

<sup>22</sup>See Dan Schnur's comments in Cathleen Decker, "Whitman Scoots Right on a Two-Edged Sword," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 2010, at [www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-theweek-20100530,0,4210214.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-theweek-20100530,0,4210214.story).

<sup>23</sup>"Internal Affairs: Barbara Boxer Recycles . . . Tom Campbell's Campaign Ads!" *San Jose Mercury News*, June 20, 2010, at [www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci\\_15330202](http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_15330202).

<sup>24</sup>Jeffrey M. Jones, "Party ID: Despite GOP Gains, Most States Remain Blue," Gallup Poll, February 1, 2010, at [www.gallup.com/poll/125450/Party-Affiliation-Despite-GOP-Gains-States-Remain-Blue.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/125450/Party-Affiliation-Despite-GOP-Gains-States-Remain-Blue.aspx); California Secretary of State, "15-Day Report of Registration," May 24, 2010, at [www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ror/ror-pages/15day-prim-10/hist-reg-stats.pdf](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ror/ror-pages/15day-prim-10/hist-reg-stats.pdf).

<sup>25</sup>Sean Trende, "The Politics of Arizona's Immigration Law," *RealClearPolitics*, July 8, 2010, at [www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/07/08/the\\_politics\\_of\\_arizonas\\_immigration\\_law\\_106221.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/07/08/the_politics_of_arizonas_immigration_law_106221.html).

<sup>26</sup>Ken McLaughlin and Steve Harmon, "Lawyer: Whitman's Husband Told Housekeeper to 'Check This' Government Letter," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 1, 2010, at [www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_16221008](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_16221008).

<sup>27</sup>John Ellis, "Housekeeper Issue Heats up Fresno Gov. Debate," *Fresno Bee*, October 1, 2010, at [www.fresnobee.com/2010/10/01/v-textonly/2101070/hispanic-issues-loom-large-in.html](http://www.fresnobee.com/2010/10/01/v-textonly/2101070/hispanic-issues-loom-large-in.html).

<sup>28</sup>Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field, "Brown and Whitman in a Dead Heat in the Race for Governor," *The Field Poll*, September 3, 2010, at [field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2353.pdf](http://field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2353.pdf); Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field, "Increased Support from Women, Latinos, Non-Partisans and L.A. County Voters Propelling Brown to a Ten-Point Lead over Whitman in Governor's Race," *The Field Poll*, October 28, 2010, at [field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2362.pdf](http://field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2362.pdf).

<sup>29</sup>Exit poll data from Edison Research, November 2, 2010, at [www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2010/results/polls.main/](http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2010/results/polls.main/).

<sup>30</sup>Compilation of survey data by John Green at [www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2004/11/State-By-State-Percentage-Of-White-Evangelicals-Catholics-And-Black-Protestants.aspx](http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2004/11/State-By-State-Percentage-Of-White-Evangelicals-Catholics-And-Black-Protestants.aspx).

<sup>31</sup>Seema Mehta and Maeve Reston, "Whitman, Fiorina losses raise questions about their political futures in California," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 2010, at [articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/08/local/la-me-whitman-fiorina-20101108](http://articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/08/local/la-me-whitman-fiorina-20101108).

SABATO, LARRY J., PENDULUM SWING  
LONGMAN, 2011

## Chapter 10

# *The Perils of Holding a Tea Party at High Altitude: Colorado's Senate and Gubernatorial Races in 2010*

by Dr. Seth E. Masket

*Associate Professor of Political Science  
at the University of Denver*

### Introduction

Colorado's top-ballot races were anything but predictable in 2010. The Tea Party movement was particularly powerful during these races, leading to defeats of candidates favored by Republican Party elites during the primaries. The general election for Senate was one of the most expensive and closely watched in the country. The gubernatorial general election, meanwhile, featured Republican leaders abandoning their own nominee in favor of a third-party candidate. Despite the general rout of Democrats across the country and within Colorado, the Democratic nominees in these two contests prevailed. The results demonstrated the strengths of the Tea Party movement during 2010, but also revealed the risks that a party faces when a populist movement takes over its nomination process.

### The Primaries

During the party nominations stage, party elites went about doing what they normally do—picking candidates they like and giving them

enormous advantages (money, expertise, endorsements) for the nomination (Cohen et al. 2008; Masket 2009). In most years, these advantages prove insurmountable to all but a handful of lucky challengers. 2010 was not like most years, however.

