

RNC Research BRIEFING

Democrat Summer Stumbles

For Democrats Running For Governor, The Start Of The Summer Campaign Season Has Been Anything But Smooth

IN OREGON, JOHN KITZHABER CONTINUES TO THROW TAXPAYERS MONEY AT HIS COVER OREGON DEBACLE

Gov. John Kitzhaber (D-OR) Spent More Than \$2 Million On An Outside Law Firm To Assist With The Lawsuit Against Cover Oregon's Website Contractor, Oracle. "It's not the only clue. On May 15, the state entered into a \$2-million contract with Markowitz Herbold Glade & Mehlhaf PC, the outside firm hired to assist with exploring litigation against Oracle. The firm's earlier contract had been for \$250,000, then was expanded to \$550,000. The state has paid out nearly \$365,000 on the earlier contract, according to a contract ledger released by the state." (Nick Budnick, "With Legal Demands And \$2-Million Pact, Oregon Moves Closer To Suing Oracle Over Health Exchange Fiasco," [Oregonian](#), 6/17/14)

- **The Law Firm And Its Managing Shareholder Contributed A Combined \$10,500 To Kitzhaber's Campaign For Governor In 2010.** ([Oregon Secretary Of State Website](#), Accessed 6/17/14)

Kitzhaber Has Even Enlisted The Services Of Two Washington D.C. Lawyers To Help With The U.S. House Committee On Oversight's Investigation Into Cover Oregon. "The state has retained two Washington, D.C., lawyers to help Oregon with an investigation by a U.S. House committee ... To help with the investigation by the Republican-controlled House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the state hired Elliot Berke, who has been a lawyer for former House GOP leaders, and his law partner, Democratic attorney William Farah. Their firm was paid \$17,000 last month before they founded their own firm, which has a contract worth up to \$100,000." (Jonathan J. Cooper, "Oregon Closer To Health Exchange Suit," [Associated Press](#), 6/17/14)

As Of April 2014, Cover Oregon Had Spent Nearly \$250 Million In Federal Grant Money. "Cover Oregon closed one of the sorrier chapters in the history of Oregon state government Friday when it opted to dump its troubled \$248 million health insurance exchange in favor of the federal exchange." ("Oregon Leaving Online Health Exchange For U.S. Site," [The Associated Press](#), 3/5/14)

Oregon Received A Total Of \$305 Million In Grants To Build Its ObamaCare Exchange. "The federal government has issued a total of \$305 million in grants to Oregon to perform feasibility studies as well as to build, test and operate the exchange. An unknown fraction of those grants have been spent." (Jeff Manning, "Cover Oregon: \$248 Million State Exchange To Be Jettisoned In Favor Of Federal System," [CNBC](#), 2/13/14)

Kitzhaber Is Scrambling After Being Asleep At The Switch While Problems With The State's ObamaCare Exchange Grew

Kitzhaber Is Scrambling To Try To Hold The Cover Oregon's Website Contractor "Accountable" Months After He Knew There Were Problems. "Gov. John Kitzhaber said Thursday he's asked Oregon's attorney general to sue Oracle, the contractor responsible for building the glitch-filled Cover Oregon health insurance website ... 'The time has come to hold Oracle accountable for its failure to deliver technology that worked on the timelines the company committed to,' Kitzhaber said, according to prepared remarks delivered to the state legislature on Thursday." (Dana Davidsen, "Oregon Governor Wants To Sue Contractor Over Health Insurance Site," [CNN](#), 5/29/14)

A Report Conducted By The Centers For Medicare And Medicaid Services Said Oracle, The Technology Vendor For Cover Oregon, "May Have Boosted Billings." "A Feb. 27 review of the project by a federal IT SWAT team found that Oracle Corp., the project's main information technology vendor, has refused numerous requests from Cover Oregon for basic information about the system it is paying for. The report indicates Oracle may have boosted billings by 'throwing bodies rather than skillset' at problems. (Jeff Manning, "Cover Oregon: Feds Blast State Health Insurance Exchange And Lead Contractor, Oracle," [The Oregonian](#), 3/13/14)

