PRESENTATION

# ANATOMY OF AN UPSET: DECONSTRUCTING THE 2026 MISSISSIPPI SENATE RACE



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# Executive Overview of the 2026 Mississippi Senate Contest

Annotated excerpt of the Mississippi Republican Party press conference transcript from November 5, 2026, highlighting Chairman Mike Hurst's statements regarding ballot monitoring.

- Overview of US Explanatory's analytical report on the uncalled 2026 Mississippi U.S. Senate race.
- Democrat Scott Colom holds an expanding lead of 2,574 votes over incumbent Republican Cindy Hyde-Smith as of Friday, November 6.
- Outcome represents an unprecedented shift in a state carried by Donald Trump by 23 percentage points in 2024.
- Mississippi Republican Party mobilizes 50 volunteer attorneys and observers while publicly asserting commitment to legal process.

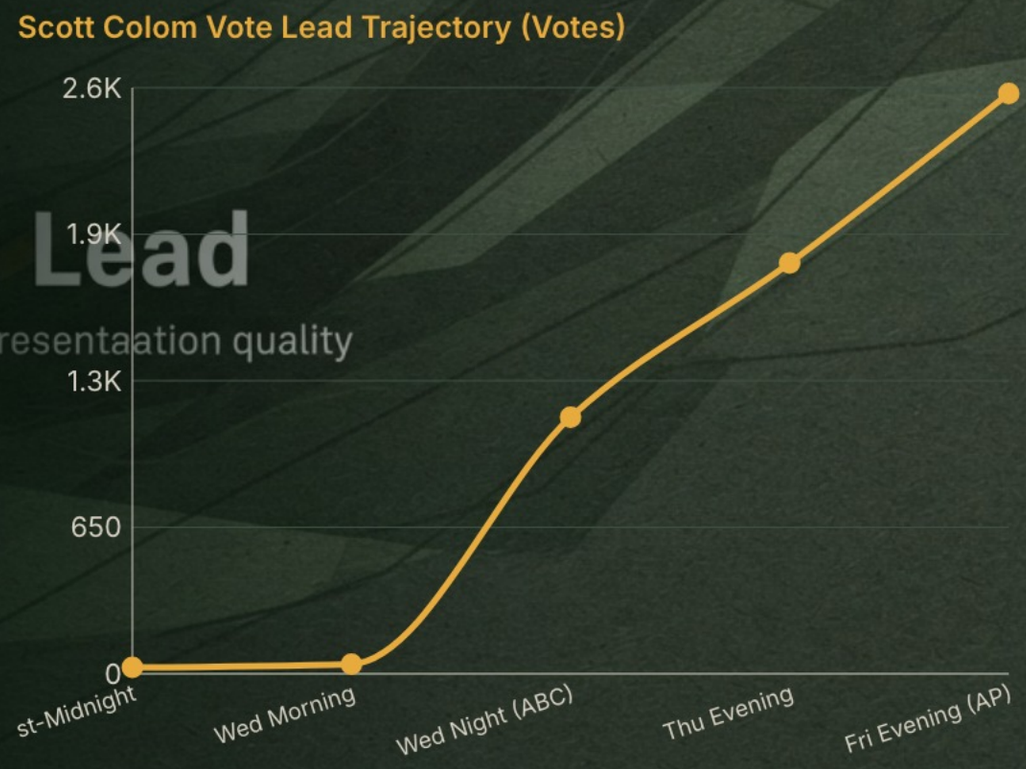


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# Trajectory of the Colom Lead Since Election Night

Line chart showing Scott Colom's cumulative vote lead over Cindy Hyde-Smith across reporting checkpoints from November 4 to November 6, 2026.

- Initial election night returns favored Hyde-Smith before Colom took an initial 28-vote lead shortly after midnight.
- Lead expanded steadily across every subsequent reporting update rather than fluctuating.
- Progressive growth reflected standard tabulations moving from small precincts to large urban centers and hand-checked provisional ballots.
- Total state turnout exceeded 900,000 votes cast, making the raw differential razor-thin yet persistent.




