

**Tea Party Politics in a Blue State:
Dino Rossi and the 2010 Washington Senate Election**

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Introduction

While the Tea Party was making waves nationally during the 2010 elections, the influence of the Tea Party appeared to be less pronounced in the Washington state U.S. Senate election. In this chapter, we examine Washington State’s unique political arrangement to understand why the Tea Party failed to influence the 2010 race in the same way it did in other states, such as South Carolina, Kentucky, and Utah. We argue Washington’s lack of a traditional closed primary, coupled with a moderate-to-progressive leaning overall electorate prevented Tea Party candidates from gaining a foothold in 2010. Overall, Republicans picked up just one open U.S. House seat in Washington, with Democrats holding on to Patty Murray’s U.S. Senate seat, as well as the state house, and state senate. In reviewing the Evergreen state, we start by describing the profile of Tea Party supporters in Washington. Second, we examine the political environment—the context of the Senate race—in Washington State during the election season. Third, we look at the primary and general election in detail. Finally, we assess the Tea Party’s overall influence in the 2010 election.

The Tea Party in Washington

While Washington was not the hotbed of Tea Party activity in 2010, there was a significant Tea Party presence, particularly in the East. Eastern Washington is largely rural and more conservative than the rest of the state but the smaller population means that statewide candidates also have to win in the West, and perform well in King County. King County includes Seattle and is both more densely populated and more liberal than the other counties in Washington. In fact, it’s possible for a candidate or initiative to lose in 38 of 39 counties, but to win by a big margin in King County and ultimately win statewide.

Table 1: Composition of the Electorate

Region	Democrat	Republican	Independent	% of total electorate
Statewide	35%	28%	37%	100%
Puget Sound	41%	24%	35%	52%
Rest of W. WA	33%	28%	39%	26%
Eastern WA	23%	38%	39%	22%

*Registered voters by region based on the 2010 Washington Poll

As the table above reveals, Republican voters are significantly outnumbered in the Puget Sound region by Democrats, meaning that Republican candidates need a large share of the independent vote to be successful statewide. As a general rule, with King County (the Puget

Sound area) comprising one-third of all votes, GOP candidates need at least 40 percent of the vote to have a chance of winning statewide. Indeed, the Secretary of State, Republican Sam Reed, won 52 percent of the vote in King County in his 2008 general election contest.

Like the Republican Party, the Tea Party had higher levels of support outside of King County, particularly in Eastern Washington prior to the primary election. Table 2 shows the distribution of Tea Party approval by region in Washington state.

Table 2: Tea Party Approval by Region

TP Support	Statewide	Puget Sound	Rest of W. WA	Eastern WA
True Believers (Strongly Approve)	19%	15%	22%	28%
Middle of the road	26%	23%	20%	26%
True Skeptics (Strongly Disapprove)	27%	34%	23%	18%
No opinion / don't know	28%	28%	31%	28%

* Based on the 2010 Washington Poll; n=1686 RVs

As the table reveals, Tea Party approval is unsurprisingly lowest in the Puget Sound area and highest in Eastern Washington. By the time of the general election this had shifted somewhat, with Tea Party approval slightly higher in Western Washington excluding King County. While there was little change statewide in Tea Party support between the primary and the general election, support actually declined substantially in Eastern Washington between May and November. While two Tea Party candidates vied for the Senate seat in the primary, by the general there were no statewide Tea Party candidates and enthusiasm for the movement may have subsided in Washington state.

Demographically, Tea Party supporters in Washington were older, tended to have higher income levels than average Washingtonians, were more likely to be male, to at least have some college education, and tended to be conservative and Republican. This fits with the demographic characteristics of the Tea Party nationally, according to a poll conducted by the New York Times/CBS in April of 2010.¹ Perhaps one important difference of Tea Party enthusiasm from national trends, is that Republicans, which tend towards moderate in Washington were not as enamored with the movement, and more Independents opposed, not supported the Tea Party. Overall, just 43% of Republicans said they strongly approved of the Tea Party, and 19% of Independents strongly approved of the Tea Party compared to 24% of Independents who said they strongly disapproved of it.

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html?_r=1&ref=politics

Tea Party supporters also displayed stronger tendencies toward social conservatism than non-supporters, perhaps making it difficult for their candidates to gain statewide traction in Washington State. On the issue of same sex marriage, Tea Party supporters were overwhelmingly against giving same sex couples the right to marry and much more likely than non-supporters to favor giving same sex couples no legal recognition whatsoever.

