahoma		Wisconsin	<i>Texas</i>	<i>S. Dakota</i>
<b>Pennsylvania</b>				<i>Vermont</i>
Tennessee				
Wyoming				

## **Toss-Up States**

### ***Iowa***

According to a recent poll, it appears that Secretary of State Chet Culver (D) has a small lead over Congressman Jim Nussle (R). Culver has been attacking Nussle for his tenure in Congress and leadership position as chair of the House Budget Committee. Nussle has accused Culver of being inexperienced and unqualified for the job of governor. It appears that Nussle's support among Republican and independent voters has weakened in the last month. This race will likely go down to the wire.

### ***Maine***

The presence of a Green party candidate and an independent candidate is hurting Governor John Baldacci (D) in his bid for reelection, as is Maine's weak economy. Independent expenditures on behalf of State Senator Chandler Woodcock (R) have helped the Republican nominee, and seem likely to continue in this very close race. In recent weeks, both President Clinton and Howard Dean have campaigned for Baldacci, while Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney has appeared for Woodcock.

### ***Maryland***

Incumbent Governor Bob Ehrlich (R) is waging an aggressive campaign for reelection in this blue state, but continues to slightly trail Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D). Ehrlich has tried to focus the campaign on O'Malley's alleged shortcomings as Mayor of Baltimore. O'Malley has defended his record while attempting to link Ehrlich to President Bush. Ehrlich remains well-liked by voters, and in 2002 he performed better on election day than polls had indicated he would. For these reasons, this race remains a Toss-up.

### ***Michigan***

Incumbent Governor Jennifer Granholm (D) has maintained her single digit lead over businessman Dick DeVos (R). Michigan's economy has had a tough time during Granholm's tenure, and DeVos has made this a central part of his campaign. DeVos has said the state needs someone with his business background, but Granholm has attempted to make this a liability by attacking the practices of businesses DeVos was involved with. Given the resiliency shown by Granholm's campaign in the last month, she is slightly ahead but this race could still go either way.

### ***Minnesota***

The race here is very fluid and remains a Toss-up. Incumbent Governor Tim Pawlenty (R) has faced an unexpectedly difficult challenge from Attorney General Mike Hatch (D). Making this race even harder to handicap is the presence of an Independence Party candidate (Peter Hutchinson), who is polling at 7%, and appears to be drawing more Democratic than Republican votes.

### ***Oregon***

Incumbent Governor Ted Kulongoski (D) continues to poll slightly ahead of challenger Ron Saxton (R), but this race is very close. Oregon has not had a Republican governor in more than 20 years, and voter fatigue with years of Democratic rule seems to be hurting the incumbent governor. Saxton has sought to portray Kulongoski as a do-nothing governor, while Kulongoski has been hammering Saxton's tenure as Chair of the Portland Public School Board.

### ***Wisconsin***

The governor's race in Wisconsin remains a Toss-up. Most polls have shown incumbent Governor Jim Doyle (D) with a single digit lead over Congressman Mark Green (R). Doyle has criticized Green's congressional voting record as being too aligned with President Bush, while Green has aired advertisements focusing on a state employee convicted of steering a state contract to Doyle contributors. The presence of a Green party candidate on the ballot could hurt Doyle in what is expected to be a close election.

## **Leans Republican**

### ***Alaska***

Polls show that Tony Knowles (D) continues to trail Sarah Palin (R), but that he has narrowed the gap. Knowles, a former two-term governor, has been touting his experience and casting doubt upon whether Palin, the former Mayor of Wasilla, is up to the job. Palin, however, is fighting back, and still must be considered the favorite in this very red state. The candidates are scheduled to appear jointly (along with the independent candidate) on multiple occasions before the election, so this race is far from over.

### ***California***

Very little has changed in the California governor's race over the past month. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) continues to hover at (or just under) the 50% mark in most polls, while State Treasurer Phil Angelides (D) is below 40%. Angelides has proved no match for Schwarzenegger's star power, failing to achieve a breakthrough that would stir excitement among his core constituencies or with independent voters, among whom the incumbent Governor has a nearly 20 point lead.

### ***Florida***

This race remains relatively unchanged from last month. Congressman Jim Davis (D) continues to trail Attorney General Charlie Crist (R) by double digits. Crist is running a cautious campaign, appropriate for a well-funded frontrunner. Davis has run a credible campaign but has shown no signs of catching fire, which is what he will need to do in order to catch Crist.

### ***Georgia***

Governor Sonny Perdue continues to have a large lead over Lt. Governor Mark Taylor. The candidates have traded ethics charges, but this does not seem to be swaying voters in large numbers. Taylor has been hurt by the failure of his primary opponent to endorse him and apathy among core Democratic voters. Perdue is aided by a strong grassroots organization, as well as a significant funding edge. Taylor's best hope at this point appears to be holding Perdue to under 50% in the general election (there is one minor candidate in the race) and forcing a run-off. Perdue is Georgia's first Republican governor in 130 years, and this will be a watershed election that tests the strength of Georgia's Republican conversion.