Colom Lead
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# The Arithmetic of Outstanding Ballots

Comparison table contrasting the NBC total outstanding ballot estimate with the Mississippi Republican Party estimate alongside required win thresholds for Cindy Hyde-Smith.

- NBC network models estimate approximately 31,000 ballots remain uncounted statewide.
- Hyde-Smith requires roughly 53% of all outstanding ballots to erase Colom's margin and reclaim the lead.
- State Republican Party estimates a smaller pool of roughly 20,000 outstanding ballots subject to active observation.
- Current geographic and ballot-type distributions make achieving the required 53% threshold mathematically challenging for the incumbent.

**Outstanding Ballot Estimates and Victory Thresholds**

| SOURCE / ENTITY | ESTIMATED OUTSTANDING BALLOTS | HYDE-SMITH REQUIRED SHARE |
|---|---|---|
| NBC News Projection | 31,000 | 53% |
| Mississippi Republican Party Estimate | 20,000 | 56%+ (implied) |



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# Geographic Concentration of Uncounted Ballots

Comparison table detailing estimated outstanding ballot volumes and prevailing candidate win margins across Hinds, Lee, and Rankin counties.

- Largest remaining single tranche resides in Hinds County, the state's largest jurisdiction and capital seat.
- Associated Press estimates approximately 5,800 uncounted votes in Hinds County, where Colom is winning approximately 80% of the vote.
- Secondary uncounted tranches remain in Republican-leaning jurisdictions: Lee County (Tupelo), Rankin County, and Gulf Coast counties.
- Colom gains several thousand votes if remaining ballots in each county break according to existing county-level percentages.

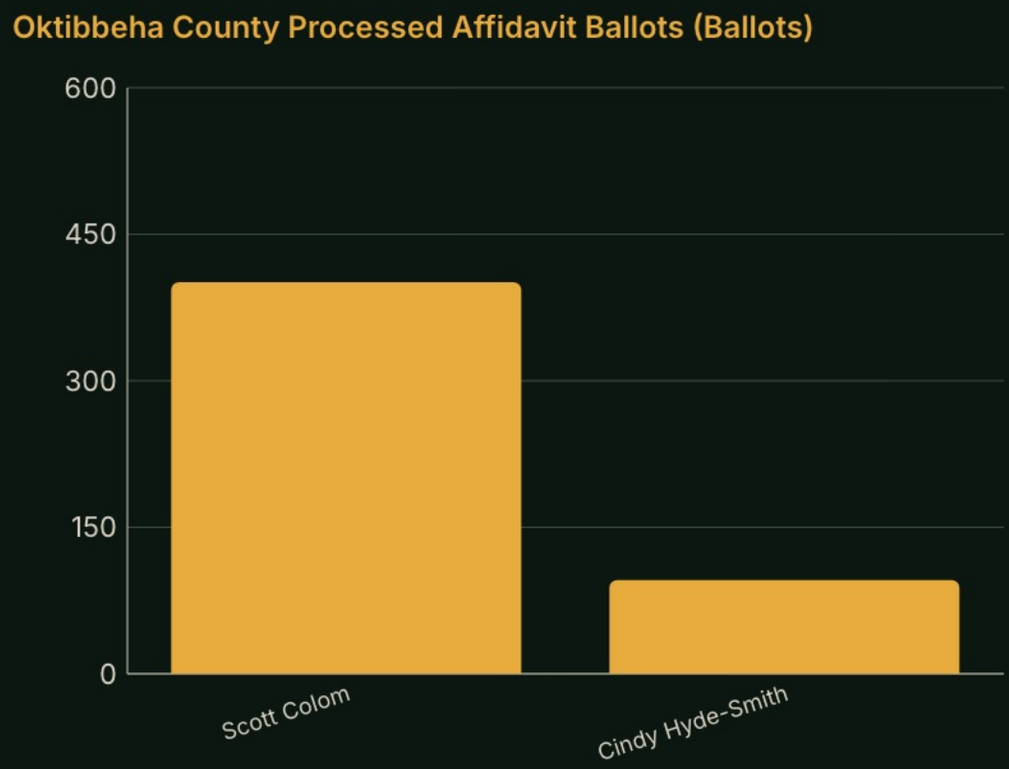


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# The Affidavit Ballot Factor and Early Splitting

Bar chart displaying the split of processed affidavit ballots between Scott Colom and Cindy Hyde-Smith in Oktibbeha County.