Tea Party supporters also tended to hold more negative views toward immigration, with approximately 35 percent of Tea Party supporters strongly agreeing with the statement “immigration is changing the culture in the U.S. for the worse”. This is contrasted with approximately 12 percent agreement amongst non-supporters and 23 percent by Republicans.² This suggests a greater tendency toward nativism amongst Tea Party supporters than that amongst non-supporters or Republicans. They were also significantly more likely to favor deportation in response to undocumented immigration and to express less agreement with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants than the general population, with the table below highlighting the significant differences between Tea Party supporters and the general public in Washington on policies toward undocumented immigration.

Likewise, we found Tea Party supporters to be far outside the mainstream of Washingtonians on issues of race, affirmative action, and racial profiling. In the Washington Poll, strong supporters of the Tea Party demonstrated overwhelming support for strict anti-immigrant laws such as Arizona’s SB 1070, support for racial profiling of Muslim and Middle Eastern Americans at airports, and that if Blacks would just try harder, they would be equal to Whites.

To summarize, in Washington the Tea Party largely found support in Eastern Washington and in the West outside of King County. Overall, approximately 20% of the population in Washington expressed strong support for the Tea Party based on the May and November Washington Polls. Tea Party supporters tended to be male, have higher income levels than the average, and at least some college education. On same sex marriage, Tea Party supporters were strongly against giving couples the right to marry and much more in favor of giving them no legal recognition than were other Washingtonians. On immigration, Tea Party supporters displayed stronger nativistic tendencies, even than Republicans, and favored deportation and felony charges for undocumented immigrants at a much higher rate than the rest of the population. They also were significantly less likely to approve of a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants than non-supporters.

While it other research has documented that Tea Party sympathizers in other states and nationally also tend to hold such conservative viewpoints beyond budgetary issues (Parker and Barreto 2010), in Washington state the median voter tends to be center-left and candidates on both the left and the right play to this centrist paradigm. For example, in 2009 Washington

² Based on data from the May 2010 Washington Poll

state voters passed Referendum 71 by well over 100,000 votes which gave full legal recognition and equal rights to same-sex partners. In previous years, anti-immigrant measures failed to win enough signatures to even qualify for the ballot. Thus, Washington state may not have been the natural setting for Tea Party candidates to influence statewide election outcomes.

Table 3: Attitudes on issues of diversity by Tea Party support

Questions:	True Believers of Tea Party	Middle of Road	True Skeptics	Never Heard of	All Voters	Diff. True Believers v. Middle of Road
Number of Observations (N)	N=335	N=440	N=464	N=456	N=1695	
While equal opportunity for blacks and minorities to succeed is important, it's not really the government's job to guarantee it. (Agree)	74%	57%	31%	54%	52%	+17%
Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve (Disagree)	78%	65%	43%	59%	59%	+13%
If blacks would only try harder, they would be just as well off as whites. (Agree)	46%	27%	14%	22%	26%	+19%
Immigration is changing the culture in the U.S. for the worse. (Agree)	54%	30%	16%	35%	32%	+24%
The immigration law in Arizona which requires police to question people they suspect are illegal immigrants for proof of legal status (Approve)	88%	54%	21%	58%	52%	+34%
Welcoming immigrants to US society, even immigrants who entered illegally makes America better off in the long run (Agree)	23%	51%	73%	47%	50%	-28%
Barack Obama's policy of engaging with Muslim countries (Disapprove)	73%	34%	7%	29%	33%	+39%
We should not single out Muslims or Middle Easterners for airport security stops (Disagree)	63%	46%	31%	41%	43%	+17%
Gay and lesbian couples should have the same legal right to marry as straight couples (Agree)	18%	39%	61%	37%	41%	-21%
Compared to the size of their group, lesbians and gays have too much political power (Agree)	52%	32%	5%	22%	25%	+20%

Note: Cell entries represent the percent in each column category

The Context of the Race

Washington, like the rest of the country, was in the doldrums heading into the 2010 election season. Washington faced a projected budget deficit of \$4.6 billion for the fiscal period 2011-2013, which would necessitate significant budget cuts.³ Belief that Washington was heading the right direction had steadily declined between 2006 and 2010 based on data from the Washington Poll.