### ***Nevada***

With a single-digit lead in most polls, five-term Congressman Jim Gibbons (R) appeared to be headed toward a victory over State Senate Minority Leader Dina Titus (D). However, recent allegations, unequivocally denied by Gibbons, that he acted inappropriately towards a woman outside of a Las Vegas restaurant have added uncertainty into this race. The final outcome could depend upon whether this story continues to receive media attention, and how the public reacts. Polls had shown Gibbons doing well among female voters, and any erosion of this support would hurt his campaign.

### ***Rhode Island***

A very blue state, Rhode Island has not elected a Democrat governor since 1990, and this appears to have hindered the reelection prospects of incumbent Governor Don Carcieri (R) who is being challenged by Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty (D). Polls indicate the race is relatively close, but most observers believe Carcieri will emerge victorious.

### ***Texas***

This race is relatively unchanged from last month. Governor Rick Perry (R) appears to be beatable, but not when facing three opponents, as he is this year (Congressman Chris Bell (D), State Treasurer Carole Keeton Strayhorn (I, former Republican), and singer/cowboy Kinky Friedman (I)). To win, a candidate only needs a plurality of the vote, and with all three of his challengers polling in the teens, Perry appears to be in no danger of losing.

## **Leans Democrat**

### ***Arkansas***

Most polls show Attorney General Mike Beebe (D) with a double digit lead over Congressman Asa Hutchinson (R), causing this race to move to the Leans Democrat category from Toss-up.

### ***Colorado***

Former Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter (D) has increased his lead over Congressman Bob Beauprez (R) in the race to succeed Governor Bill Owens (R). Ritter leads Beauprez in fundraising, leads among independent voters, and has received meaningful support from the business community. Recently Beauprez's campaign has been thrown off stride by an investigation into allegations that information that appeared in one of his campaign advertisements was improperly accessed from an FBI database.

### ***Illinois***

The campaign of Governor Rod Blagojevich (D) has been hurt by the recent indictment of one of his former fundraisers. Blagojevich still appears to be headed to reelection, but should the ethics issue take root among Democrats or independent voters, this race could tighten. Blagojevich, whose unfavorable ratings are more than 40%, is helped by his fundraising advantage, and by the fact his opponent, State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka (R), has unfavorable ratings near 50%.

### ***Massachusetts***

Lt. Governor Kerrey Healey (R) has been vigorously attacking former Assistant U.S. Attorney General Deval Patrick (D) in advertisements that portray him as being liberal and soft on crime. Patrick, a first time candidate for public office, has aggressively rebutted Healey's attacks as he seeks to convince voters that a change in direction is needed in a state that has elected Republican governors since 1991. Because polls show Patrick with a double digit lead, this race is now classified as Leans Democrat.

### **Safe Republican**

#### ***Alabama***

This race remains in the Safe Republican category as Governor Bob Riley (R) has maintained a very large lead over Lt. Governor Lucy Baxley (D).

#### ***Connecticut***

Incumbent Governor Jodi Rell (R) continues to lead New Haven Mayor John DeStefano (D) by a large margin.

#### ***Hawaii***

Governor Linda Lingle (R) appears to be headed to a comfortable reelection over former State Senator Randy Iwase (D).

#### ***Idaho***

Congressman Butch Otter (R) has set fundraising records for a gubernatorial candidate in Idaho, and he should win comfortably on November 7.

#### ***Nebraska***

Incumbent Governor Dave Heineman (R) should easily defeat his opponent, David Hahn (D), whose campaign is nearly out of money.

#### ***South Carolina***

Incumbent Governor Mark Sanford (R) should be reelected in this conservative state. Sanford's campaign has not made any missteps, and his opponent, State Senator Tommy Moore (D), is relatively unknown and only went up on television in mid-October.

#### ***South Dakota***

Nothing has changed here as Governor Mike Rounds (R) has a comfortable lead over former State Representative Jack Billion (D) in this conservative state.

**Vermont**

Scudder Parker, former Chairman of the state Democratic party, has proved to be no challenge for Governor Jim Douglas (R) who should cruise to an easy victory on November 7.

**Safe Democrat****Arizona**

Incumbent Governor Janet Napolitano (D) is leading her Republican opponent by a 2-1 margin, and should comfortably win reelection.

**Kansas**

Governor Kathleen Sebelius (D) remains a favorite to win reelection over State Senator Jim Barnett (R).

**New Hampshire**

Incumbent Governor John Lynch (D) continues to maintain a large lead over his Republican opponent.

**New Mexico**

Incumbent Governor Bill Richardson (D) has a large lead over challenger John Dendahl (R).

**New York**

The campaign of Attorney General Eliot Spitzer (D) shows no signs of faltering as he is outpolling his Republican opponent by a greater than 3-1 margin in some polls.

**Ohio**

In recent weeks, Congressman Ted Strickland (D) has widened his double digit lead over Secretary of State Ken Blackwell (R) in what is shaping up to be a difficult political year for Republicans in Ohio.

**Oklahoma**

The campaign of Congressman Ernest Istook (R) does not appear to be moving, assuring a second term for Governor Brad Henry (D).

**Pennsylvania**

Governor Ed Rendell (D) continues to lead Lynn Swann (R) by a comfortable margin in his bid for a second term.

**Tennessee**

Governor Phil Bredesen (D) continues to lead State Senator Jim Bryson (R) by a greater than 2-1 margin.

**Wyoming**

Governor Dave Freudenthal (D) has a commanding lead over Ray Hunkins (R).

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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