To say that 2010 was an anti-incumbent/antiestablishment year (Beam 2010) is a bit too simplistic. As Sides (2010a) and Abramowitz and Sabato (2010) note, despite the media attention on incumbents being in trouble in primaries, only six members of Congress actually lost their jobs during the primary season—about average historically. While the casualties did include such presumably safe incumbents as Sen. Bob Bennett (R-UT), they nonetheless represent only a tiny fraction of the members of Congress actually up for reelection in 2010, with the vast majority retaining their seats. Yet it does seem fair to say that incumbents and party-favored candidates had to work harder than usual to win this year. Colorado's senatorial and gubernatorial primaries provide rich examples of this phenomenon.

### The U.S. Senate Race

Of the four top-ballot statewide races, only the Democratic contest for U.S. Senate actually featured an incumbent seeking to defend his seat. And Sen. Michael Bennet was not a typical incumbent; Gov. Bill Ritter had appointed him to the position in January of 2009, after Sen. Ken Salazar accepted a position as President Obama's secretary of the interior. This was, according to many observers, a most unusual appointment, as Bennet—then the superintendent of the Denver Public School district—had no prior electoral experience. Having previously served as chief of staff to Denver's mayor, John Hickenlooper, Bennet was no stranger to politics, but he had no automatic allies within the state's Democratic Party. Thus, many of the advantages incumbents usually enjoy—political experience, a seasoned staff, a network of party allies—were missing from Bennet's quiver.

Indeed, Bennet's appointment to the Senate laid the seeds for his most serious challenge in the primaries. Among the list of prominent Democratic candidates suggested to Governor Ritter for the appointment was former statehouse Speaker Andrew Romanoff, who had just

recently been termed out of office. Others mentioned for the job, including Mayor Hickenlooper and Reps. John Salazar and Ed Perlmutter, already had jobs in which they appeared to be safe.<sup>1</sup> Romanoff was extremely popular among the state's active Democrats, many of whom felt that the Senate seat was a perfectly timed opportunity for the state to continue to utilize Romanoff's skills. When the governor passed on appointing Romanoff to this position, Romanoff and his supporters became incensed and began looking for other avenues for him to hold office.

In September 2009, Romanoff announced his intention to challenge Bennet for the Senate seat. From the start, Romanoff enjoyed some advantages over the incumbent, including significant electoral and legislative experience, a network of Democratic friends and allies across the state, and a more comfortable public speaking style. Yet Bennet had two things Romanoff did not—substantial financial resources—and the ability to raise more—and the energetic support of the president of the United States. Within a day of Romanoff's announcement, Obama stated his preference for Michael Bennet.

Colorado's system for party nominations is unusual and multi-tiered. While the nomination is ultimately determined by a primary held in early August, the first contest is traditionally a precinct caucus, held in March of the election year. At these caucuses, attendees must perform two tasks—register their support for one candidate or another, and elect attendees for the next stage of the process, the county conventions and assemblies, usually held a month or two later. The same process repeats itself there, with attendees voting on their preferences and electing delegates to the state assembly and convention.

While the precinct caucuses are open to all registered party voters, turnout is usually much lower than in primaries. Thus it would not be terribly shocking to find that the preferences of caucus attendees are significantly different than those of primary voters (although see Hersh 2010). By their nature, those who attend the caucuses and stick through the process to attend the county and state convention and assembly are the most committed partisans, usually with many years of party experience and service under their belts.

In the Democratic Senate race, these caucus attendees picked Andrew Romanoff over Michael Bennet by a vote of 50 to 42 percent, with the rest voting uncommitted. The party faithful, it seemed, had made a choice. The endorsement by Barack Obama, who remained greatly popular among party activists, proved far from influential on this select electorate. Yet this stage of the nominations process is far from determinative. It ensured only that both Romanoff and Bennet would have a primary contest and that Romanoff's name would appear first on the ballot.<sup>2</sup>

The primary itself was a very different contest. When competing for the favor of a few thousand convention attendees, Bennet's vast financial resources made little difference; most forms of advertising at that stage were pretty useless. When trying to win over a primary electorate, however, the funds proved quite helpful. This electorate contained many who were only marginally familiar with either Romanoff—the former state legislator from Denver—or Bennet—the incumbent who had been appointed just over a year earlier.