- Substantial portion of remaining ballots consists of affidavit (provisional) ballots requiring manual precinct-by-precinct verification.
- Affidavit returns have broken significantly more Democratic than standard election-day tallies across all reporting counties.
- Oktibbeha County (Mississippi State University) affidavit ballots broke 401 to 96 in favor of Colom despite voting for Trump in 2024.
- Hinds County had not yet processed or reported its affidavit ballots as of Friday, November 6.






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# Administrative Friction and Ballot Rejection Rates

Comparison table contrasting standard state automatic recount mechanisms against Mississippi judicial election contest requirements.

- Secretary of State Michael Watson flagged approximately 230,000 voter registrations as inactive prior to the election.
- Inactive registrants were required to cast affidavit ballots, dramatically inflating the provisional pool.
- Verification mandates voters cast ballots in their precise assigned precinct with matching envelope signatures.
- Rankin County election officials report roughly one in five (20%) affidavit ballots rejected so far, primarily for wrong-precinct voting.
- Mississippi election law contains no statutory provision for automatic or candidate-requested recount procedures regardless of margin.
- Candidates seeking to challenge an outcome must initiate formal election contests in state court contesting specific ballots.



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# Jurisprudence on Postmarked Mail-in Ballots

Annotated excerpt of the June 2026 Supreme Court 5–4 majority decision upholding Mississippi's five-day post-election mail ballot receipt window.

- Mississippi statute permits mail ballots to arrive up to five business days post-election if postmarked by election day.
- Republican National Committee previously challenged the post-election receipt window in federal appellate court.
- Supreme Court upheld the regulation 5–4 in June 2026 in an opinion authored by Justice Amy Coney Barrett.
- Mail-in ballots postmarked by November 3 and received by November 10 remain legally valid and must be tabulated.

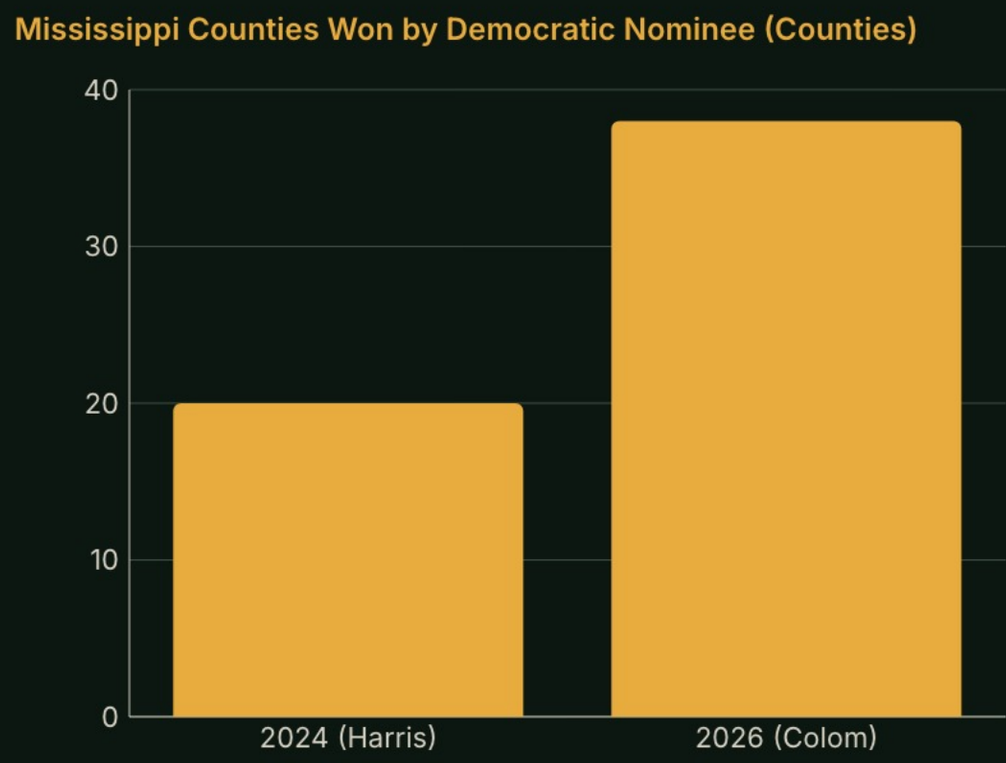


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# County-Level Electoral Realignment Since 2024

Bar chart contrasting the number of Mississippi counties won by the Democratic candidate in 2024 (Harris) versus 2026 (Colom).

