



1. *The Battle for the Senate*
2. *The Experience of a Religious Person at Hamilton College*

## The Battle for the Senate

By CARTER BRIGLIA  
STAFF WRITER

The presidential election is getting a lot of buzz lately, and rightfully so, since this election will determine our country's prospects for the next four years and beyond. But despite all the attention surrounding the presidency, there are many competitive Senate races that will decide who controls the Senate. As we have seen during the current 116th Congress, holding a Senate majority is an incredibly powerful position for either party to be in. Currently, the Senate has 53 Republicans and 47 Democrats, so the Democrats have the often-tough challenge of needing to gain at least

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three seats. In addition, they will almost certainly lose Doug Jones's seat in Alabama, which they were lucky to win in a 2017 special election.

At the start of this election cycle, many pundits saw the Senate as massively difficult for the Democrats. It has largely been assumed that they will keep their majority in the House of Representatives, but the Senate map looked much harder. It seemed unlikely that Democrats would be able to pick up seats in South Carolina, Iowa, Montana, Kansas, or Georgia, considering that Trump won all of these states in 2016, and because in four of them, they will have to beat a Republican incumbent.

Despite the clear difficulties the Democrats face, however, the news in the last few months regarding the Senate has been especially positive for them. Races that were considered long shots, such as Montana, South Carolina, and Iowa, now look more

like tossups. In fact, FiveThirtyEight's election forecast now has the Democrats favored to win the Senate, with its highest-probability projection predicting they will win 51 seats. Recent polling suggests they are likely to gain seats in Maine, Arizona, and Colorado while also protecting Gary Peters's seat in Michigan. This trend suggests that a "blue wave" may be coming, which could give the Democrats control of the House, Senate, and presidency. Given the recent changes in Senate projections, I believe it is worth looking into the reasons why they are making Senate races competitive across the board.

While many factors have contributed to the recent surge in their Senate chances, I believe fundraising and enthusiasm play the largest roles. Democratic Senate challengers are raising money to an extent never seen before, which has forced the GOP to go on the defensive. Challenger Jaime Harrison in South Carolina raised a whopping \$57 million in the third financial quarter, a colossal amount for a Senate race in a state which President Trump won with about 55 percent of the vote. In the North Carolina race, challenger Cal Cunningham raised

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\$28.3 million in the third quarter, nearly quadrupling his \$7.4 million in the previous quarter. In Iowa, a state Trump won with 51 percent of the vote (beating Hillary Clinton by almost 10 points), Democratic

*continued on back*

## The Experience of a Religious Person at Hamilton College

By PHILIP CHIVILY  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Religion. The mention of it can bring a dinner to an awkward silence or inspire fiery quarrels that result in the participants flipping the table. Yet religion also inspires people to do good. It inspires sacrifice, charity, and art that awes the mind and entralls the soul. Yet in this secular age, many people take it for granted. They ignore religion in all its forms, finding it backward, antiquated, uncomfortable, or some combination of these. Some even find religion downright evil. And these sentiments are heard frequently at Hamilton College.

Let me clarify a few things before discussing religion. First, writing for *Enquiry* does not make me racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, transphobic, and/or fascist. The toxicity of today's political climate forces me to say this. And if you do take offense, or are uncomfortable with me writing for *Enquiry*, please feel free to chat with me, as I always encourage a good and productive conversation about politics. Second, this is a commentary on student life at Hamilton, not academic life. Third, my intention is not to be overbearing or moralistic. I try every day to be the best Christian I can be, but it is a struggle. I have my own vices and faults to deal with. I am a sinner. And I want you, the reader, to read this article knowing that.

I write as a Roman Catholic. However, I have friends who are non-Catholic Christians, and others who are Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. I often engage in discussions with them to understand their religious views. All religions are beautiful, and I admire people of faith no matter what God or gods they worship and what practices

*continued on back*

challenger Theresa Greenfield raised \$28.7 million in the third quarter.