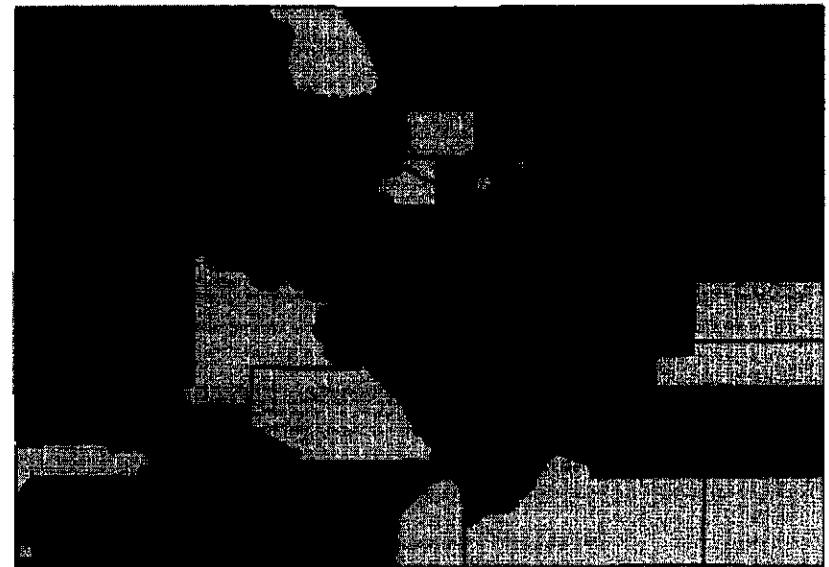
Romanoff surely raised a respectable amount of money—nearly \$2 million overall—and his campaign was bolstered by the endorsement of former president Bill Clinton.<sup>3</sup> However, Obama's endorsement of Bennet was not just in name. It came with several presidential fundraisers and the activation of the Obama For America (OFA) organization, which was essentially a rebranding of the president's 2008 campaign (Catanese 2010). With this help, Bennet ultimately raised more than \$7 million prior to the primary.

Romanoff did succeed in raising questions about Bennet, particularly when it came to his ties to Wall Street. Yet it was difficult to overcome Bennet's advantages. The one thing that could have affected many primary voters—a *New York Times* article tying Bennet to a financially questionable decision regarding the pensions of Denver Public Schools employees—arrived a bit late for Romanoff's purposes.

On Election Day, Bennet prevailed over Romanoff 54 to 46. His support was remarkably widespread; while Romanoff held his hometown of Denver and took a handful of counties in the southeast region of the state, Bennet took the majority of the vote in 51 of the

state's 64 counties, 21 of them by more than 60 percent. A geographical depiction of the vote can be seen in figure 10.1.

**Figure 10.1—County-Level Vote in 2010 Colorado Democratic U.S. Senate Primary**



Source: *Denver Post*

Note: Shaded counties are those in which Michael Bennet received the majority of the vote. Others were won by Andrew Romanoff.

To what extent did Bennet owe his commanding win to the work of the Obama For America organization? In theory, if the Obama organization influenced the 2010 primary vote in Colorado, we should see similarities in the voting patterns between that election and the state's presidential caucuses two years earlier. I test this in table 10.1, regressing Bennet's share of the county-level 2010 primary vote on Obama's share of the 2008 caucus vote. I include census measures to control for county demographic disparities, including urbanization, education, income, race, and religion. I also include the 2008 presidential general election vote as a control for county liberalism-conservatism.<sup>4</sup>

Table 10.1—Variables Predicting Bennet Primary Vote in 2010

Variable	Coefficient
Obama share of Clinton + Obama caucus vote, 2008	0.305** (0.103)
Percent urban	1.405 (3.713)
Percent with college degree	36.36 (21.74)
Percent making more than \$75,000	-33.65 (16.93)
Percent African American	-44.72 (53.61)
Percent Latino	19.54 (15.47)
Percent Evangelical	-2.628 (12.61)
Percent Catholic	-5.137 (9.659)
Obama share of two-party vote, 2008 general election	-33.77* (13.97)
Constant	39.52** (13.11)
Observations	60
R-squared	0.293

Notes: Cell entries are ordinary least squares coefficients. Standard errors appear in parentheses (\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ).

Source: Compiled by author.

The table shows a strong relationship between the Obama caucus vote from 2008 and the Bennet primary vote in 2010; each percentage-point increase in the Obama vote was associated with a 0.3 percentage point increase in the Bennet vote. This result is statistically significant at the .01 level. The implication is that Bennet won, at least in part, because of the influence of the Obama organization. The control variables, meanwhile, showed little relationship to the primary vote with the exception of the measure of county ideology. This suggests that Bennet did better in the more conservative counties across the state.

The Republican contest for Senate saw considerable competition as well. Although Democrats had been doing well in statewide elections since 2004, they had only controlled both Senate seats since 2008. Most polling, meanwhile, suggested that the president's party, which tends to lose congressional seats in midterm elections, was looking particularly vulnerable for 2010, and the Senate incumbent whose term was up in Colorado was an appointee with almost no electoral experience. (Unlike most incumbents, Senate appointees have a tough time in elections; only about a third of appointees have won voters' permission to keep their seats since the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment (Reed 2008). Thus this race looked like a strong potential pickup opportunity for the Republicans, and the right nominee could seal the deal.