- Kamala Harris carried 20 of Mississippi's 82 counties during the 2024 presidential contest.
- Colom leads in 38 counties in 2026, representing an 18-county net flip with zero Republican counter-flips.
- Every single county across Mississippi shifted toward the Democratic margin relative to 2024 presidential baseline results.
- Structural shifts manifested in fast-growing suburbs, university towns, and traditionally conservative rural counties.






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# Regional Margin Shifts in Suburbs and College Towns

Comparison table tracking margin shifts between the 2024 presidential election and the 2026 Senate race across key jurisdictions.

- DeSoto County (Memphis suburbs) shifted 30 points: Trump +24 in 2024 to Colom +6 in 2026.
- Madison County, north of Jackson, flipped to Colom by less than a point.
- Forrest County (Hattiesburg) moved from Trump +18 to Colom +10; Lowndes County moved from Trump +8 to Colom +16.
- University centers flipped decisively, including Lafayette County (Ole Miss) and Oktibbeha County (Mississippi State).

**County Margin Shifts: 2024 Presidential vs. 2026 Senate**

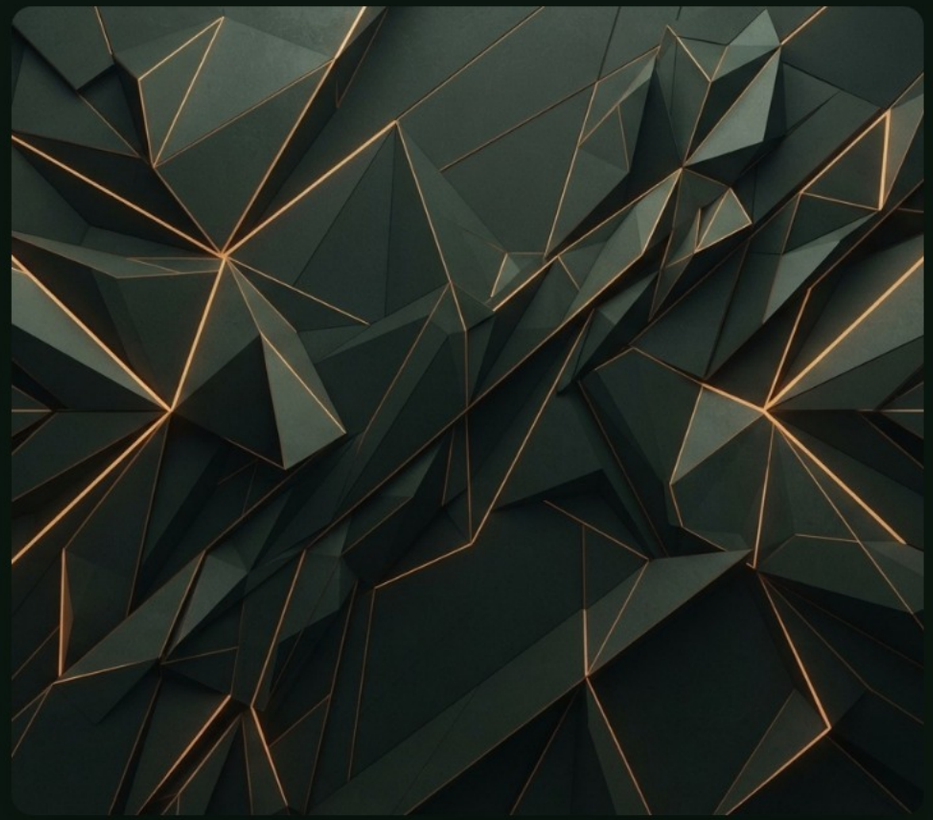
| COUNTY | 2024 TRUMP MARGIN | 2026 COLOM MARGIN | NET MARGIN SHIFT |
|---|---|---|---|
| DeSoto County | Trump +24 | Colom +6 | 30 pts toward D |
| Forrest County (Hattiesburg) | Trump +18 | Colom +10 | 28 pts toward D |
| Lowndes County (Columbus) | Trump +8 | Colom +16 | 24 pts toward D |
| Harrison County (Gulf Coast) | Trump +29 | Hyde-Smith +4 | 25 pts toward D |



