

Jason Altmire:

Hello, and welcome to another edition of Career Education Report. I am Jason Altmire, and we are going to talk about campaigns and elections today. We get a lot of comments from listeners about the upcoming midterm elections and how important they are to the future of the country. And in many of these states, there's going to be Senate races that are up for grabs. And the control of the Senate [00:00:30] right now is 50/50, Vice President Harris breaks the tie. So for the Republicans to retake control of the Senate, they would need to gain one seat somewhere in the country, they need to net one seat. So we have the perfect guest to talk about Senate races in the midterm elections. And he is Matt Moon, the Deputy Executive Director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. And what that is is the national organization that oversees [00:01:00] the Republican Party's efforts across the country in these Senate elections.

And Matt has a long history of involvement in successful campaigns. One of which he worked for the Business Roundtable was Vice President for Advocacy, and in 2017 was very involved in the successful passage of President Trump's tax cuts. On the campaign side, he has worked for the reelection campaign for now Senator Rick Scott, but it was [00:01:30] his reelection as governor, his second successful reelection as governor. He also has been a senior advisor for US Senator Ron Johnson, who has a very difficult reelection this year. So nobody better positioned to talk about that. Let me just start, Matt, by thanking you for being here and just asking your overall opinion of what the landscape looks like here as we're talking at the end of August.

Matt Moon:

Well, I think the landscape looks very good for Republicans. [00:02:00] I won't speak for my colleagues on the health side, but I do believe that Republicans will take the majority in the House. I also believe that the Republicans will retake the majority in the Senate as well. Not just because of the races that we have, but because the national environment is tilted towards us in a very strong way. Some of the things that you usually look at when it comes to the national environment are, of course, presidential job approval, presidential [00:02:30] image, the generic ballot, and things like if voters think that a country is going on the right track or the wrong track. And so if you compare 2022 to around this time in the last two waves that we've had in our generation, which are 1994 and 2010, we're at or above where we were on the generic ballot, as well as right track versus wrong track, I would argue [00:03:00] that much more voters in 2022 think that we're on the wrong track rather than the right track versus '94 and 2010.

I think people forget that President Obama and President Clinton both had positive images and positive job approvals at around this time, in 2010 and in 1994, while we all know that President Biden's nationwide approval is hovering around anywhere between the high thirties and low forties, and has been since about [00:03:30] a year ago after the failed Afghanistan withdrawal. So we feel that that's going to drag a lot of these Democrats down, and especially with a lot of these Democrats voting nearly 100% with the Biden agenda.

Jason Altmire: The national media narrative in recent weeks has been about President Biden's resurgence, according to the media outlets. And inflation has come down, gas prices have come down substantially from where they were before, of course he had this [00:04:00] successful effort to kill the Al-Qaeda leader, the success on legislation related to the spending bill, the climate and healthcare bill that was passed. And the media seems to think that the President has righted the ship. Do you think that there's something to be concerned about from your point of view, as you move into November?

Matt Moon: I don't because as with the big spending bills that he had last year, there are some concerns with the spending bill [00:04:30] that the House and the Senate just passed, including \$80 billion for the IRS to hire about 87,000 agents, of which the CBO said will target a lot of middle-class taxpayers with unnecessary and what I would call harassing audits. Whereas the Democrats promise that they would only be going after the rich. What I'll say about the so-called inflation reduction act as well, is that from economists on the right and left, [00:05:00] and even Bernie Sanders says that this will have no impact on inflation. And while it's true that on a month-to-month basis, inflation and gas prices have ticked down, a year-over-year inflation number of 8.5% last month is still pretty high and is still hitting a lot of middle class to lower class folks.

And among the working class, which has trended more Republican over the past few cycles, than they have been trending Democrat, [00:05:30] we've been seeing this in turnout numbers, in plenty of our states, especially in states that have already had their primaries where we've had record Republican turnout versus Democrat turnout in states like Georgia and Pennsylvania. And we also see this on the ground with our grassroots, still caring about inflation, still caring about gas prices, but a couple other crises as well, including crime in some of our major cities and those suburban areas, as well as the border [00:06:00] crisis that not only affects border towns and border states, but a lot of the drugs that have come across the border, like fentanyl, have been killing a lot of people across the country. And this is what the American people are concerned about. I don't know that anything that Joe Biden and the Democrats have passed this year are going to help them in November.