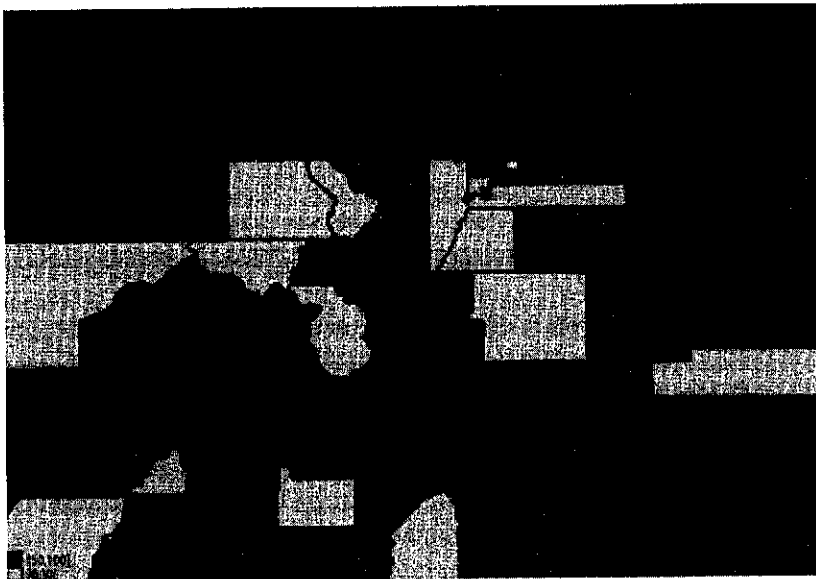
Many Republican Party leaders settled early on their choice for nominee. Partly at the urging of Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), many elite Republicans backed Jane Norton, who had previously been Colorado's lieutenant governor. The idea of Republican Party elites converging on a preferred candidate long before the primary is hardly a new in Colorado. Many of these same party figures had helped clear the field for Senate candidates Bob Schaffer in 2008 and Pete Coors in 2004, as well as for gubernatorial candidate Bob Beauprez in 2006.

Many of these activists, brought into politics through the nascent Tea Party movement, expressed an early liking for Ken Buck, the district attorney of Weld County in the north-central part of the state. Buck seemed to attract activist support in part due to political stances that were more conservative and more provocative than those of Jane Norton. Buck, for example, had previously described Social Security as a "horrible policy" and advocated for its privatization (Miller 2010).

The Norton campaign was concerned enough about Buck's challenge that it chose not to contest Buck in the caucuses. By skipping the contest altogether, she would avoid the potential embarrassment of a caucus loss or, worse, being barred from the primary by failing to secure 10 percent of the vote. Buck's caucus victory would thus be an empty one.

After the convention, Norton generally trailed Buck by 10 to 15 points in polls. While she maintained an advantage in terms of both endorsements and funds, she was never able to overtake Buck, who ultimately won the primary by just over 3 points. A map of the primary vote (seen in figure 10.2) shows that Buck's support was widespread, limiting Norton's wins to the Denver metro area, a handful of mountain counties, and her home county of Mesa, the home of Grand Junction on the state's western border. Buck, meanwhile, won not just in his own Eastern Plains region, but also in the Western Slope and along much of the Front Range.

Figure 10.2—County-Level Vote in 2010 Colorado Republican U.S. Senate Primary



Source: *Denver Post*

Note: Shaded counties are those in which Ken Buck received the majority of the vote. Others were won by Jane Norton.

## The Governor's Race

By the summer of 2010, things were looking good for Denver mayor John Hickenlooper's bid to become Colorado's next governor. Indeed, a prominent Colorado political blog confidently claimed, "There's no realistic scenario where [Hickenlooper] loses anymore" (ColoradoPols 2010). This outcome would have been quite difficult to predict just eight months earlier. Although Hickenlooper had a quiet primary day in August, having avoided any challengers to his nomination, the path that led him to the Democratic nomination was circuitous.

At the beginning of 2010, Colorado's political observers were focused on Gov. Bill Ritter's odds for reelection. His polling situation looked difficult, if not insurmountable; a December 2009 Rasmussen poll showed Ritter trailing likely Republican nominee Scott McInnis 48 to 40. With slow economic growth and high unemployment, combined with political actions that had undermined his support among organized labor (Bartels 2009), Ritter announced on January 5 that he would not run for a second term (Bartels 2010).

