



December 14, 2017

TO: Interested Parties

FR: DSCC

RE: Republicans Have a Problem & It Isn't Roy Moore's Fault

After a stunning Democratic win in Alabama, Senate Republicans are rushing to duck responsibility and blame all of their problems on Roy Moore. But make no mistake: the same trends that our counterparts want to gloss over are emerging in Senate races across the country. Massive recruitment failures are leading to destabilizing primaries, and now even the most extreme candidates know that they can count on the GOP's ultimate support, just like Roy Moore before them.

Recruitment Failures & Destabilizing Primaries

Mitch McConnell's Senate Leadership Fund was quick to point out in their statement Tuesday night that "candidate quality matters regardless of where you are running." This is the same reasoning they offered when Moore defeated Luther Strange, [citing Strange's "handicap"](#) in a primary where he wasn't beloved by anyone and had the "shadow" of scandal hanging over his campaign.

Bottom line: at no point did Republicans think they fielded strong candidates in Alabama – and this same sentiment is widely held for the GOP candidates across the map.

Politico reported earlier this year "[there isn't a state on the Senate map where national Republicans are facing their dream candidate](#)" and the Washington Post observed that these recruitment failures have given way to "[expensive \(and, in some cases, divisive\) primaries](#)." **Read more on these trends [here](#).**

Why is this a problem? Republicans are looking in a rearview mirror at the Moore train wreck but the real catastrophe lies ahead. [FiveThirtyEight](#) put it well:

"Of course, Republicans won't have Roy Moore running in other races. **But they will have other candidates with characteristics similar to Moore** (ignoring, for now, the sexual misconduct allegations). That is, they'll have candidates who are nominated by the GOP base against the wishes of party elites and who prove to be disasters with swing voters. There could be more of them in 2018, especially with [Steve Bannon targeting "establishment" Republicans in almost every Senate race](#). Republicans have had plenty of these over past election cycles, such as Todd Akin and Richard Mourdock in 2012 and Sharron Angle, Christine

O'Donnell and Ken Buck in 2010.”

SIREN: Not One Republican Senate Candidate Opposed Moore

Look no further for confirmation in how bad the crop looks for the GOP than how they handled Roy Moore. The list of reasons why Moore was unfit for the Senate was long even before women came forward to share their stories but as **Roll Call reported, Senate candidates offered a “[warmer embrace \(or less forceful rejection\) of the Alabama GOP Senate nominee.](#)”** It may seem like a basic test to hold a candidate like Moore accountable but it’s one that an entire class of Republican Senate candidates just failed. Here are a few highlights:

AZ – When asked if she supported Roy Moore, **Congresswoman Martha McSally** declared “[It’s not my job to remove them all.](#)”

IN – Congressman **Todd Rokita** said “[I’d be comfortable with Roy Moore.](#)”

MO – **Josh Hawley** “[would not say directly](#)” if he would vote for Moore.

NV – Asked if he agreed with Mitt Romney that Moore would be a “stain” on the GOP, **Senator Dean Heller** said “[talk to my office.](#)”

OH – **Josh Mandel** “[after refusing to answer questions on Roy Moore for days,](#)” he “[shaded his statement about Moore with the ‘if true’ qualification.](#)”

MT – “[Montana State Auditor Matt Rosendale](#) said he supports Alabama GOP Senate nominee Roy Moore ‘until he’s found guilty of a crime’ and praised his public service in a Thursday radio interview.”

WI – **Kevin Nicholson** shared a mega-donor with Roy Moore but refused to [reject his wealthy supporter.](#)

McConnell Made It Happen

Don’t let the Republican handwringing distract from the fact that the strategic missteps Mitch McConnell and his allies made in Alabama led to Roy Moore’s nomination. The Majority Leader had the opportunity to follow the lead of his colleague [Alabama Senator Richard Shelby](#) and assert a write-in was a better alternative than supporting Moore. He [declined](#).

It is hard to believe McConnell will learn from Alabama and challenge the Republican candidates in these races to stand up to the likes of Roy Moore rather than cower to the base that isn’t showing up for them anyway. Then again, why listen to a guy with approval ratings this [low](#)? Look for McConnell to continue to be a drag on Republicans in 2018.

Bottom Line

The Jones campaign built an impressive operation that capitalized on the unique circumstances in Alabama. [Every single county swung in the direction](#) of Democrats. Turnout was higher in Democratic strongholds – particularly among African American voters – and Jones convinced college-educated voters who had been out-of-reach for Democrats that he was worthy of their vote. Democrats will have to do this sort of hard work in every single state.

Meanwhile, Republicans will need to answer for candidates that sound like and sided with Roy Moore.

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