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[The Most Important Vote on Healthcare Reform?](#)

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On Tuesday, January 19th, voters in Massachusetts will go to the polls in the state's Senate special election to fill the seat left by Senator Edward Kennedy after his 47 years of service. The special election comes on the same day that the 2nd session of the 111th congress reconvenes in order to, among other items on President Obama's domestic agenda, vote on the healthcare bill that has been intensely debated over the prior 12 months. Not only is the race symbolically significant considering Sen. Kennedy's years championing the cause of Healthcare in the Senate, but the outcome of the election has a critical bearing over the voting on and passing of the current healthcare bill, as a Republican victory would deliver a blow to the Democrats' filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

After the death of Sen. Edward Kennedy on August 25th of last year, Massachusetts democratic leaders reversed a state law which disallowed the Governor's appointment of a replacement Senator to fill a seat in the event of it being vacated. On September 25th, Paul Kirk, a long-time Kennedy aide and former Democratic National Committee chairman was seated in the US Senate after being appointed by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick. Gov. Patrick also chose January 19th, 2010 as the date of the Senate special election. After the December 8th party primaries, the Republican Party nominated State Senator Scott Brown, and the Democratic Party nominated Attorney General Martha Coakley[i].

Brown has guaranteed that, if seated, he will cast his vote against the Healthcare Reform bill in the Senate. A 41st Republican seat in the Senate, coupled with the loss of the Democrats' 60th seat would jeopardize not only the Democrats' Healthcare Reform plans, but would cast doubts about other items on President Obama's legislative docket at least until this fall's mid-term Senate elections. But, even greater questions remain there with the imminent retiring of Senators Dodd and Dorgan[ii].

Are current Congressional Democrats and President Obama willing to make yet more concessions in the Healthcare Reform bill, or is Martha Coakley Healthcare Reform's last great hope?

Sources:

[i]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate_special_election_in_Massachusetts,_2010

[ii] <http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-na-senate6-2010jan06,0,7077974.story>

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