This left the Democrats scrambling to find a new gubernatorial nominee less than a year before the election. To a remarkable degree, the party managed to avoid internal strife, with the leading possible Democratic candidates quietly coordinating and apparently deferring to each other in order of declining electability. Eyes first turned to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who had won his U.S. Senate seat with broad support in 2004. Salazar received tacit endorsements from President Obama and Mayor Hickenlooper. When Salazar demurred, Hickenlooper agreed to run, and Democrats quickly rallied around him (Kraushaar 2010). No other Democrat challenged Hickenlooper's candidacy, and the Denver mayor won his party's nomination for governor by acclamation at the state convention.

The Republican contest for governor remained contentious from the beginning. Scott McInnis, with his congressional experience and strong name recognition throughout the Western Slope, seemed a popular early choice. He drew two challengers for the nomination, one from a little-known Evergreen businessman named Dan Maes, the other from McInnis's own former protégé, state senator Josh Penry. Penry, all of 33 years old, had previously worked in McInnis's congressional office, and offered a challenge somewhat from McInnis's right. Penry won early

press attention through a campaign that was sharply critical of both political parties (Bonham 2009), and even won a September 2009 party straw poll held at Keystone Resort. Yet by November, Penry had decided to abandon the race. Conservative donors were assembling a 527 committee on behalf of McInnis, threatening to overwhelm Penry's own fundraising abilities (Crummy 2009).

Penry's departure at the end of 2009 left Scott McInnis, a well-known former congressman with numerous endorsements and half a million dollars cash on hand, facing only Dan Maes, who had little name recognition or experience and less than \$8,000 in the bank. Perhaps McInnis could be forgiven at this point for not taking Maes's challenge more seriously. Maes, however, continued to press his case with Tea Party groups across the state, raising concerns that McInnis was not sufficiently conservative and that only someone from outside the system could fix it. With the support of these activists, Maes managed to win nearly 40 percent of the vote on caucus night in March and actually defeated McInnis in the Republican Assembly in May by a slender margin of 49.4 percent to 48.9 percent.

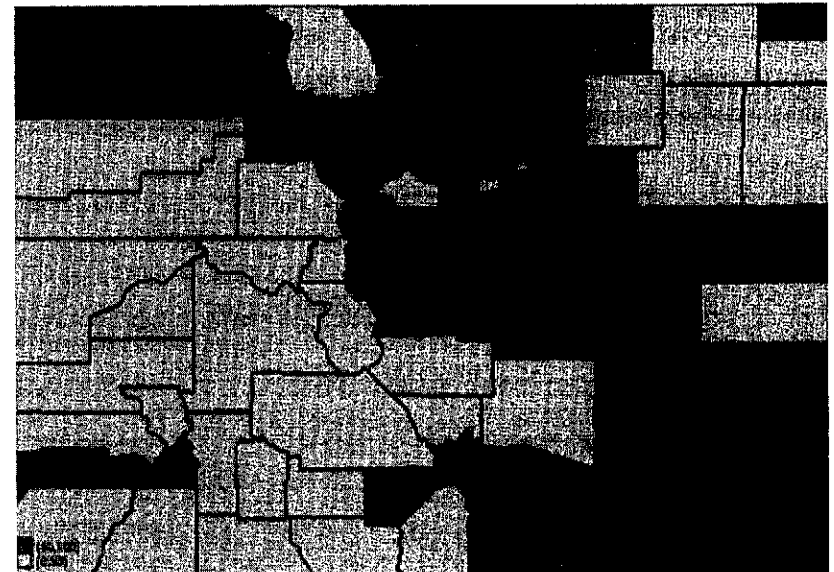
McInnis still had the lion's share of funds and endorsements by this point, and convention winners rarely go on to win the primary. The environment might have remained safe for McInnis had it not been for the emergence of a scandal. In mid-July, the *Denver Post* and other news organizations aired allegations that Scott McInnis had, while writing on water policy for a newsletter owned by the Hasan Family Foundation, extensively borrowed from a 1984 article by Gregory Hobbs, who later served on the Colorado Supreme Court. McInnis was paid \$300,000 for these articles but did not attribute the text to Hobbs or anyone else (Crummy 2010a). McInnis initially tried to blame the incident on subordinates and on a water policy analyst, but ultimately owned up to the error and sought to pay back the income. The scandal proved damaging to McInnis; while he'd been leading Hickenlooper in matchup polls earlier in the summer, post-scandal polling showed him down by 5 points to the Democrat (Booth and O'Connor 2010).

At this point, the situation looked daunting for Republicans who, less than a year earlier, saw the Colorado governor's mansion as low-hanging fruit for 2010. Their handpicked front-runner suddenly looked weak against the Democrat and was facing a surprisingly strong primary challenge from a poorly funded relative extremist who

had scandals of his own (Fender 2010). This situation was apparently too much for former U.S. representative Tom Tancredo (R-Littleton). Arguing that neither of the Republican candidates could win in November, he publicly demanded that both drop out of the race, or else he would run against them. When neither dropped out, Tancredo followed through on his threat, enlisting as the gubernatorial nominee of the American Constitution Party.

