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## With No Exit Polls, The “Why?” For Dem. Coakley’s Senate Defeat Gets Spun

By: [TheCallUp](#) Wednesday January 20, 2010 1:32 pm



*Originally posted at [AlterPolitics](#) by [Stan \(AKA TheCallUp\)](#)*

One of the most vexing revelations to come from last night’s Senatorial contest in Massachusetts was the fact there were [NO EXIT POLLS](#). NONE! Not a single news organization conducted exit polls to ascertain a “why?” for such a huge, significant upset.

Surely, the networks knew the significance of last night’s election before a single vote was cast, and they clearly saw Coakley’s sliding poll numbers since January 5, when Rasmussen released a [survey](#) showing Republican Scott Brown trailing Democrat Martha Coakley by only nine points.

Call me a cynic, but you just have to wonder if the absence of exit polls wasn’t somehow intentional. Perhaps the beltway media establishment didn’t want to quantify the populist voter outrage which would likely incite a legislative turn to the Left, against entrenched interests.

By not conducting exit polling, the establishment accorded itself the opportunity to reframe the resulting Democratic upset in the usual way: Obama needs to move further to the right to placate enraged Independents

(whom they routinely misportray as nothing more than disaffected Republicans).

Ryan Grimm of the [Huffington Post](#) addressed the establishment’s reaction to last night’s Republican victory in Massachusetts as being focused entirely on the Independent voters; while largely ignoring the base:

With all the talk about “angry independents” deciding the special election in Massachusetts Tuesday night, the inclination among establishment Washington Democrats is to chase after them. Progressives, meanwhile, want the party to deliver on promises made during the campaign.

Not surprisingly, Democratic politicians are already indicating that they will likely shift rightward. Barney Frank seemed to [suggest](#) to Rachel Maddow, in reaction to the upset, “that without support from at least some Republican senators, health care reform, at least in this iteration, wouldn’t happen.” In other words, he interpreted this defeat as a need to appease the right — as if they haven’t been doing that all along. That move would certainly help him to water down [even further](#) his current banking reform initiative (as would also be necessary to gain Republican votes).

[Anthony Weiner](#) “suggest[ed] on MSNBC that maybe it’d really be better to drop health care reform—and pivot to jobs.”

Digby [points out](#) that Chris Matthews, in reaction to Coakley’s defeat, has now joined the deficit-hawk choir:

The predicted reverberations are already being felt. Chris Matthews is already going on about deficits being the most important problem in the whole wide world and how his daughter is really worried about government spending and taxes.

And the Democrats are subsequently making it much more difficult to fix the economy by playing into this deficit propaganda themselves.

The usual conservative voices, as one would expect, are all too happy to capitalize on the absence of exit polls.

Here’s [Michael Gerson](#) at the Washington Post, suggesting that Obama’s “liberalism” has infuriated Independent voters:

It means that Rahm Emanuel’s “big bang” theory of legislative liberalism is the most foolish political strategy in recent memory. It means that spending political capital on health reform instead of economic recovery and growth was a dreadful error. It means that a crisis that Obama didn’t want to waste has largely been wasted. [...]

There is only one explanation for this remarkable turn of events. Americans thought Obama was a moderate. He certainly sounded like one. But now he is attempting to remake one seventh of the economy in a quick march of party-line votes. In the process, he has alienated independents in large numbers — even in Massachusetts.

Did you get that? According to Michael Gerson this isn’t about populist outrage from both the Left and Right; this is about Obama (who actually ran on a progressive populist platform) somehow misleading Independents into thinking he was more conservative than he really was. To Gerson, it would seem Independents have suddenly awoken to discover that Obama and his “liberal” cohort Rahm Emanuel are governing as some kind of commie-liberals.

David Broder never once mentions populist outrage from the Left in his [column](#); no talk of Wall Street bailouts while turning a blind eye to the plight of Americans; no mention of Health Insurance and Pharmaceutical Industry giveaways off the backs of hurting Americans.

First he mentions voter concerns about deficit spending, and then he describes just how the victor Republican Scott Brown was able to capitalize on the current Health Care Reform bill before Congress:

This allowed Brown to argue that he would vote against the legislation pending in Washington, which by comparison looks more expensive and more **bureaucratic** and more partisan than the Massachusetts model.