Kitzhaber Claims He Didn't Know About Cover Oregon's Website Problems Until Late October, Weeks After It Already Missed Its October 1 Launch Date. "In a brief interview with KATU in early January, Gov. John Kitzhaber made an incredible claim about the failed launch of Cover Oregon's website. 'In late October was when I first learned about the problems,' Kitzhaber said. The claim was incredible because the website had already missed its Oct. 1 launch date. Kitzhaber was, in effect, saying he didn't know there were problems until weeks after one of the most important projects under his watch had already failed." (Dusty Lane, "Paging Dr. Kitzhaber: What Did Gov. Know About Cover Oregon Collapse?" [KATU](#), 1/30/14)

- **Despite Kitzhaber's Claim, "The State's Quality-Assurance Contractor Had Been Raising Glaring Red Flags For Almost Two Years."** "It was incredible because mountains of reports from the state's quality-assurance contractor had been raising glaring red flags for almost two years. It was incredible because the state had implemented a stringent set of checks and balances for the specific purpose of making sure the project didn't spiral without people in power knowing. And it was incredible because the KATU Investigators have unearthed emails and conducted interviews laying out repeated attempts by lawmakers and others involved with the project to get Kitzhaber's help in righting what was clearly a sinking ship." (Dusty Lane, "Paging Dr. Kitzhaber: What Did Gov. Know About Cover Oregon Collapse?" [KATU](#), 1/30/14)

IN HAWAII, RECENT POLLS SHOW THE DEMOCRAT INCUMBENT LOSING TO A PRIMARY CHALLENGER

Incumbent Gov. Neil Abercrombie (D-HI) Trails State Sen. David Ige (D-HI) By 11 Points Less Than Two Months Before The Primary. "Less than two months before the Aug. 9 primary for Hawaii governor, state Sen. David Ige leads Gov. Neil Abercrombie by 11 percentage points among likely Democratic voters. Ige has 48 percent of the vote compared with 37 percent for Abercrombie." (Chad Blair, "Ige Holds Healthy Lead Over Abercrombie In Hawaii Governor's Race," [Honolulu Civil Beat](#), 6/12/14)

- **"Voters Appear To Have Turned Against The Incumbent Governor And Prefer Another Candidate."** (Chad Blair, "Ige Holds Healthy Lead Over Abercrombie In Hawaii Governor's Race," [Honolulu Civil Beat](#), 6/12/14)

Abercrombie "Is Clearly Not A Popular Governor" As 51% Have a Negative Opinion Of The Governor. "In the latest poll, with 51 percent of those surveyed saying they have a negative opinion of

Abercrombie, he is clearly not a popular governor. Forty-five percent of likely Democratic primary voters said they are not satisfied with his performance as governor.” (Chad Blair, “Ige Holds Healthy Lead Over Abercrombie In Hawaii Governor’s Race,” [Honolulu Civil Beat](#), 6/12/14)

- **“In Terms Of Specific Issues, The Governor Has Middling Marks When It Comes To His Handling Of Education And The Environment And Relations With Organized Labor.”** (Chad Blair, “Ige Holds Healthy Lead Over Abercrombie In Hawaii Governor’s Race,” [Honolulu Civil Beat](#), 6/12/14)

In December 2013, Obama Officially Endorsed Abercrombie’s Re-Election Bid For Governor.

“Campaign officials for Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie say President Barack Obama is endorsing Abercrombie's bid for re-election next year. The campaign said on its website Friday that Obama is backing Abercrombie because of his handling of state finances and approach to making tough choices. Obama says in a statement that he's known Abercrombie for decades and appreciates him as a friend and public servant who doesn't let politics get in the way of serving the people. Abercrombie, a Democrat, says he is honored by Obama's endorsement.” (“Obama Endorses Gov. Abercrombie For Re-Election,” [The Associated Press](#), 12/20/13)

IN MASSACHUSETTS, MARTHA COAKLEY’S PAST CAMPAIGN FAILURES ARE BEING REVIVED

This Weekend, Massachusetts Democrats Endorsed Steve Grossman For Governor Over Attorney General Martha Coakley (D-MA), Who Finished Just One Point Above The Third-Place Candidate.