Tancredo, one of the most conservative members of the House of Representatives, had a sharp impact on the race for governor. Polls suggested he would split the Republican electorate in two, virtually guaranteeing the Democrats a win should he stay in the race. Maes, meanwhile, showed little interest in moderating his views prior to the primary. During a late July campaign rally, Maes warned his supporters that Denver's popular public bicycle-sharing program was "converting Denver into a United Nations community" (Osher 2010).

**Figure 10.3—County-Level Vote in 2010 Colorado Republican Gubernatorial Primary**



Source: *Denver Post*

Note: Shaded counties are those in which Dan Maes received the majority of the vote. Others were won by Scott McInnis.

It was in this environment that Colorado Republicans went to vote in the August 10 primary. Republican voters, by a 2-point margin, picked Maes as their nominee. The county-level results show a strong regional pattern in the vote (figure 10.3), with McInnis winning the western part of the state, including his home county of Garfield, handily. Maes, however, dominated the Eastern Plains and the Denver metro area.

In many ways, Dan Maes and Ken Buck shared similar campaign narratives, fighting long odds to claim their party's nominations. To what extent were their candidacies fueled by the same insurgency? I seek to address this question in table 10.2, where I have regressed Maes's county-level vote on Buck's, using the same control variables used in table 10.1. Although none of the control variables' coefficients reaches statistical significance, there is a strong relationship between the Maes and Buck votes, with each 1-point increase in Buck's primary vote corresponding with a .55-point increase in Maes's primary vote share. The implication is that both candidacies were backed by the same sort of newly energized Tea Party voters. Buck and Maes were both part of the same insurgency.

**Table 10.2—Variables Predicting Maes Gubernatorial Primary Vote in 2010**

Variable	Coefficient
Buck share of Republican Senate primary vote, 2010	0.556** (0.192)
Percent urban	7.106 (4.080)
Percent with college degree	36.18 (24.18)
Percent making more than \$75,000	-0.445 (18.51)
Percent African American	98.36 (59.54)
Percent Latino	8.955 (17.03)

Percent Evangelical	1.765 (13.52)
Percent Catholic	7.587 (10.61)
Obama share of two-party vote, 2008 general election	-21.98 (14.79)
Constant	-2.694 (19.72)
Observations	60
R-squared	0.259

Notes: Cell entries are ordinary least squares coefficients. Standard errors appear in parentheses (\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ).

Source: Compiled by author.

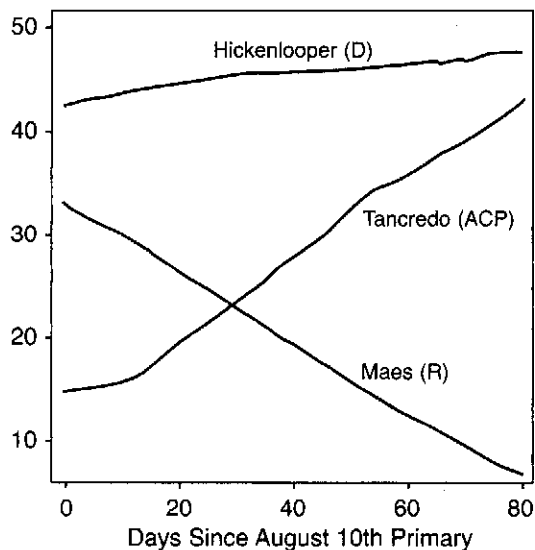
## The General Election

Typically, even bizarre primary contests give way to relatively predictable general elections, with the nominees of the two major parties sparring to control a plurality of the electorate. This did not happen in Colorado's gubernatorial race in 2010. Tom Tancredo's quixotic bid as the nominee of the little-known American Constitution Party did not fade away, unlike so many other third-party campaigns. The opposite happened—Tancredo was increasingly perceived as the more credible and electable of the two conservative candidates.

This trend was abetted by a string of Republican Party elites issuing endorsements for Tancredo. Former U.S. representative and 2006 Republican gubernatorial nominee, Bob Beauprez, former state Senate president John Andrews, state senator Josh Penry, state representative Marsha Looper, and former state representative Rob Witwer were among the broad ideological range of Republican officials endorsing Tancredo for governor, considering Maes unelectable (Crummy 2010c). Even Ken Buck, running under the Republican banner for the U.S. Senate, withdrew his earlier endorsement of

Maes (Strogoff and Luning 2010). All this occurred amidst a strong but unsuccessful effort by party leaders to convince Maes to withdraw as the party's nominee. It is an interesting reflection on the peculiar nature of the 2010 midterm elections that Tom Tancredo—who once called President Obama a greater threat to the Constitution than Al Qaeda, and referred to the Council of La Raza as a “Latino KKK without the hoods or the nooses”—was considered the pragmatist's candidate. Not all Republican leaders found Tancredo an acceptable alternative, however; Mary Smith, the chair of the Denver County Republican Party, announced her endorsement of Democratic nominee John Hickenlooper (Strogoff and Luning 2010).