Table 4: Voter Mood in Washington

Direction	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Right Direction	63	58	50	44	37
Wrong Track	27	31	37	38	47
DK/Refused	10	11	14	18	16

By 2010 47 percent of Washingtonians thought the state was on the wrong track, which suggested that Washington could experience the same anti-incumbent wave that had swept through other states. The national environment was also anti-Democratic in the lead up to the 2010 election, which was reflected in the heavy losses eventually suffered by Democrats in November. That said, Washington is generally a more Democratic state, with 7 of the 9 statewide offices held by Democrats and Obama favorability generally higher in Washington than it was nationally. Obama's support varied by region but was quite strong in the Puget Sound area, with 64.5 percent of voters in this region viewing Obama at least somewhat favorably. Statewide, Obama was viewed at least somewhat favorably by 55.8 percent of registered voters.

Table 5: Obama Favorability by Region

	Statewide	Puget	Eastern	West/Other
Strongly Fav.	34	41	23	28
Somewhat Fav.	22	23	21	20
Somewhat Unfav.	10	8	10	15

³ <http://www.governor.wa.gov/priorities/budget/faq.asp>

Strongly Unfav.	33	26	44	36
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Obama’s favorability in Puget Sound suggested that despite the feeling amongst the electorate that Washington was on the wrong track, the state, and King County in particular, remained favorable to Democrats. While Eastern Washington was far less enamored of the Democratic Party, the region’s low population meant that any Republican or Tea Party candidate would have to win significant portions of the electorate in Western Washington and King County if they hoped to take any statewide offices.

The 2010 Washington primary featured a crowded field of 15 senatorial candidates, but only 4 of these were considered viable possibilities for the Congressional seat that was up for grabs in the general election. Patty Murray, the incumbent Democratic senator, remained popular in Washington, despite the national anti-incumbent mood and simmering Tea Party sentiments, and was widely expected to move through to the general election with little difficulty. Data from the May 2010 Washington Poll highlighted Murray’s strong position statewide, with 50.34 percent at least somewhat approving of the job she was doing. This is contrasted with the 35.31 percent who at least somewhat disapproved of Murray.

With Murray in a strong position heading into the primary, the main question was who she would face in the general election. Three Republicans would face off in the primary to determine who would get their shot at Murray in November. Dino Rossi, a former state senator and two-time loser for the governorship, was the establishment candidate and was generally considered to have the best shot at unseating Murray in the fall. Paul Akers, a Bellingham businessman, and Clint Didier, a Pasco farmer and former NFL player, were Rossi’s Republican competition for the August primary.

Candidate Profiles

Patty Murray

Two-time statewide loser Dino Rossi faced three term incumbent Patty Murray, who had first been elected to the Senate in 1992 on a “mom in tennis shoes” campaign theme. Murray, who at that time was a state senator, outpaced Republican congressman Rod Chandler, 54 – 46 percent.⁴ In the Senate, Murray received a seat on the Appropriations committee, and by 2001, she was chair of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee. This appointment has helped bring federal spending to Washington State, and Murray has used it for her political advantage. On policy matters, Murray has worked on behalf of companies such as Boeing—which is based in the Seattle area—and otherwise has a generally liberal voting record,

⁴ <http://nationaljournal.com/almanac/2008/people/wa/was1.php>

including pro-choice stances and votes against going to war in Iraq. In her two other campaigns for Senate in 1998 and 2004, Murray easily defeated her Republican opponents. But, given the poor national mood and anti-incumbency in 2010, Murray's victory appeared all but reassured.

Paul Akers

Paul Akers had built a successful Bellingham business around his invention of the FastCap, a sticker for covering exposed screws and nails. Akers had no political experience but was encouraged to run when he was at a New York event hosted by the Republican National Committee. Akers, like Didier, courted social conservatives, with his website proclaiming his belief that marriage should be between one man and one woman, as well as his anti-abortion beliefs. Akers also professed tough stances on illegal immigration and gun rights. He enjoyed some Tea Party support, primarily from the local Bellingham chapter and sought to establish himself as to the right of Rossi. However, lacking Rossi's profile or funding or Didier's conservative endorsements, he seemed like a long shot to make it through the primary.

