

60 didn't matter, anyway...

BY: TONY ROMM

Wither the dream of 60: [The undisputed re-election of Georgia Senator Saxby Chambliss](#) means that Democrats, *even if they win in hotly-contested Minnesota*, will still fall short of a filibuster-proof majority. To the party's credit, it *did capture seven new Senate seats this year*, including an upset that toppled [favored North Carolina incumbent Elizabeth Dole \(R\)](#). But the re-election of Chambliss, regardless of the party's previous accomplishments, renders the Democrats' symbolic, statistical aspiration unattainable.

However, President-elect Barack Obama and the party's Congressional leaders should not fret: 60 didn't matter, anyway. Many of the Democrats who successfully challenged or fended off their Republican opponents [did so from the center of the political spectrum](#), occasionally severing any ties with (if not flatly criticizing) Obama's presidential campaign. Now, these "blue-dog Democrats," including Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Hagan in the Senate [and about 50 others in the House](#), comprise those majorities that Democratic strategists previously insisted would vote as a whole.

But while some of those politicians do, in fact, owe their victories to Obama's coattails, there is little evidence to suggest new "blue dogs" will repay Obama by gravitating toward the left and supporting his line purely for the party's sake. In off-election years, satisfying constituencies usually trumps appeasing the president (a strategy the candidates may later leverage [if the sitting president casts a shadow over their re-election campaigns](#)).

However, political squabbles are amplified in magnitude when they occur within the party. Even though "blue dog Democrats" represent "red states," they are *still Democrats*, and their disputes are *still symbolic* of party disunity. Then again, that's the unstated paradox of the Democrats' "paint the states blue" strategy: You can easily change a building's color, but a new hue does not affect the people who work inside it. States, especially Virginia, may now rest in the Democrats' column, but their contents — and the candidates who represent them — are still more conservative or moderate than liberal (which is, perhaps, why Jim Martin lost to Chambliss; [he wasn't "red" enough](#) to win Georgia).

In other words, a Senate "supermajority" would have been symbolic, but legislatively insignificant. The successful sale of a trillion dollar health care policy, a prompt withdrawal from Iraq and a series of upper-echelon tax increases does not wholly depend on the party to which important politicians belong. Rather, it depends on voting records, campaign promises, constituencies, personal philosophies and political futures, none of which the magic number of 60 affects.

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December 3rd, 2008 at 3:23 pm

[...] one's on Sen. Chambliss vs. the Democrats' pursuit of a supermajority. Check it [...]

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Politics@theEAGLE is a presidential election blog owned by The Eagle, American University's student newspaper, and Tony Romm, the newspaper's special projects editor and a student in the COMM-490 Capstone class. [Click to read more](#)

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