**Figure 10.4—Polling in Colorado Gubernatorial Race During General Election**

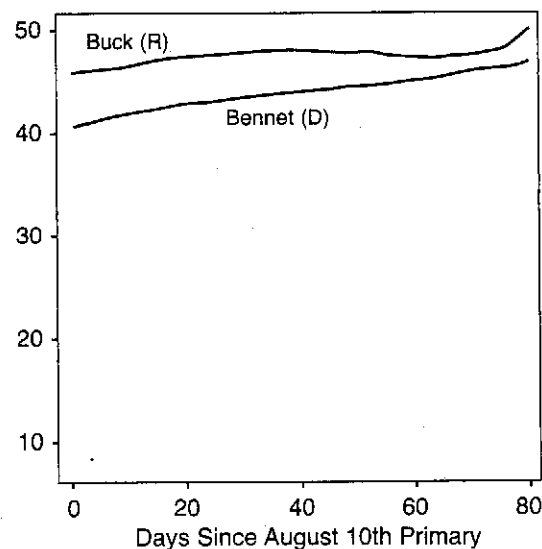


Note: Graph depicts lowest running averages of polls between John Hickenlooper (D), Dan Maes (R), and Tom Tancredo (American Constitution Party) during the general 2010 election cycle. Data compiled by Pollster.com.

So many party leaders lining up against Maes severely dampened his fundraising potential. During the first two weeks of September, while Hickenlooper raised \$218,000 and Tancredo raised \$120,000,

Maes only raised \$14,000, much of which went toward paying a penalty for a previous campaign finance violation (Crummy 2010b). The result of all this activity was that Maes's support continued to drop throughout the fall. As figure 10.4 suggests, Maes's support transferred almost perfectly to Tancredo. By November, voters had largely settled on two main candidates for governor, with the Republican appearing as little more than a third-party spoiler. Indeed, prominent Republicans feared that Maes would finish below 10 percent of the vote, which, under Colorado law, would have rendered the Republicans a minor party for the next four years, severely hampering its fundraising abilities. In the end, Maes managed to eke out just over 11 percent of the vote, while Tancredo pulled 37 percent. Hickenlooper, who stayed relatively quiet during much of the campaign season and ran only a handful of positive advertisements, managed to win with 51 percent of the vote.

**Figure 10.5—Polling in Colorado U.S. Senate Race During General Election**



Note: Graph depicts lowest running averages of polls between Ken Buck (R) and Michael Bennet (D) during the general 2010 election cycle. Data compiled by Pollster.com.



By comparison, the race for U.S. Senate was much more typical of statewide elections, with the two major party candidates running within a handful of points of each other throughout the fall (see figure 5). The candidates began the general election season by trying to distance themselves somewhat from some of the stances they took during their difficult primary battles. Democratic nominee Michael Bennet, who had relied upon very explicit and public support from President Obama during the primary, decided that Obama's support might not be so helpful for the general election (Stephanopoulos 2010). Bennet further distanced himself from the president by opposing a second stimulus measure and urging action on the national debt (Kane 2010).

Republican nominee Ken Buck, meanwhile, sought to walk back several stances he had taken during his primary against Jane Norton, including opposition to the Seventeenth Amendment and support of Colorado's "personhood" amendment initiative, which would have defined life as beginning at the moment of conception.

Both candidates engaged in a blistering ad war. Bennet sought to define Buck as simultaneously an extremist ("Ken Buck's ideas are too extreme") and a flip-flopper ("Who is Ken Buck?"). For his part, Buck sought to describe Bennet as one of Obama and Pelosi's foot soldiers. A National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) ad showed a picture of Bennet with the president and the Speaker, with the voiceover saying, "We need a senator for us, not them."

Bennet largely outmatched Buck financially, raising over \$11 million to Buck's \$3 million by mid-October. That difference was somewhat mitigated by outside money, which tended to favor Buck. The NRSC and the DSCC (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee) were heavily involved in the race, as well. Outside funding for the Senate race topped \$30 million, making it the number one destination for outside money during the entire cycle (Attkisson 2010).

