By David Espo THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

#### WASHINGTON

emocrats in numerous key enate campaigns face a finanial disadvantage this fall, ccording to strategists in both arties, the combined result of e priority given to John erry's bid for the White ouse, new fund-raising restricons and the location of the ost competitive races.

While developments in and Colorado sparked expressions of optiism from Democrats, most hotly contested Senate races are outside the 17 battleground U.S. states targeted by Kerry, a cluser of independent groups supporting him and the Democratic National Committee.

Democrats also lag in the fund-raising race between the party senatorial committees, ailing the Republicans in cash on hand by nearly \$10 million at he end of March. And while erry works furiously to raise he money to compete with resident Bush's record-setting ring ast var chest, the president raised 2.7 million for the GOP senaorial committee at one event in of their March and has pledged to attend dinner benefiting congression-

al candidates in June.

Dan Allen, a spokesman for the Senate GOP campaign committee, said the money advantage 'will allow us to have more of an impact on the competitive races that are in good territory for the Republicans to begin with."

Brad Woodhouse, spokesman for the Senate Democratic campaign committee, conceded the GOP edge but said Democrats would have the

money it needs for the "small number of races that we need to impact."

Republicans hold a 51-48 Senate majority, Democratic-leaning independent. Democrats must gain two seats to win a majority, but were hit by the retirement of five incumbents in Bush's Southern stronghold.

More recently, though, Republican Sens. Don Nickles in Oklahoma and Ben Nighthorse Campbell in Colorado have announced retirement plans, and Democrats quickly fielded strong contenders in both states. "We're moving," asserted New Jersey

Sen. Jon Corzine, who heads the Democratic senatorial committee.

Privately, though, numerous Democratic strategists conceded a significant financial disadvantage looms, the result of an unprecedented confluence of events.

Four years ago, many of the presidential battleground states

Michigan, Washington, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania among them - also had key Senate contests. Bush and then-

Vice President Al money and personnel into the (The money adstates, shaping the vantage) will allow political terrain us to have more of with television commercials and get-out-the-vote activities that spilled over to other races.

> ago, old fundraising applied, and

Republican and Democratic senatorial committees helped their candidates by raising tens of millions of dollars in donations of unlimited size.

In recent years, both committees bankrolled television advertising designed to help contenders in key races.

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## Bush and Kerry's fates shaped by series of unpredictable events

an impact on the

competitive races.

spokesman for the Senate

GOP campaign committee

By Ron Fournier THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - No president or presidenal candidate ever commanded his own fate, but is year's White House race may be unusually

The political fortunes of President Bush and Democrat John Kerry are largely out of their introl, pinned to unpredictable outcomes in raq, the vagaries of the economy and the fight gainst terrorism.

'There's a lot more that can't be controlled nan can," said David Danbom, history professor North Dakota State University in Fargo.

That did not stop Bush from spending \$40 milon on television and radio commercials in just one month to champion his fight against terrorism and cast Kerry as a tax-raising waffler.

Nor did it give Kerry pause as he spent \$6 million in the same period to answer Bush's charges and accuse him of neglecting the economy.

Both candidates spent additional millions on polling, travel and consultants. And yet, no amount of money protects them from the unexpected:

-Will violence ebb in Iraq before Nov. 2?

—Will the economy bounce back in a way that

-Will terrorism hit America's shores again? If so, would Americans rally behind the commander in chief or blame him?

We don't know the answers to those questions," said GOP consultant Joe Gaylord. "We don't even know all the questions.

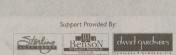
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