Jason Altmire: I can tell you that I travel across the country and speak to our schools and to other audiences, even about political topics, given my background, and I do hear [00:06:30] that come up quite a bit. I think that the media is missing something. When you talk about crime in the country, and you talk about the focus that people have on the issue of immigration and especially big city crime, those are issues that are floating under the radar screen, but I hear about them when I travel. Is that the same thing that your candidates are experiencing across the country?

Matt Moon: Yeah, absolutely. And you're already seeing a lot of Democrats trying to distance themselves from [00:07:00] some of the defund the police policies, as well as rhetoric from a lot of the far left that has been driving some of this stuff. In

Seattle, where there's been plenty of crime because of the defund rhetoric and defund policies, they elected their first Republican district attorney last November in quite some time because the people of Seattle, Washington were very frustrated with how policing was going to go, but we're going [00:07:30] to make sure, and I think the American public knows that it is Democratic Party orthodoxy to be skeptical of policing. And not to go as so far as to say that everyone is for defunding the police, but they sure get a lot of support from candidates who support defund the police. They sure get a lot of support from a far-left grassroots that supports those anti-crime measures. We definitely hear it on the ground and we're going to make sure that voters across the country [00:08:00] and each of these states know about it.

Jason Altmire: Of course, one of the biggest issues that's come up is the abortion ruling by the Supreme Court, the overturning of Roe. What do you think that is going to mean for the election? There's a lot of people who think this is going to increase turnout among Democrats, that the race in Kansas for the abortion ballot measure sent a shockwave through the country related to that. Many of these primaries, Democratic turnout has been very high. Do you think it's going to play out in a way that the abortion [00:08:30] issue could favor Democrats in the fall?

Matt Moon: I think the one thing I'll concede on abortion and the Dobbs decision is that it has definitely infused a lot of money into Democratic candidates. One figure that I saw was that on the day of the Dobbs decision, it was tens of millions of dollars on that day, that ActBlue, the online processor of a lot of Democratic campaigns, processed [00:09:00] that much amount of donations. And so we'll concede that it definitely made a lot of Democratic campaigns cash flush, in a way that makes them even more competitive now on a financial standpoint versus our Republican candidates. I think the liability for Democrats here is that they hold some extreme positions too, with a lot of those incumbents having voted for the law that codifies Roe in the Senate, which goes [00:09:30] beyond where a lot of states actually are, which is to have reasonable restrictions, like restricting abortion when a child in a womb is viable.

And so I think every Democrat is going to have to answer the following question, which is, do you support any legal limits on abortion? Because where the American people are, while they might have differing opinions about being overall pro-life or overall pro- [00:10:00] choice, they're definitely against late-term abortions and they're definitely against taxpayer paid abortions. And that's a question that Democrats have to answer from now until the election. But what I'll also say is that I think Democrats put themselves in danger if abortion is the only thing that they talk about because clearly when you see abortion versus the other bread and butter issues like inflation and gas prices and crime in their neighborhoods, those bread and butter issues still outrank [00:10:30] abortion by quite a margin.

Jason Altmire: I want to drill down to some of the individual races are happening across the country. And as you certainly know better than anybody, the narrative among

many political observers is the Republicans have not fielded the strongest slate of candidates that they might otherwise have given the primary outcomes. And I just want to give you the opportunity to respond to that. You hear a lot about the missed opportunity in many of these states. Just before we [00:11:00] get into some of these specific candidates and states, what's your response to that criticism?

Matt Moon: Well, my overall response is that I think Washington and those who think they know what conventional wisdom is, is usually really bad at picking candidates. It's our position that our candidates are a high quality because many of them don't come from politics. And I think the conventional wisdom as well, you have to have some political experience in order to [00:11:30] do really well as a candidate, when in fact career politicians and those involved in politics aren't necessarily what voters want right now. What I will say is that amongst all of our nominees, we're very confident in their ability to win their races. Not only because of the national environment, but because of what they have to offer to voters versus the Democrat's record of voting nearly 100% with Joe Biden.