Clint Didier

Clint Didier, like Akers, positioned himself to the right of Rossi on social issues and was also a political outsider. His official website, like Akers', stated his opposition to same sex marriage and abortion, as well as tough stances on immigration and the defense of gun rights. Didier had a significantly different personal profile than Akers though. A Pasco alfalfa farmer and former professional football player, Didier was endorsed early in the primary by Tea Party darlings Ron Paul and Sarah Palin. These high profile endorsements made Didier the biggest challenge to Rossi in the primary since they crowned Didier the de facto Tea Party candidate for Washington.

The Primary Election

Clint Didier and Paul Akers both ran with hopes of riding the anti-incumbent, anti-establishment wave to victory in Washington but they faced a significant structural hurdle in the form of Washington's top-two primary. The Top Two Primary was passed by initiative in 2004, and went into effect in the 2008 election season.⁵ This unique primary system meant that Washington voters had just two candidates from which to choose in the general election. In other states, mainstream GOP candidates who were essentially ousted by more conservative Tea Party backed candidates in the primaries, could run as independent candidates in the general. The shining example is Charlie Christ, who, once ousted by Marco Rubio in the GOP primary, ran as an independent ultimately garnering 30% of the vote in a losing bid. No such option is available in Washington State. Clearly, election rules would have a huge impact on the efficacy of the Tea Party in the 2010 Washington senate race.

⁵ <http://wei.secstate.wa.gov/osos/en/Pages/Top2PrimaryFAQ.aspx>

However, as political outsiders who lacked the funding or high profile name of Rossi, both Didier and Akers had to win big among Tea Party supporters and Republicans if they hoped to move on to the general election. Data from the May 2010 Washington Poll suggested how big of a hurdle they faced.

Table 6: Republican and Tea Party Voters Certain of Voting for Rossi

Date	Statewide	Puget Sound	Rest of W. WA	Eastern WA
Republican	60	65	53	59
Tea Party	58	58	50	67

Both Akers and Didier had yet to establish their names in May, but Rossi had already essentially captured a number of voters based on name recognition alone before the primary even got heated. Amongst Republicans and Tea Party supporters a majority had already decided in May that they would vote for Rossi. This made Rossi the clear frontrunner in May, with three months to go to the primary.

A fiscal hawk, Rossi targeted his message at fiscal conservatives and moderate voters, staying relatively mute on social issues. The issues section of his website was dedicated to economic policies and in the months leading up to the primary Rossi largely avoided Tea Party events.⁶ An article appearing on July 10th in the Seattle Times is illustrative of why Rossi avoided Tea Party events. In the article, Bellingham doctor Lee Hein and his Nancy left a Tea Party forum irritated that Rossi didn't show. Both said that Rossi had lost their vote by not appearing, but when asked if they would vote for him in the general election, both said they would vote for anyone other than Patty Murray.⁷ Tea Party supporters would, if Rossi won the primary, support him in the general, even if they had backed Didier or Akers. The Top Two Primary system, combined with Rossi's funding and name recognition, essentially meant that as long as Didier or Akers did not gain significant steam in the polls, Rossi could aim his message at moderate voters and expect to get a significant portion of the Tea Party vote in the general election.

In July, Rossi did begin to court Tea Party support, signing the Contract from America and revealing endorsements from the anti-gay and religious conservative Family Research Council and the Tea Party-inspired FreedomWorks.⁸ Rossi still spurned the large Tea Party gatherings but did meet with Tea Party groups privately according to the Seattle Times.⁹ Polling ahead of the primary suggested why Rossi, when asked why people should vote for him over Clint Didier, responded, "I don't run against Republicans. I've got three months to compare and contrast myself with Patty Murray. You decide for yourself". Table 7 shows support for Didier and Rossi amongst Republicans and Tea Party supporters.

⁶ <http://www.dinorossi.com/issues/>

⁷ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012327319_rossi11m.html

⁸ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012608171_apuswashingtonsenate.html

⁹ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012600730_rossi12m.html

Table 7: Support for Didier and Rossi

	Rossi	Didier	Akers	Other
Republican	63	14	5	18
Tea Party	56	24	6	14

*SurveyUSA Poll conducted 8/6-8/9, n=1000¹⁰

As table 7 reveals, support for Rossi had actually eroded very little since May. Didier had gained some steam, but not nearly enough to pose a significant challenge to Rossi. Rossi, trying to capture independent and moderate voters and facing little challenge from either Akers or Didier, could afford to not run against Republicans because neither Akers or Didier ever gained enough ground to force Rossi to run against them.