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# Turnout Asymmetry: Midterm Depletion vs. Presidential Retention



Comparison table contrasting 2024 presidential raw vote totals and demographic turnout retention rates against 2026 midterm levels.

- Colom amassed approximately 468,000 votes, virtually matching Harris's 2024 presidential total in a lower-turnout midterm year.
- Hyde-Smith captured roughly 465,000 votes, declining sharply from Donald Trump's nearly 750,000 votes in 2024.
- Majority-Black counties sustained roughly 90% of their 2024 presidential turnout levels.
- Counties with the lowest Black population percentages experienced turnout contraction to roughly 70% of 2024 levels.

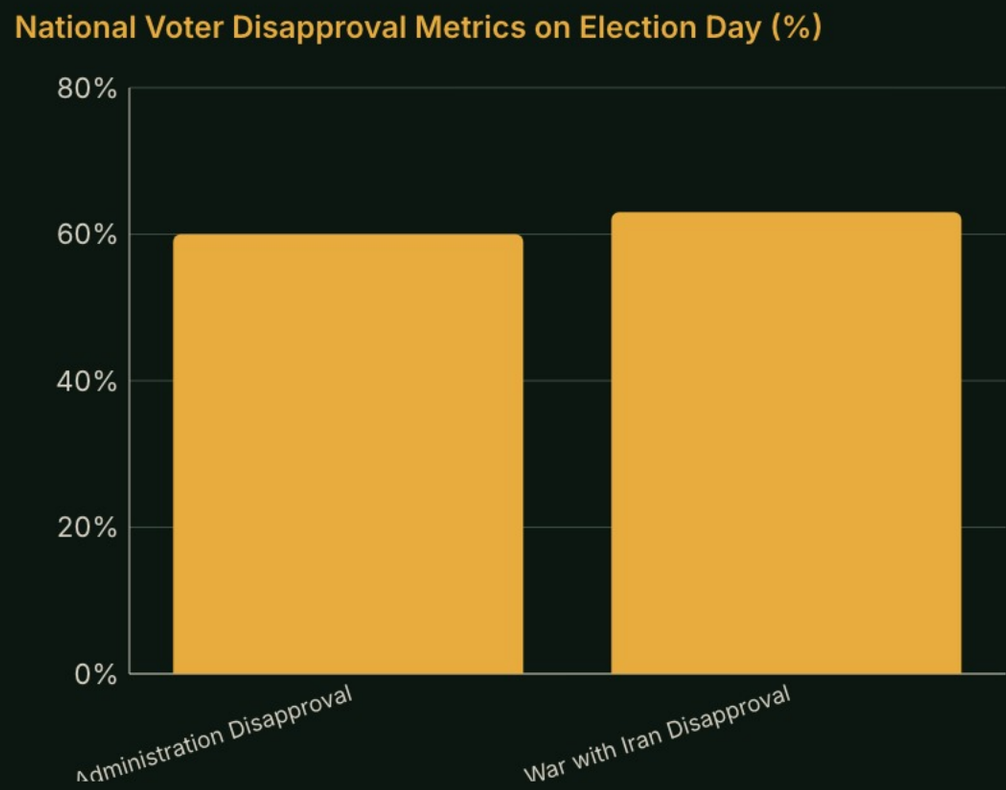


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# National Political Environment and Macro Headwinds

- National conditions heavily penalized Republican candidates across midterm Senate battlegrounds.
- National survey data recorded Trump disapproval around 60%, with 63% viewing the war with Iran as the wrong decision.
- Gas prices exceeded $4 per gallon on election day, setting an all-time election-day high record.
- Democrats flipped seven other Republican Senate seats nationwide, including Texas, Kansas, and South Carolina.






