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# With majority at risk, Democrats bolting from races

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In the wake of Republican Sen.-elect Scott Brown's victory in Massachusetts, two Democratic candidates have decided against running for office and more are likely to bow out in the weeks to come.

The shifting political winds, signaled in November by Republican victories in both the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial elections, have for the first time put the House majority within reach of the Republicans and the Senate within a few seats of a GOP takeover. "The special election in Massachusetts and the elections in New Jersey and in Virginia certainly indicate that the prospects are pretty strong for Republicans this year," said James Campbell, political science professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Vice President Biden's son, Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden, disappointed the party Monday when he announced he will not seek the Senate seat held by his father for 36 years.

The announcement came shortly after Rep. Marion Berry, a fiscally conservative Blue Dog Democrat from Arkansas, announced he would not seek an eighth term.

Biden's decision is expected to make the Delaware Senate race an easy victory for Republican candidate Mike Castle, a moderate who currently serves in the House. Berry is the sixth House Democrat to abandon a competitive race this cycle, and that list will likely grow.



In a Dec. 23, 2009 photo, Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden holds a press conference at the Department of Justice in Georgetown, Del. to update the charges against Dr. Earl B. Bradley. Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden will not be running for the U.S. Senate seat once held by his father, Vice President Joe Biden. The younger Biden told supporters in an e-mail letter Monday, Jan. 25, 2010 that he will run for re-election as attorney general rather than seek the Democratic nomination for Senate. (AP Photo/Chuck Snyder)

"I think you will see more retirements this week," said Dave Wasserman, who edits the coverage of

House races for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report. Wasserman said that he lists about 60 Democratic seats as competitive, which means that it is at least a possibility a Republican could win.

The GOP needs to win 40 seats to take over the majority, and Wasserman said the most likely outcome will result in Republicans picking up 25 to 35 seats in November. But some political analysts believe that number could be higher, particularly in light of Brown's victory. "If you had to say what is possible, I would not discount the possibility of Republicans regaining the majority," Wasserman said.

Poll numbers show an increasingly vulnerable Democratic majority, particularly in swing states like Indiana. A Rasmussen poll released on Monday showed Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., leading Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh by three points in a hypothetical matchup for the Senate seat Bayh has held for the past decade.

Pence, who heads the House Republican Conference, is weighing a run against Bayh. Senate Democrats could lose up to seven seats, including the one held by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., for whom the political picture could not be bleaker.

Reid has consistently been losing in hypothetical matchups with various Republican competitors and on Monday the liberal blog Daily Kos released a poll showing Democrat Oscar Goodman, the mayor of Las Vegas, faring much better against Republican opponents than Reid.

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