Perhaps subtle to some, but the word “bureaucratic” is actually a lightning rod term within Conservative circles. It conjures up images of an inefficient government run entity (i.e. the Republican stigmatization of a would-be public option — something which isn’t even part of the bill under consideration). In reality, the Senate Bill is clearly a giveaway to the private “for profit” health insurance industry — a dream bill to a corporatist like Broder.

The only Democratic politicians Broder spoke to were the ones who seemed to parrot the White House talking points:

“They were critical of Coakley’s campaign, arguing that it was a serious miscalculation for her to break off campaigning and advertising after her easy victory in the primary.”

Like Gerson, Broder implies it is more about ideological differences; meaning the “liberal” Democratic Congress and President are imposing their will on a more “moderate” electorate, and it’s backfired. Broder gives his readers the following as false choices for the Democratic upset: 1. voter repudiation of liberal initiatives (i.e. runaway spending and government ‘bureaucratic’ health care), or 2. a poorly run Coakley campaign (i.e. the White House talking points). Yet he never mentions the visible outrage bubbling over from the left, as Obama continues to sell out the American people to serve his corporate masters.

The reality is President Obama has been governing from right of center since the moment he took office. Liberals feel betrayed. The Democratic base couldn’t be less energized — thanks to all of Obama’s broken promises, and his backdoor deals with entrenched interests.

Ryan Grimm contends that Independents and liberals have indicated they want essentially the same thing: CHANGE.

A review of surveys of independent and Democratic voters show that both want much the same thing: change. Both groups are deeply troubled by the state of the economy and angered that bailed-out Wall Street firms seem to be the only ones to have recovered from the crisis. [...]

“If Scott Brown wins tonight, he’ll win because he became the change-oriented candidate,” Celinda Lake, pollster to losing Democratic candidate Martha Coakley, told HuffPost before the election results came in. “Voters are still voting for the change they voted for in 2008, but they want to see it. And right now they think they’ve got economic policies for Washington that are delivering more for banks than Main Street.”

Ezra Klein from the Washington Post [sums up](#) the frustration from the Left:

A Democratic Party that would abandon their central initiative this quickly isn't a Democratic Party that deserves to hold power. If they don't believe in the importance of their policies, why should anyone who's skeptical change their mind? If they're not interested in actually passing their agenda, why should voters who agree with Democrats on the issues work to elect them? A commitment provisional on Ted Kennedy not dying and Martha Coakley not running a terrible campaign is not much of a commitment at all.

Joe Trippi, a longtime party strategist and high-ranking official on the Howard Dean and John Edwards campaigns told the [Huffington Post](#):

“This needs to be a wake up call that people are still demanding change. I don't think it is ideological, I don't think it is left versus right. I think it is outsider versus insider. It is the new way versus people doing it the old way. That is still the carryover from 2008. And whether the Obama administration recognizes that is important. This is a wake up call that they can't play the inside game.”

Glenn Greenwald [weighs in](#) on the establishment's effort to reframe Coakley's defeat as voter repudiation of the Left:

The very idea that an administration run by Barack Obama and Rahm Emanuel and staffed with centrists, Wall Street mavens, and former Bush officials — and a Congress beholden to Blue Dogs and Lieberdemers — has been captive “to the Left” is so patently false that everyone should be too embarrassed to utter it. For better or worse, the Democratic strategy has long been and still is to steer clear of their leftist base and instead govern as “pragmatists” and centrists — which means keeping the permanent Washington factions pleased. That strategy may or not be politically shrewd, but it is just a fact that the dreaded “Left” has gotten very little of what it wanted the entire year.

Senator John Kerry — the quintessential Washington ‘insider’ — has wisely calculated the necessity in addressing [populist angst](#), by attributing it to Coakley's defeat:

I didn't need any reminders, but this election encapsulated what was clear in 2006 and 2008 and remains clear today: Americans are angry. They're mad at Washington and they're mad at Wall Street. They've seen millions of jobs lost and been left no choice but to bail out those responsible. They're tired of insurance companies that charge exorbitant premiums but don't deliver decent coverage when they need it. They're fed up with sending billions of dollars a day overseas for foreign oil. They hate knowing that they pay taxes while powerful interests evade taxes and hide money overseas in Cayman Island bank accounts. And they expect all of us, Democrat or Republican, to fight for them.