And in certain cases, in some [00:12:00] areas of the country, in specific states where we're going after Democrat incumbents, do we acknowledge that some of these races are going to be very close? Yes, but I think there is a wide gap between what voters want to see in their candidates and what elite conventional establishment wisdom says is a good candidate versus a bad candidate.

Jason Altmire: I mentioned in the beginning that the Republicans need to net one gained seat. [00:12:30] And there are three states that appear to be in play, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin, where it would be a flip for the Democrats or the Democrats to win. Senator Toomey and Senator Portman are retiring, Senator Johnson in Wisconsin, who you work for, is running for reelection. How do you see those three states playing out? Because if the Republicans were to lose one or more of those states, then the challenge of retaking the Senate becomes that much greater.

Matt Moon: I think Dr. Oz versus [00:13:00] John Fetterman is a race that we're confident in, and we know is a race that will be a close race. And what we're going to do is to make sure that folks know about the record of John Fetterman, who is a Bernie Sanders progressive, that has once said, because he is the chair of the Board of Pardons in Pennsylvania, that he wants to release and commute the sentences of as many criminals as he can. He also currently has a transparency problem [00:13:30] with his health issues obviously. After he had a stroke, we're glad that he's getting better obviously, but it took him two days to reveal that he was hospitalized in the first place, it took him a few weeks to reveal that he had heart problems. And I think he has a problem when it comes to being as accessible to both reporters and to the general public for the rest of the campaign, if he isn't fully transparent about the health issues that he [00:14:00] has.

And we feel that Dr. Oz is a great candidate who is working hard on the ground after a really, really tough primary battle. I'll say that in Ohio, this is a state that's gone pretty solidly Republican for the last few cycles. And we feel confident that JD Vance will beat Tim Ryan because Tim Ryan is running a campaign as a Republican telling folks that he wants to fund the police and that he loves Donald Trump's tariffs on other countries. [00:14:30] And it's an easy message to take down because his 100% voting record with Joe Biden is the reality of the situation, which is why he's trying to run as far away from it as possible. But it is a message strategy that is a straw house and not a brick house. I feel the most confident about Ron Johnson. He has won two very tough, very close races because he knows the state better than anyone else.

And [00:15:00] what I keep on hearing from Wisconsinites about Ron Johnson is that they might not agree with everything that he says, but they know that he's telling the truth versus the now democratic nominee, Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, who has a pretty progressive and far-left record that he's going to have to defend versus Ron Johnson. And I think it's a contrast that we're going to be looking forward to, and we're going to exploit over the next two and a half months.

Jason Altmire: And moving [00:15:30] to the Southeast. If you look at the states of Georgia and Florida, two similar but reversed situations of the incumbent is running for reelection in Georgia, that Senator Warnock, a relatively new Democratic Senator, running against Herschel Walker, the very famous football player, Heisman Trophy winner and NFL running back, and businessman as well. And then in Florida, you have Senator Rubio, longtime Senator in Florida, very well- [00:16:00] known, running for reelection as a Republican, of course, against Val Demings, very strong candidate Democrat incumbent Congresswoman, former police chief in Orlando, strong democratic pedigree, running a good solid campaign. Can you maybe talk about what you see in those two races?

Matt Moon: I think Marco Rubio is in solid position to win reelection, not just because of the national environment, but he's one of the hardest working candidates out there. For Florida, [00:16:30] I think it will be a fairly big margin and a big margin in Florida obviously is not a big margin everywhere else because it's still somewhat of a closely divided state. And while Val Demings has been raising a lot of money and putting a lot of that money into TV ads trying to show off her law enforcement career, she has the same 100% voting record with Biden that Tim Ryan has as fellow House members. That includes [00:17:00] a lot of anti crime-fighting votes that go in stark contrast to her public safety career.

That's something where we believe that the Rubio campaign and we, as Republicans, are going to continue to campaign on. As for Georgia, I think this is a race where all the polls show that it's very tight, but when you take a look at the way Herschel Walker has campaigned [00:17:30] around the state, as of late, he is sort of an icon in Georgia. He has the name ID that other candidates would dream to have, and he also pairs that with a positive message. And then you've

got Raphael Warnock who, unlike some of his Democrat Senate counterparts who have been trying to run away from the more far-left ideology that has become the orthodoxy of the Democratic Party, he has embraced a lot of it and he's campaigning [00:18:00] on it. And so we believe that at the end of the day, Georgia is still a Republican state that's going to deliver Herschel Walker a victory there.