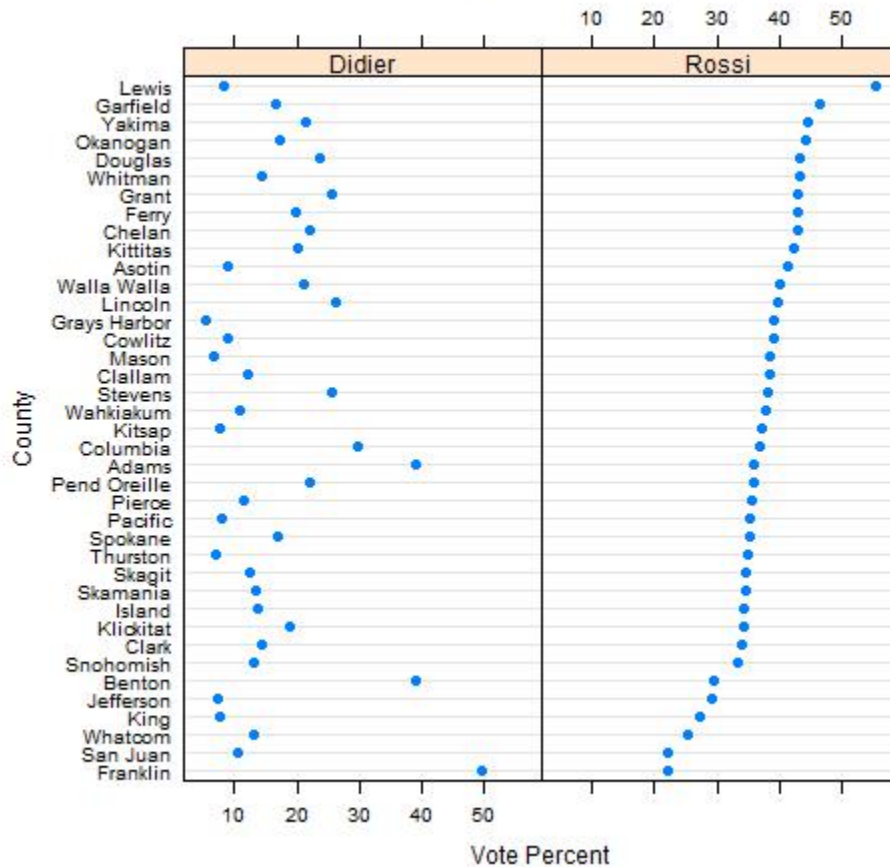
The outcome of the primary seemed all but ensured based on the pre-primary polling and in fact the final numbers reflected Rossi's strong standing in Washington. Rossi captured 33.33 percent of the vote, second to Murray's 46.22 percent. Didier came in a distant third with 12.76 percent. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the vote between Rossi and Didier in the 2010 primary.

Ultimately, despite endorsements from Palin and Paul, Didier won only three counties, his home county of Franklin and the adjoining counties of Adams and Benton. Didier, after conceding the race, refused to endorse Rossi, asking that Rossi first agree to take strong positions on abortion, taxes, and government spending. Rossi refused to accede to Didier's demands, stating that he would not submit to , "demands made by anyone, even people with whom he agrees".¹¹ Of course, the polling had shown that Rossi could bet on most of Didier's supporters backing him regardless of whether or not Didier endorsed him. This could have been a misstep based on the eventual outcome of the general election.

¹⁰ <http://www.surveyusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=f9bb1102-9a1a-4a4d-963d-9c6143c23c3b&c=28>

¹¹ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012681809_apwawashingtonsenatedidier5thldwrite thru.html

Figure 1
Rossi and Diddier Primary Vote Share by County



The General Election

This section examines the results of the general election. We base our analysis on survey data, campaign websites, newspaper stories, and advertising strategy. Republican Dino Rossi and three term incumbent Democrat Patty Murray emerged from Washington State's Top Two Primary system in August, 2010, leaving two and a half months to compare and contrast each other before the voters. As the Democratic incumbent with the largest vote share in the primary, Murray seemed to be well positioned to win the general.

However, Rossi and Murray found themselves in a close contest, as polling consistently showed the head-to-head matchup within 2-8 points. Table 8 reveals a snapshot of the race at different time points between the primary and the general election.