It is worth considering that great fundraising does not always mean enthusiasm for a candidate. For example, Michael Bloomberg spent about \$1 billion this year in his run for the Democratic presidential nomination, yet failed to win strong support. But the fundraising that is elevating the campaigns of Democratic Senate challengers appears to result more from genuine enthusiasm among voters. This is highlighted by the fact that the majority of donations to these candidates are small-dollar rather than corporate or corporate-related. For

example, Cunningham’s campaign reported that more than 40,000 North Carolinians had contributed in the past three months, with 96 percent of the donations under \$100. Similarly, in Iowa, Greenfield’s campaign reported that 95 percent of third-quarter contributions were \$100 or less.

These contributions highlight a genuine enthusiasm for Democratic candidates from voters, as even working-class families in large numbers are willing to give money in hopes of achieving a Senate majority. While some may argue that out-of-state contributions do not reflect enthusiasm from voters within the

state, they certainly reflect an overall support for Democrats, also seen in Joe Biden’s substantial polling lead over Trump. In fact, the Biden campaign raised a record \$383 million in the month of September, which shows that Democratic voters have been willing to support a Democratic agenda with their money. While the battle for the Senate initially looked difficult for the Democrats, they have plenty of reasons to be optimistic heading into this election.

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EXPERIENCE OF RELIGIOUS . . . cont.

they follow. Interfaith dialogue and unity thrive among religious students at Hamilton. Where the discussion becomes difficult is among non-religious students. I do not care if someone is an atheist, agnostic, deist, or non-religious in any other way. And many express themselves in a respectful manner. But a sizable number of non-religious students openly mock and despise religion, in cruel and jabbing ways.

I am not here to drag any reader into unnecessary drama. Nor is it

of a single Christian student, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, who is backward and bigoted. None of us are closed-minded. We are accepting of everyone regardless of their identity and have no intention of forcing a life of celibacy on the world. Jewish and Muslim students, and students of other faiths, experience problems too. They tell me that people constantly question how “Jewish” or “Muslim” they are.

To be a religious student, no matter what your faith, is in my experience to

specific stories, and didn’t interview people for this article, because I am simply describing a general climate on campus. If I had wanted to include personal experiences, I would have, and there would be so many that this article would be dozens of pages long. If you think this isn’t an issue, talk with a religious student about it. I believe that in your discussions with your religious friends and peers, they will tell you about times when they were treated with intolerance against religion or against their faiths.

*“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” Matthew 5:11*

my intent to denounce anyone as a bigot, even though there are students who seem to be. I have heard religion mocked on an almost daily basis. Students have mocked the Catholic Church in front of my face. They have assumed that Catholic students are repressive, bigoted, and have backward views on sexual intercourse and gender.

I am often told this personally by students who in many cases are not aware that I am Catholic. The fact that these closed-minded students feel they can say such things to people whose religion they don’t even know about is wrong, cruel, and offensive. Other Christians on campus have reported similar experiences. And I do not know

be a subject of mockery and ridicule from many others. Again, I want to stress that this is not true of all non-religious students on campus. Some of my closest friends are loving and open-minded non-religious students who respect my faith and the faiths of others. But the problem of intolerance against religious students is pervasive at Hamilton, and something which nearly every religious student seems to have experienced firsthand. One might claim that I am exaggerating because I haven’t cited specific instances of intolerance, or because they haven’t heard it’s an issue.

I am not exaggerating. If I felt like this was a nothing-burger, I wouldn’t have written about it. I don’t get into

I will continue to pray that such students see the error of their ways. And when one of them makes a disparaging comment against religion or religious students, call them out and correct them. But do it with gentleness and kindness. Religious students and those who oppose anti-religious hostility cannot change minds if we act with anger and arrogance. And while you call people out and correct them, know that like everyone, you are a sinner too, just as I myself have been guilty of messed-up actions. I hope that with the example set by religious students, students who voice hostility toward religion will embark on the path of love and tolerance.

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- The Battle for the Senate*  
**#BattleForSenate**
- The Experience of a Religious Person at Hamilton College*  
**#ExperienceOfReligious**