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The 2010 Wisconsin U.S. Senate Race: A Methodical Analysis.

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Issue Highlights

❖ SECTION 1

Senate frontrunners Russ Feingold and Ron Johnson are becoming more visceral in their attacks on one another. With the Wisconsin Senate race officially a “dead heat,” both Ron Johnson and Russ Feingold are intensifying their rhetoric and tone.

❖ SECTION 2

Dave Westlake, Ron Johnson and Russ Feingold have placed an unprecedented emphasis on online social networking, trumping traditional campaign methods such as: mass mailings, yard signs, and telephone calls.

❖ SECTION 3

The latest Rasmussen poll denotes a modest change in candidate preference. For the second straight month, Rasmussen polling reports that Ron Johnson, a political outsider and business leader, is narrowly defeating four-term incumbent Russ Feingold.

❖ SECTION 4

Russ Feingold’s voting record reflects that he is neither a fiscal conservative nor a moderate.

❖ SECTION 1

With the Wisconsin Senate race officially a “dead heat,” both Ron Johnson, and Russ Feingold are intensifying their rhetoric and tone.

In recent weeks, Wisconsin U.S. Senate candidates Russ Feingold and Ron Johnson have become more visceral in their attacks upon one another. Rather than focusing on seminal policy issues, and their plans for economic recovery, they have resorted to vitriolic harangues and polemical attacks on the other’s character.

The campaign began to take on a visceral tone early last month when Rasmussen reported that this race was a statistical dead heat. For just the second time in his storied political career, Senator Russ Feingold is vulnerable. As a result, he initiated a series of blatantly erroneous attack ads pertaining to Ron Johnson’s positions on critical policy issues; mainly, drilling for oil

in the Great Lakes and Social Security reform. For instance, in one of his earliest advertisements, Senator Feingold argued that Ron Johnson would “hand over the Great Lakes to big-oil companies.” Sen. Feingold’s attack ad was erroneous in that Mr. Johnson had stated on numerous occasions he is fundamentally opposed to drilling for oil in the Great Lakes, to say nothing of the fact drilling is already illegal in the Lakes. In fact, Russ Feingold was the only Great Lakes Senator to vote against the Great Lakes Compact—the measure that sought to protect the Great Lakes from commercial drilling. FactCheck.org has also noted that Feingold’s advertisement was blatantly false.

In response to Sen. Feingold’s advertisement, Mr. Johnson issued a scathing rebuttal in which he contended that Russ Feingold has been a career politician whose sole interest is his own political fortunes. Russ Feingold then abandoned his infamous heartwarming, feel-good biography advertisements and began a character assassinations of Mr. Johnson.

Ron Johnson, despite running a more positive campaign thus far, has still spent more money attacking Sen. Feingold than he has on promoting his agenda for restoring American prosperity. In this time of economic tumult, it is paramount that political candidates refrain from mudslinging and, instead, focus on their proposals for restoring American Exceptionalism.

❖ SECTION 2

Dave Westlake, Ron Johnson and Russ Feingold have placed an unprecedented emphasis on online social networking, trumping traditional campaign methods such as: mass mailings, yard signs, and telephone calls.

For the first time in the history of Wisconsin politics, social networking is the primary medium for voter outreach. Social Networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, while having been in existence since 2004 and 2006, respectively, were not a prominent part of the 2006 U.S. Senate election, in which the Republican Party failed to recruit a viable challenger against Senator Herb Kohl. In that election, neither Kohl nor Lorge barraged the state with television or radio commercials, rob calls, yard signs, or mass mailings.

Each of the candidates vying for the position of United States Senator is running a media savvy, social network based campaign. The 2010 United States Senate election is unique in that neither of the three major candidates has barraged the state with signs, billboards or mass mailings, all three of which have long been the preferred methods of voter outreach. Instead, Sen. Feingold, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Westlake have made technology, mainly social networking and campaign advertisements, the focal point of this campaign. As of August 16, 2010, Ron Johnson, the Republican frontrunner, has nearly 8,000 fans on Facebook and has released five television commercials. Mr. Johnson’s Republican opponent, Dave Westlake, has 2,034 fans on

Facebook and has yet to release a television commercial, while Russ Feingold has nearly 23,000 fans on his Facebook page and has run four television commercials.

As the reader can discern, Sen. Feingold, Mr. Westlake and Mr. Johnson have focused more of their resources on new media and social networking than traditional methods of voter outreach. In fact, PAI's policy staff has yet to see a single yard or highway sign for any of the three major candidates. It appears that the traditional methods of voter outreach, yard signs, mass mailings and phone calls have gone by the wayside in this competitive U.S. Senate race.

Dr. Richard Semiatin, a professor of Political Science at American University in Washington, D.C., recently edited a fascinating tome entitled *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge*, in which he and his contemporaries argued that social networking and media-based campaigns are the "new wave of the future." Furthermore, Dr. Semiatin asserted that campaigns will begin to abandon traditional methods of voter outreach due to the ease and efficiency of new media.

Since the publication of this book in late 2007, Dr. Semiatin's assertion that mass media and social networking would come to dominate American political campaigns have proven to be accurate. With the general election just two months away, voters should expect the candidates to exert even greater energy in online for to try and convince voters that they are the superior candidate in this competitive race. As a result, the candidates will begin spending more money on television and radio advertisements, as well as increasing their presence on the internet, especially on social networking websites.

❖ SECTION 3

With the U.S. economy dwindling on the brink of calamity, and the United States mired in two wars, the electorate is demanding a change in the national political climate. As a result, many leading incumbents, including Wisconsin's Russ Feingold, are finding themselves vulnerable.