Table 8: Head-to-Head Polling Snapshot From Primary to General¹²

Poll	Date	N	Murray	Rossi	Murray – Rossi
Rasmussen	7/28	750 LV	49	47	+2
Rasmussen	8/31	750 LV	47	50	-3
Survey USA	9/19	609 LV	50	48	+2
Washington Poll	10/14	500 RV	50	42	+8
Washington Poll	10/28	500 RV	49	45	+4
Final Result	11/03		52.3	47.6	4.7

Table 8 clearly reveals that the general election was competitive. Both candidates and their campaigns acted in ways consistent with a competitive electoral environment: spending lavishly on attack ads, and raising considerable funds. On separate occasions, President Obama, Michelle Obama, and Joe Biden made trips to the western part of the state to campaign for Patty Murray.¹³ Obama’s rally at the University of Washington in late October was politically beneficial for Murray as Obama was very popular among young people (64 percent approve in October Washington Poll) and Puget Sound dwellers (64 percent approve).

By mid October the poll trend lines revealed, if anything, a slight Murray lead, with Nate Silver, author of the influential website fivethirtyeight.com, concluding that “Murray may be holding a slight lead.”¹⁴

General election contests in Washington State often hinge on the two populated swing counties to the north and south of King County -- Pierce and Snohomish. An article written in National Journal’s Hotline in late August, 2010, summed up the Democratic candidate’s geographic strategy: “When one Dem operative began working in WA, her boss gave her an easy to follow piece of advice: “You can see all the votes you need to win from the top of the Space Needle.””¹⁵

If Democrats maintain a large lead in King County and split or narrowly win Pierce and Snohomish, they are virtually guaranteed a victory. Turning to the results, in 2010, Murray won Snohomish County 52 – 48 percent of 265,000 votes cast, and Rossi won Pierce by less than 2,000 votes of 270,000 votes cast. Figure 2 shows Murray’s vote share by county in the 2010 general election. While Rossi won the majority of counties, especially those in Eastern

¹² <http://www.surveyusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=8bead0ce-327f-4867-a642-612add78c02f>

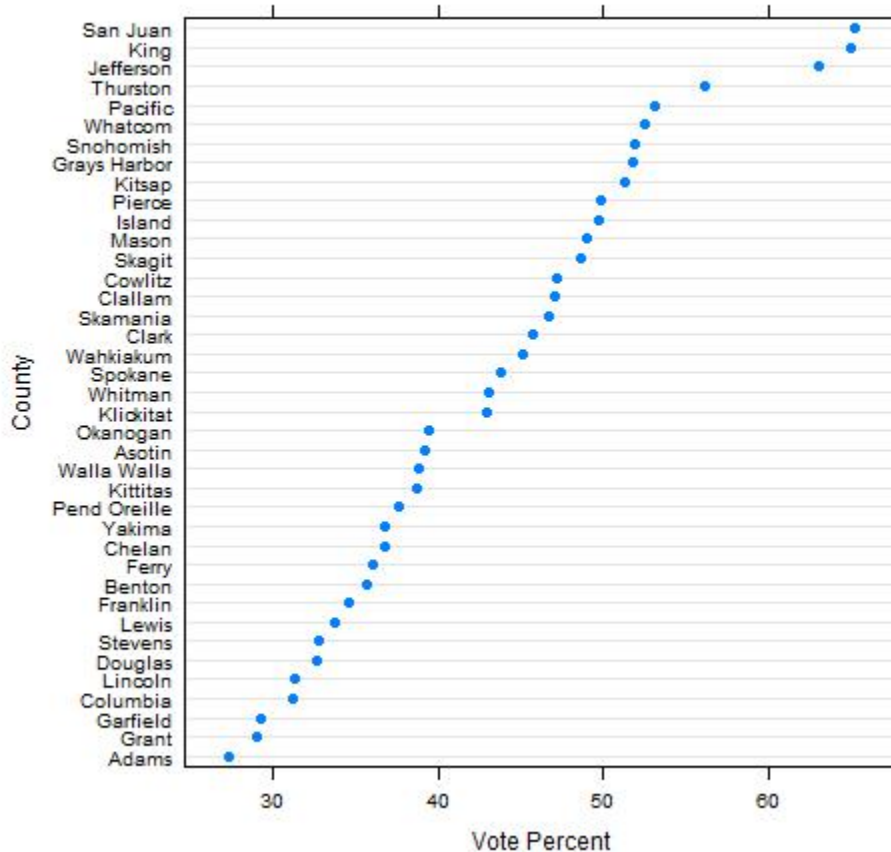
¹³ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2013135501_obama12m.html

¹⁴ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2013154840_polls14m.html

¹⁵ http://hotlineoncall.nationaljournal.com/archives/2010/08/patty_murrays_p.php

Washington, Murray secured her victory by focusing specifically on voters residing in the Puget Sound region.