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# Incumbent Underperformance History

Comparison table tracking Cindy Hyde-Smith's electoral victory margins relative to baseline Republican performance in 2018 and 2020.

- Appointed to the Senate in 2018 following Thad Cochran's resignation, becoming Mississippi's first female congressional member.
- Won 2018 special election by 7 points while fellow Republican Senator Roger Wicker won by 19 on the same ballot.
- Marred by controversial campaign rhetoric, including a public hanging remark that drew national scrutiny.
- Secured 2020 reelection by 10 points while Trump carried the state by 16, establishing a pattern of running behind the party baseline.



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# Candidate Dynamics and Personal History

Quote card displaying Scott Colom's post-election declaration regarding process integrity and legal compliance.

- Colom has served as District Attorney for four northeast Mississippi counties since 2016.
- Nominated in 2022 by President Biden to a federal judgeship in northern Mississippi.
- Hyde-Smith unilaterally blocked Colom's judicial confirmation by withholding her blue slip, citing George Soros-affiliated campaign support.
- Campaign framed as an institutional collision: Colom seeking to serve as colleague to the senator who blocked his federal bench appointment.

> *"We will protect the process of this election. We will protect the integrity of this election."*
>
> — Scott Colom, Democratic U.S. Senate Nominee (November 4, 2026)



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# The Third-Party Variable: Ty Pinkins' Candidacy

Bar chart contrasting the raw vote gap between Colom and Hyde-Smith (2,574 votes) against total votes cast for independent Ty Pinkins (~20,000).

- Independent candidate Ty Pinkins garnered approximately 20,000 votes statewide.
- Pinkins was the Democratic nominee against Senator Roger Wicker in 2024 before leaving the party.
- Democratic officials unsuccessfully pressured Pinkins to withdraw to avoid splitting the anti-incumbent coalition.
- Pinkins' vote share exceeds the current margin between Colom and Hyde-Smith by nearly eightfold.



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# Hyde-Smith's Remaining Path to Victory

Framework diagram mapping the three interdependent prerequisites required for Cindy Hyde-Smith to erase the deficit (Rural Tranche Surges, Urban Ballot Rejections, Judicial Interventions).

- Hyde-Smith campaign relies on outstanding votes in conservative bastions breaking disproportionately in her favor.
- Potential path depends heavily on high disqualification rates among affidavit ballots in Democratic-heavy jurisdictions like Hinds County.
- Campaign has positioned legal teams across all 82 counties to challenge specific ballot batches in state court.
- Overturning the margin without aggressive judicial disqualification remains mathematically improbable given current trends.



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# Critical Operational Deadlines and Milestones

- Tuesday, November 10 at 5:00 PM: Statutory deadline to resolve/cure affidavit ballots and receipt cutoff for postmarked mail ballots.
- Friday, November 13: Statutory deadline for county boards of election commissioners to certify official local counts.
- Thursday, December 3: Final statutory deadline for state-level certification of general election results.
- Oversight overseen by Secretary of State Michael Watson, who launches a statewide campaign for Lieutenant Governor in 2027.

**Nov 10, 2026 (5:00 PM)**

### Cure and Mail Deadline

Cutoff for affidavit fixes and arrival of postmarked mail ballots

**Nov 13, 2026**

### County Certification

Statutory deadline for all 82 counties to certify returns

**Dec 3, 2026**

### State Certification

Final statewide certification deadline overseen by Sec. of State Watson



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# Strategic and Historical Takeaways

Comparison table displaying federal Senate balance scenarios (55 vs. 56 seats) and historic Mississippi representation milestones.

- A Colom victory would make him Mississippi's first Democratic senator since John Stennis and first Black senator since Blanche Bruce (1881).
- Increases Democratic U.S. Senate majority to 55 seats (or 56 depending on Mary Peltola's ranked-choice tabulation in Alaska).
- Resets political expectations for Mississippi's 2027 gubernatorial race as Governor Tate Reeves reaches term limits.
- Hyde-Smith remains seated through January 3, 2027, retaining voting power during the lame-duck budget session.



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