

# Finances hamper Democratic bids to regain Senate control

By David Espo  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Democrats in numerous key Senate campaigns face a financial disadvantage this fall, according to strategists in both parties, the combined result of the priority given to John Kerry's bid for the White House, new fund-raising restrictions and the location of the most competitive races.

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

Democrats also lag in the fund-raising race between the party senatorial committees, trailing the Republicans in cash on hand by nearly \$10 million at the end of March. And while Kerry works furiously to raise the money to compete with President Bush's record-setting war chest, the president raised \$2.7 million for the GOP senatorial committee at one event in March and has pledged to attend a dinner benefiting congressional

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, a 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, with one 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 Gore poured money and personnel into the states, shaping the political terrain with television commercials and get-out-the-vote activities that spilled over to other races.

Two years ago, old fund-raising rules 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.

**"(The money advantage) will allow us to have more of an impact on the competitive races."**

— Dan Allen, spokesman for the Senate GOP campaign committee

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

By Ron Fournier  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — No president or presidential candidate ever commanded his own fate, but this year's White House race may be unusually capricious.

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

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

That did not stop Bush from spending \$40 million 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 voters notice?
- 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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