Figure 2
Murray Vote Share by County



In terms of demographics, exit poll figures reveal a noticeable gender gap, with Murray winning among women 56 – 44 percent.¹⁶ Murray had run several ads specifically targeting women. Given her reputation as a “mom in tennis shoes”, this result is not surprising. With respect to income, Murray outperformed Rossi among people making less than \$50,000 a year by a margin of 63 -37 percent. Rossi won households making \$50,000 or more by a smaller margin (53 -47 percent). In perhaps the most interesting demographic split, which in many ways speaks to the regional East-West split in Washington, college graduates supported Murray 55 – 45 percent, whereas non-college graduates supported Murray 55 - 44 percent. Finally, Democrats (who comprised 35 percent of the poll) voted for Murray at 96 – 4 percent, Republicans (23 percent of the electorate) handed Rossi a 96 – 4 percent margin, and independents (42 percent) sided with Rossi 59 -41 percent. Rossi’s push to the middle seems to have attracted a

¹⁶ <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2010/results/polls/#WAS01p1>

sizable number of independents, however, when the results are analyzed by ideology, Murray performed notably well among moderates (35 percent of the electorate) with a 57 - 42 percent margin.

In the end, the traditional demographic disadvantages facing Washington Republican candidates were realized in these results. Rossi was unable to overcome the large and liberal voting behavior of King County and, while doing well among self-styled independent voters, did not capture the moderate voter, despite his ostensible moderation on many social issues.

Did the Tea Party Move Rossi to the Right During the General Election?

In this section we evaluate the Tea Party’s effect on Rossi’s general election strategy. We find that Rossi spent little time courting the Tea Party, and generally presented himself as a fiscal conservative less focused on social issues, such as abortion or same sex marriage. We conclude therefore that the Tea Party had relatively little influence on the general election in Washington State, especially when compared to the Tea Party influence in some other Senate contests.

As we have seen in the primary contest, Rossi outperformed the Tea Party backed candidate Didier among survey respondents who strongly approved of the Tea Party. Because Rossi did not have to mightily struggle over Tea-Party votes in the primary, when juxtaposed against a liberal Democrat—Murray—Tea party supporters would plausibly be even more supportive of Rossi than they were in the primary.

We evaluate this claim by examining survey results from a Survey USA poll conducted on August 20, 2010, just three days after the primary. Table 9 shows the results from this survey. Overall, Rossi led Murray 52 – 45 percent. Among respondents who had a favorable impression of the Tea Party (33 percent of the electorate), 94 percent supported Rossi, 4 percent supported Murray, and just 3 percent were undecided. Those unfavorable to the Tea Party (30 percent of the electorate) were essentially opposite in voting behavior: 92 percent for Murray, 7 percent for Rossi, with just 2 percent undecided. Finally, those who were neutral or had no opinion about the Tea Party split their votes between the two candidates.

Table 9: Tea Party Influence on Vote Choice, Initial General Poll

Candidate	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	No Opinion
Rossi (R)	94	7	59	41
Murray (D)	4	92	33	56
Undecided	2	2	7	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Composition	33	30	22	15

Because Rossi clearly had the strong support of Tea Party backers, he focused his campaign efforts more on independent voters (one third of the electorate) by discussing issues of taxes, government spending, and the health care bill, as opposed to couching his messaging in the words of the Constitution and other issues of social conservatism. A review of his advertisements shows little regional or substantive variation in terms of the issues he stressed. In general, he focused on Murray's votes on government spending, budget deficits, Wall Street bail outs, health care, and to a lesser extent on immigration. For example, in his ad, *Misery*, an announcer states

Record deficits, high unemployment, massive debt...the result of Murray's 18 years in Washington. Murray voted to double the national debt, voted for the costly Wall Street bailout and took half a million dollars from the same industry she helped bail out.¹⁷

On his campaign website, <http://www.dinorossi.com/issues>, Rossi discussed primarily tax issues, energy issues, health care, and defense. Only one issue could be interpreted as a socially conservative response: border and immigration issues. Clearly, his approach to the general was similar to his approach in the primary. Table 10 shows the issues that appear on his campaign website.