It was one of these outside funding efforts that ended up shaping the final days of the general election contest. During his primary with Jane Norton, Buck made the comment that Republicans should vote for him because he doesn't wear high-heeled shoes. This was a reference to an earlier comment by Norton's campaign that she would use her high-heeled shoes to kick Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in the shins. Buck's comment, however, drew complaints of sexism dur-

ing the primary. A Democratic-leaning group called Women's Voices Women's Votes revived these criticisms during the general election. They spent nearly \$1 million running an advertisement featuring a woman explaining to the camera, "Colorado women deserve respect. We need leaders who will stand with us, whether we're in high heels or cowboy boots." The ad also referred to comments Buck had made as the Weld County district attorney, when he had refused to prosecute a rape case, suggesting that the victim had "buyer's remorse" (Peoples 2010).

It is difficult to say whether those ads *per se* caused the race to tighten up in the final weeks. However, it is interesting to note that the gender gap in the Senate race was historically massive. According to CNN exit polls, men preferred Buck to Bennet 54 to 40, while women preferred Bennet to Buck 56 to 39—roughly 15 points across gender lines. By comparison, the national House vote in 2010 only saw a 6-point gender gap. Similarly, there was only a 6-point gender gap in the U.S. Senate race between Mark Udall (D) and Bob Schaffer (R) in Colorado in 2008. It is certainly conceivable that the activation of gender issues in the final weeks of the campaign helped produce Michael Bennet's narrow victory.

## Conclusion

Colorado's altitude did not place the state out of reach of the Republican wave of November 2010. Republicans took over the secretary of state and treasurer positions and retained their hold on the attorney general's office. Two of the state's seven congressional districts—those held by John Salazar and Betsy Markey—flipped from Democratic to Republican control. The GOP also made substantial inroads in the Colorado State Senate and managed to take over the state House by a single seat. Victories by John Hickenlooper and Michael Bennet ran very much counter to these trends and marked some of the very few bright spots for Democrats.

The results suggested that the Tea Party movement, which certainly energized Republican voters and activists and may have boosted the vote shares of conservative House candidates (Sides 2010b), had a considerable downside in some races—the nomination of less-electable Republicans. Dan Maes was very much the creature of

Colorado's Tea Party movement; it is difficult to conceive of his nomination in a different year. And he proved to be such a flawed candidate that many lifelong Republican leaders chose to actively work against their own nominee. We obviously cannot know whether a scandal-tainted Scott McInnis would have won the election had he won the primary, but it seems fair to suggest he would have done better than Maes.

Ken Buck, while certainly a more experienced politician than Maes, also rose to prominence with the aid of the state's Tea Party activists. It is less clear in Buck's case whether he was a superior or inferior candidate than Jane Norton, whom he defeated in the primary. However, a Norton candidacy likely would not have activated gender politics in the way Buck's did, possibly enabling Norton to defeat Michael Bennet. Whether fair or not, Buck is now spoken of in the same sentence as Sharron Angle of Nevada and Christine O'Donnell of Delaware—Tea Party candidates who may have cost the Republican Party control of the Senate.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Salazar ended up losing his 2010 reelection bid, although Perlmutter easily won reelection.

<sup>2</sup>Top ballot placement may be worth roughly a percentage point of the vote, or maybe nothing at all (Alvarez et al. 2010).

<sup>3</sup>Clinton was possibly repaying a favor here, as Romanoff had endorsed Sen. Hillary Clinton's presidential run in 2008, while Bennet was an early Obama supporter.

<sup>4</sup>Broomfield, Jackson, Pitkin, and Rio Bravo counties are excluded from the analysis due to insufficient census data.

## Chapter 11

# *Of Witches' Brew and Tea Party Too!: 2010 Delaware Senate Race*

by Dr. Samuel B. Hoff

*George Washington Distinguished Professor of History and Political  
Science; Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy  
at Delaware State University*

### **An Unexpected Vacancy**

Delaware was not supposed to have a U.S. Senate election in 2010. Six-term incumbent Joseph R. Biden Jr. briefly ran for the Democratic nomination for president in 2008 before bowing out. He then announced his intention to seek a seventh term in the Senate, but instead was tapped by Barack Obama as his vice-presidential nominee. Biden simultaneously ran for vice president and U.S. senator from Delaware, winning the latter race by a 65 to 35 percent margin, even though he virtually ignored his Republican challenger. Biden accepted election as vice president and announced his intention to resign his Senate seat.

Two weeks after the 2008 presidential election, Delaware governor Ruth Ann Minner surprised many political observers by appointing long-time Biden aide Edward "Ted" Kaufman to the vacated seat. According to law, a special election would have to be held in 2010 to fill Biden's unexpired term. Immediately after his appointment, Kaufman declared