Jason Altmire: I want to move to the Southwest and talk about Nevada and Arizona. But I did want to just follow up about Herschel Walker because it's been in the news, he's made some, I think it's fair to say, off-the-wall statements, maybe misstatements. Do you feel that the media portrayals of his campaign [00:18:30] are accurate because you see a lot of these video clips come out, day after day, but how's he really playing on the ground in Georgia?

Matt Moon: Well, I think one of the missteps, both the media and Democratic groups and allies of Raphael Warnock have done is try to make hay out of his previous mental illness issues, where he has actually proactively talked about these things, has proactively talked about the mistakes [00:19:00] that he's made in the past. And in his own words, to help other people who have mental illness and who have been in these situations, to help them recover. And so a lot of these attacks that Democrats are making on Herschel Walker, I think are very misplaced because Herschel has been open and transparent about his past, and willing to talk about his past in a way to both help people and to be transparent with [00:19:30] what's happened in his life and how far he's come along. I mean, he's a real success story in that way. And that's why I think he'll also make for a good United States Senator and a good role model.

Jason Altmire: And in Nevada and Arizona, you have Democratic incumbent senators that are running for reelection. Both of those are going to play a huge role in who wins the Senate, who's in control of the Senate for the next two years, so how do you see those two states going?

Matt Moon: I think these two states, more [00:20:00] than anything else, will hinge on two things. One, the border crisis, and two, the Hispanic vote. When it comes to the border crisis, I think you've seen both Mark Kelly and Catherine Cortez Masto, try to sidestep a lot of what the Biden administration's border policies have been, but they have a voting record of voting in line with exactly what the Biden administration and Democrats want. You have Mark Kelly trying to of have it [00:20:30] both ways for instance, on whether or not to get rid of Title 42. And he's flip-flopped on that issue several times, but most recently voting against keeping Title 42 in place to help secure our border. And in both of these cases, you have very large Hispanic populations that have been a growing part of the overall American electorate. And as the polls have shown and as election results have been shown over the [00:21:00] past few cycles, Hispanic voters are turning more and more Republican.

We've done plenty of polling of Hispanics in our battleground states. And what they tell us is that they do want the border to be secure, they are very worried about inflation. And because a lot of those Hispanic voters are middle class and working-class voters, they've told us in polls and focus groups that they're frustrated that they can't take their kids out of failing public schools [00:21:30] because they can't afford to put their kids into private schools in some of these places. So the trend that you've been seeing in places like Texas, among Hispanic voters, you should expect to see in Nevada and Arizona to help deliver wins for our Republican candidates there.

Jason Altmire: So in summary of all of this, and when you look across the country, you deal with this every day, is it fair to say that you feel pretty confident that the Republicans are going to retake the Senate?

Matt Moon: I feel very confident that [00:22:00] Republicans will take the Senate. And a couple of the states that haven't been mentioned include Colorado and Washington. We've got two great candidates there in what are dark blue to solid blue states in usual years, if you take the conventional wisdom. But both Joe O'Dea and Tiffany smiley are fantastic candidates, who've raised money, who are challenging incumbents [00:22:30] who have not only hued far left on policy, but are both seen as ineffective in their states. And in this environment where this wave that we're seeing that could become bigger, we may see Republican candidates win in Colorado and Washington.

Jason Altmire: Well, Matt Moon, the Deputy Executive Director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. He is a busy man because the NRSC is overseeing the Republicans' effort [00:23:00] all across the country in all of these states that we've talked about. So Matt, really appreciate your time. Thank you for being with us.

Matt Moon: Oh, thank you so much, Jason, really appreciate it.

Jason Altmire: Thanks for joining me for this episode of the Career Education Report. Subscribe and rate us on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. For more information, visit our website at career.org and follow us on Twitter @cecued, that's @C-E- [00:23:30] C-U-E-D. Thank you for listening.