



TO: THE SIMMONS CAMPAIGN TEAM

FROM: NEIL NEWHOUSE, PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

SUBJECT: THE NEW PLAYING FIELD

DATE: JANUARY 6, 2010

The news today that Senator Dodd has decided not to run for re-election shouldn't have been all that surprising. After all, his latest approval scores and ballot measures showed how difficult his re-election campaign would likely be.

However, the efforts to coronate Attorney General Blumenthal as his successor might be a little premature.

There's no question that Blumenthal's image in the state is positive and that he probably holds a lead over Rob at the current time. However, the November election is still a long ways off, and Blumenthal hasn't run a campaign against a competitive opponent in decades.

So, we ought to expect the following over the coming weeks and months:

- ✓ ***Blumenthal will become the darling of national Democrats.***
He will be embraced by national Democrats as their party's hope to hold this seat as they quickly put Chris Dodd in the rear view mirror.
- ✓ ***Blumenthal's poll numbers will probably improve before they get worse.***
Rob is going to be further behind Blumenthal two weeks from now than he is today. That's just the way it is, as the Attorney General will embark on his political honeymoon.
- ✓ ***Blumenthal's support is likely to wane as he takes positions on federal issues...***
As Attorney General, Blumenthal has managed to stay out of the federal issue fray, but his Senate candidacy will force him to take sides on the issues of the day, potentially causing fissures in his constituency.
- ✓ ***And as his AG record meets with closer scrutiny.***
Blumenthal's twenty years as Attorney General will likely be the topic of a much more detailed review than it has in the past – by both the press corps and his opponents.

✓ ***Having NEVER been in a competitive general election campaign, Blumenthal's campaign may face "growing pains."***

Since Blumenthal was elected in 1990, he has NEVER faced a competitive race. That's probably not going to bode well for him as he begins his campaign in a highly charged political environment.

The Bottom Line

Attorney General Blumenthal will enjoy a honeymoon of sorts in the coming weeks as the anointed Democratic nominee for US Senate in the state. But, that does NOT mean this race is over. In fact, far from it.

Once Blumenthal becomes the Democrats' "heir apparent," he's going to be required to take positions on federal issues – something that's going to be foreign to him and which may cross-pressure his current support. Further, Blumenthal will presumably support Congressional Democratic policies that have helped create a very favorable political climate for Republicans (health care reforms that raise taxes, federal programs that explode the deficit and trying terrorists in civilian courtrooms).

Obviously, we are in a different race now than we were 24 hours ago, and Blumenthal is the flavor of the day. But, in the end, this campaign is going to be won or lost on the national issues that are trending our direction.

Unlike the campaign we were in 24 hours ago, this race will be a war of attrition, with Blumenthal slowly losing support over time as he makes it known where he stands on the issues of the day.