For the third consecutive month, Rasmussen, the nation's largest and most preeminent polling agency, has reported that Ron Johnson, a political outsider, leads his opponent, Democratic incumbent Russ Feingold, by a miniscule margin: 47% to 46%.

Technically, the race is a tie, due to the fact that the margin of error exceeds Johnson's margin of victory over Russ Feingold. The August 2010 Rasmussen poll denotes little change in the mood of the WI electorate, or in candidate preference. For the past five months, Russ Feingold's percentage of support in the Rasmussen polls has been a steady 46%. Conversely, Ron Johnson, since winning the nomination of the Republican Party at its convention in May, has seen his percentage of the vote fluctuate from 49% to 47% in recent months.

In each of the last three polls, the race has been a statistical dead heat, with the margin of error exceeding Johnson's margin of victory. The August 2010 Rasmussen poll, despite being a dead heat, provides political analysts with enlightening information. First, 57% of Wisconsin voters believe that the economy is in a state of disarray, whereas just 4% believe the economy is on the right track.

Among those who believe the economy is in a state of utter disrepair, roughly 65% support the Republican nominee, whoever it will be. On the other hand, those who assert that the economy is on the right track overwhelmingly support Democratic incumbent Russ Feingold.

Secondly, aside from the economy, a significant portion of those surveyed said that health care, entitlements and victory in the Middle East remain the most pressing issues facing the United States in the years ahead. On each of those issues, voters support the Republican candidate over Sen. Feingold. Rasmussen noted that 85% of those who oppose ObamaCare support Ron Johnson; whereas, just 69% support Mr. Dave Westlake.

Lastly, Independents and non-affiliated voters, the catalyst for Barack Obama in 2008, are abandoning the Democratic Party in droves in 2010. Rasmussen noted that Ron Johnson leads Russ Feingold among Independents, 53% to 46%. With the U.S. economy dwindling on the brink of calamity, and the United States mired in two wars, the electorate is vying for "real" political change. As a result, many leading incumbents, including Wisconsin's own Russ Feingold, find themselves vulnerable in 2010.

❖ SECTION 3

Russ Feingold's voting record reflects that he is neither a fiscal conservative nor a moderate.

Since his inauguration into the world's most exclusive club, the United States Senate, Russ Feingold has sought to portray himself as a moderate, fiscally conservative "man of the people." Russ Feingold's voting record, however, reflects that he is anything but a fiscal conservative, or for that matter, a moderate.

For nearly a decade, Russ Feingold has been one of the more liberal members of the United States Senate. The intention of this section is to alert the electorate of key votes taken by Senator Feingold during his three terms in the U.S. Senate. Feingold, as aforementioned, portrays himself as a voice of reason who is always looking out for the best interest of Wisconsinites. His voting record, especially on social and national security issues may prove otherwise.

Key votes by Russ Feingold that went against the wishes of his constituents:

- **Defense of Marriage Act:** In 1996, Russ Feingold was one of just fourteen senators to vote against the Defense of Marriage Act, a bill which his constituents overwhelmingly supported. The Defense of Marriage Act sought to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman.
- **The USA PATRIOT ACT:** Russ Feingold was the only Senator to oppose the USA PATRIOT ACT. Immediately following the heinous attacks of September 11, 2001, Russ Feingold chose to put his liberal partisan interests ahead of protecting American security.
- **The Graham-Leach-Bailey Act:** The Graham-Leach-Bailey Act, herein referred to as GLB, sought to repeal key elements of the Glass Steagall Act of 1933. The GLB Act allowed commercial banks, investments banks, security firms, and insurance companies to consolidate. Feingold, a self-proclaimed fiscal conservative, argued that this legislation provided the financial industry with too much authority.
- **The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2005:** After the passage of the Arizona Immigration legislation, S.B. 1070, in early July, it appears as though immigration reform will be a focal point of the 2010 elections. In 2005, Russ Feingold was one of 65 senators to support the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2005. This legislation sought to double the number of H-1B visas from 65,000 to 115,000, with an automatic increase of 20% increase every year.

Key votes by Russ Feingold that supported the wishes of his constituents.

- **The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program), and The Final Reform Act of 2010.** Senator Feingold was one of the only Senate Democrats to oppose these pork laden economic reform bills. Senator Feingold should be lauded by fiscal conservatives for opposing these egregious spending bills.
- **ObamaCare:** Russ Feingold, since being elected in 1992, has been an ardent supporter of universal, or government run, health care. Senator Feingold, in a 2010 press release, indicated that his vote against ObamaCare stemmed from his chagrin with the fact it did not include universal coverage.
- **The Confirmation of Timothy Geithner:** Russ Feingold was one of just four liberal Senators to oppose the nomination of Timothy Geithner to the position of Secretary of the Treasury. Feingold, despite agreeing with Geithner on the vast majority of policy issues, voted against him for personal reasons. In a 2009 press release, Senator Feingold stated, "I am deeply troubled by his failure to pay the property taxes he owed, despite repeated alerts from his employer at the time, the International Monetary Fund, that he was responsible for paying those taxes."

The votes analyzed above are just a select few of the thousands of votes cast by Russ Feingold during his year Senate career. Throughout the duration of his tenure, he has

accumulated one of the most liberal voting records and party loyalty scores: 96% (as of April 2010).

Aside from going against the grain on fiscal issues every now and then, Russ Feingold is an ardent liberal Democrat. His liberal voting record, coupled with his wanton disregard for constituent viewpoints, has made Feingold one of the most vulnerable incumbents in the 2010 election cycle. Prior to stepping into the voter booth on November 2, 2010, it is paramount that Wisconsinites are informed as to where each of the candidates stands on critical policy issues. It is our hope that you turn to the Pax Americana Institute for information pertaining to the 2010 U.S. Senate Race, as well as the 2010 Wisconsin gubernatorial race.