

POLITICAL VIEWS



FROM THE KINGDOM

BY BRENDAN HADASH

Open Doors to the Senate

The fate of all gay and lesbian civil rights for the rest of our lifetime is at stake. The next president and Senate will choose up to three Supreme Court justices, who make decisions on everything from same-gender marriage to gay and lesbian rights to serve in the military to whether gays can be Boy Scouts.

Thirteen senate races in the country will primarily decide who runs the senate. In five of them, incumbent senators have retired to leave them open, and those are the ones I'll focus on. Of course, many races are still in

comments about candidate records on Human Rights Campaign reports from the 101st 103rd and 105th congresses.

The five open seats are in New Jersey, Florida, Nevada, Rhode Island, and New York. Because of the difficulty in defeating an incumbent, these will be the most hotly contested races in the country. Of the five, three will not produce any great change in support for gay and lesbian rights: one race looks good for us, and one looks bad.

The Good, the Bad, and the Inconsequential

In New Jersey, Republican Governor Christine Whitman,

dent makes it hard for unrepresentative Republican U.S. Reps like Bob Franks or Dick Zimmer to win.

In Rhode Island, we have two allies squaring off: Mayor Lincoln Chaffee (R) and U.S. Rep. Bob Weygand (D). The mayor's father is retiring Senator John Chaffee, who has voted with us 100 percent. Weygand, who also has a perfect record of supporting our issues, is leading in the race.

Florida is our good news state. Retiring Senator Mack (R) voted with us only an average of 21 percent of the time. In a June poll, U.S. Rep Bill Nelson (D), who voted with us twice as much as Mack, led right-wing U.S. Rep. Bill McCollum (R) by a 48 percent to 33 percent margin.

Meanwhile, Nevada is our bad news state. Retiring Senator Bryan (D) voted for us two-thirds of the time. Things looked good while attorney general Frankie Sue Del Papa (D) was nearly tied in the polls with U. S. Rep Johns Ensign (R,) who voted for us only 25 percent of the time. However, she's dropped out of the race. This leaves multimillionaire Ed Bernstein, a Las Vegas trial attorney and talk show host who has never held public office, as the likely Democratic candidate.

New York is my heartbreak

state: Moynahan (D), one of the greatest supporters of our rights in the Senate, is stepping down.

recall, Lott was the senator who compared gays and lesbians to alcoholics and kleptomaniacs.

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He was one of only 14 senators to vote against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Both candidates in this race, Republican New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Democrat Hillary Clinton, are good on our issues, but both would have probably voted for DOMA. Giuliani was keynote speaker at the Log Cabin Republican annual meeting of gay and lesbian Republicans. Hillary's opinions probably do not differ from those of President Clinton, who has been the supportive president that we have ever had — even if he did sign DOMA.

There is probably not much difference between the support that Rudy and Hillary would give us. But there is one important difference. As a Republican, Giuliani will vote for homophobic Trent Lott for Majority Leader of the Senate. If you

What does that mean? The Majority Leader assigns senators to the judiciary committee, who will rule on who can become Supreme Court justices. Lott is likely to stack the justice committee with conservatives, who will only allow justices opposed to our rights to join the Supreme Court.

The Democrats currently hold three of the five seats discussed, and lead in three of the races. In order to take over the Senate, they would have to win six seats, which would likely mean winning New York and five of the eight close races I'll discuss next month. One of those races includes one right here at home in Vermont, a race that might well be the deciding vote that will decide the future of gay rights for the entire country. ▼

Brendan Hadash is minister of St. Johnsbury Universalist Church.

Op-Ed

Out in the Mountains

flux. Candidates are still declaring their intentions to run or dropping out of races, so I'm sticking with the likely candidates and opponents. I'm basing

who supports gay and lesbian rights and was favored to win, has announced that she will not run. This leaves former Governor Jim Florio (D), who signed the gay rights bill into law, as a likely replacement for the supportive Senator Laugtenberg. Bob Grant running as a right-wing indepen-

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