So what should those on the Left take away from these dueling-message efforts? In the future, if Progressives intend to send a ‘resounding’ message by abandoning Democratic candidates, they'd be well served to at least hire an independent polling company to conduct exit polls that accurately quantify the “why?” for voter behavior.

If exit polls aren't there to capture the true underlying motivation of the voters, then the beltway establishment will gladly define it for them.

## UPDATE

Thanks to cbsunglass for pointing out a newly released [Research 2000 Massachusetts Poll](#).

Well done! The exit poll reveals exactly what we needed to show. Fascinating how this has been largely overlooked by much of the press all day, and it had even been earlier reported that [NO exit polls](#) had been administered.

I stand corrected.

[7 Comments](#)  [Spotlight](#)



## 7 Responses to “With No Exit Polls, The “Why?” For Dem. Coakley’s Senate Defeat Gets Spun”

cbsunglass January 20th, 2010 at 1:35 pm

[1](#)

Check out Adam [Green’s](#) just released poll of MA voters. It is dynamite!

 [Reply](#)

[TheCallUp](#) January 20th, 2010 at 1:47 pm

[2](#)

In response to [cbsunglass @ 1](#)

Thanks cbsunglass. I just added that as an update.

 [Reply](#)

[TheCallUp](#) January 20th, 2010 at 4:27 pm

[3](#)

Correction to my update. The Reseach 2000 Mass Poll was not an exit poll, as I incorrectly stated. It was a poll taken after the election.

My mistake. Again ... :)

 [Reply](#)

onitgoes January 20th, 2010 at 5:15 pm

[4](#)

Thanks for the info. I’m not surprised that the trad/med wasn’t interested in exit polls. Frankly, neither side is interested in exit polls. Both sides are now free to spin it whatever way they want.

Rahmbama is clearly uninterested in the voters; our needs are of no value to him, nor does he care. Rahmbama, without exit polls, is free to spin this loss in whatever way he chooses, which – no surprises here – is to bash the leftists and say it was all our fault. We are the convenient scapegoat upon whom all sorts of nasty diatribes and blame can be showered. Spin away!

IMO, this loss is exactly what Rahmbama wanted, so that they could rush ever futher to the right is purported “reaction” to us devilish liberals. After all, this is what the corporate masters want – pushing further rightward. And awaaaaay we goooo....

 [Reply](#)

[TheCallUp](#) January 20th, 2010 at 6:38 pm

[5](#)

In response to [onitgoes @ 4](#)

Thanks for your comment, onitgoes.

I agree. Rahmbama wants everyone to believe Coakley was a weak candidate, and the Repubs want everyone to believe it was because the electorate is repudiating progressive initiatives.

When in reality, there is a populist tsunami approaching.

 [Reply](#)

[letsgetitdone](#) January 20th, 2010 at 8:47 pm

[6](#)

What I can't figure is why would they want to hide their heads in the sand. They know there's at least a possibility of a populist tsunami, so why wouldn't they want to find out whether one is coming their way? One can spin, spin, and keep on spinning, but reality just comes on like a giant wave and sweeps the spin away. Spin didn't save the Republicans in 2008 and it won't save the Dems in 2010. They're going to have to some things for people if they want to hang on.

 [Reply](#)

[TheCallUp](#) January 20th, 2010 at 9:44 pm

[7](#)

In response to [letsgetitdone @ 6](#)

I suspect they've been caught up in a Rahm state of mind for some time. I believe Obama is comfortable with cutting deals with special interests, because it plays well to his preferred governing style — non-confrontational, appealing, i.e. taking the path of least resistance.

But, like you said, I think after this defeat they realize they can't continue this approach indefinitely. It's proven to be a failed strategy with catastrophic consequences, so my guess is they will begin to make some kind of transition. But at the moment, they are still a bit shocked, and thus still defending what has been their now comfortable 'status quo' approach to governing.

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