Table XX: Dino Rossi Campaign Issues

Issue
Economic growth and job creation
Health care
Reform tax code
Reduce government spending
Energy
Border and immigration
Defense
Veterans issues

His approach was summed up in a Seattle Times October 9 article:

In a year when the national political spotlight has followed fiery tea-party candidates arising seemingly out of nowhere to upend the political establishment, Rossi's story is

¹⁷ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdm7BA_mGr4&feature=relmfu

different. Although he's playing off voter anger and vowing to repeal President Obama's signature legislative accomplishments — the Wall Street and health-care overhauls — Rossi is no tea-party insurgent.¹⁸

His style was much more that of a small businessman concerned with low taxes and economy, and he tapped into voter anger there as opposed to the more socially conservative Tea Party rural alarmist anger. Indeed, a Seattle Times article posted on October 9 stated, “From bank and car-company bailouts to federal control of health care, he warned, ‘you're witnessing the fundamental redefinition of America — and we can't let that stand.’”¹⁹ The point is that Rossi had very little electoral incentive to move to the right, or to push hard for base votes as these voters were going to vote for him anyway. Instead, he made a calculated effort to win the hearts and minds of independent voters with a fiscally conservative message. It is impossible to know whether a more rightward shift for Rossi would have produced electorally beneficial results. It is plausible that with a more conservative constitutional message, Rossi could have motivated more people to go to the polls thereby offsetting any possible losses among independent voters. We can only assume that his pollster had tested these messages, and the campaign decided to hew a more moderate stance. Finally, because of his two previous campaigns for statewide office, it would have been harder for Rossi to emerge as a rampant Tea Partier given his fiscal campaign focus of previous campaigns.

In the end, even though Rossi did not seek out the support of his primary Tea Party rival Didier, stating that he would not submit to the demands of anyone, other Tea Party supporters, such as Keli Carender, a Seattle blogger known as “Liberty-Bell”, endorsed him.²⁰ This is indicative of the contest: he was not forced to move politically anymore to the right than he normally would have during a general election because he knew Tea Party types would support him regardless.

The Macro-Political Environment and the Tea Party

Given this arrangement, it appears that the Tea Party played a diminished role in the general election Senate contest, especially relative to other states. A search of the terms “Dino Rossi” and “Tea Party” on the Seattle Times website with dates just after the primary (late August) to just before the election (early November) produced 58 articles that jointly reference “Dino Rossi” and the “Tea Party”. A close examination indicates that many of these articles are Associated Press stories discussing various Senate races, so the connection between Dino Rossi and Tea Party is somewhat spurious. For instance, in one article entitled, “Political ads: It’s getting really nasty out there,” the article discusses a third party attack ad on Dino Rossi. But

¹⁸ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2013120903_rossi10m.html.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012701777_apwashingtensenateparty.html

later the article refers to how Democratic candidates, generally speaking, were using Tea Party-backed previous candidates' statements against them (notably Sharron Angle).

Nevertheless, this count of articles is considerably lower than searches from the same time period in states where Tea Party candidates had considerable backing. For instance, during the same time period in Nevada, 113 articles were found with a search of "Sharron Angle" and "Tea Party",²¹ 79 articles in the Louisville Courier Journal for "Rand Paul" and "Tea Party",²² and 113 articles from the Anchorage Daily News for "Joe Miller" and "Tea Party".²³ These results suggest that the macro-political environment in Washington was less charged with Tea Party influences than in other states where candidates clearly ran as Tea Party backed insurgents.

While the national effects of the Tea Party were certainly discussed in the Washington State media, the Tea Party rhetoric surrounding constitutional issues was simply not in operation in the Washington Senate contest. In Washington's third congressional district, Tea-Party backed GOP candidate Jamie Herrera was victorious on Election Day and did garner some statewide attention; however this influence did not lead to an influential statewide Tea Party movement.

²¹ <http://www.lasvegassun.com/search>

²² http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/courier_journal/advancedsearch.html

²³ <http://www.adnsearch.com/>

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