“Massachusetts Democrats on Saturday endorsed for governor Steve Grossman, the state treasurer, passing over Martha Coakley, the attorney general, and setting up an intense fight for the party nomination in the September primary ... On the first ballot, Mr. Grossman won 35 percent of the vote. Ms. Coakley came in at 23 percent, followed by Donald M. Berwick, a former Medicaid official, with 22 percent.” (Katharine Q. Seelye, “Massachusetts Democrats Hand Coakley A Setback,” [The New York Times](#), 6/14/14)

- **75 Percent Of Convention Delegates Chose A Candidate Other Than Coakley.** “Recent polls put Coakley miles ahead of any Democratic primary rival, and for now, leading Baker, although by single digits. But, 75 percent of convention delegates chose another candidate.” (Joan Vennoch, “2010 Haunts Martha Coakley In 2014,” [The Boston Globe](#), 6/15/14)

Delegates At The State Convention Couldn’t Shake Coakley’s Failed 2010 Senate Bid And “Remain Bitter At The Loss.” “She has tried to shake off the perception that she was a weak candidate who ran a bad campaign. But many of the 4,600 delegates here remain bitter at the loss and said they were not ready to risk letting the governor’s office fall out of Democratic hands.” (Katharine Q. Seelye, “Massachusetts Democrats Hand Coakley A Setback,” [The New York Times](#), 6/14/14)

- **“People Felt Like She Hadn’t Worked Hard Enough To Retain That Seat, And There’s Residue Of That Here.”** (Katharine Q. Seelye, “Massachusetts Democrats Hand Coakley A Setback,” [The New York Times](#), 6/14/14)

The Boston Globe Headline: “2010 Haunts Martha Coakley In 2014” (Joan Vennoch, “2010 Haunts Martha Coakley In 2014,” [The Boston Globe](#), 6/15/14)

- **“No Forgiveness. For Martha Coakley, That Was The Main Message From Worcester.”** (Joan Vennoch, “2010 Haunts Martha Coakley In 2014,” [The Boston Globe](#), 6/15/14)
- **Coakley Suffered “One Of The Biggest Upsets In Massachusetts Political History.”** “Republican Scott Brown tonight pulled off one of the biggest upsets in Massachusetts political history, defeating Democrat Martha Coakley to become the state’s next United States senator and potentially derailing President Obama’s hopes for a health care overhaul.” (Matt Viser and Andrea Estes, “In stunning upset, Brown tops Coakley for Senate seat,” [The Boston Globe](#), 1/19/10)

MSNBC's Steve Kornacki: "Now All Those Bad Memories From 2010 Are Being Revived." Kornacki: "The bigger threat to Coakley is the headlines. She's been benefiting from name recognition and a sense of inevitability. Now the story is that she's lost a big test. She's lost her party's endorsement. Now all those bad memories from 2010 are being revived. Before the convention, Grossman said that Coakley, if she lost, would have to 'do a lot of soul searching about whether to stay in the race.'" (MSNBC, "Up With Steve Kornacki, 6/15/14)

IN IOWA, JACK HATCH'S CAMPAIGN EXPERIENCES A ROUGH ROLL OUT FOR THEIR RUNNING MATE

Jack Hatch's (D-IA) Campaign Prematurely Announced Their Pick For Lt. Governor On The Campaign's Website. "Incumbent Gov. Terry Branstad was several steps ahead of Democratic challenger Jack Hatch on Hatch's own big announcement today on his running mate choice. Hatch was set to reveal his lieutenant governor pick at an event at 9 a.m. today, but he was scooped at 8 a.m. by the Branstad campaign, who publicized the news after discovering it on Hatch's own official campaign website. The "Meet Jack's running mate" message on Hatch's site soon vanished, indicating it had been posted prematurely." (Jennifer Jacobs, "Branstad Camp Claims 'Hatchvernon' Website, Twitter Handle," [The Des Moines Register](#), 6/17/14)

Hatch's Campaign Even Failed To Register Their Website Domain And Twitter Handle. "Another problem for Hatch: He couldn't reserve [www.HatchVernon.com](#) or [@HatchVernon](#). His GOP rival had already purchased the website and snagged the Twitter handle ... The Branstad 'HatchVernon' site looks strikingly similar to the official [www.JackHatch.com](#), but instead of links across the top connecting Iowans to 'Ideas for Iowa,' 'Meet Jack,' 'Join Our Team,' 'News,' 'Contact' and 'Contribute,' the faux site has links to 'A Really Bad,' 'Choice for Iowans,' 'Who Like Jobs,' 'Low Taxes,' and 'Balanced Budgets.'" (Jennifer Jacobs, "Branstad Camp Claims 'Hatchvernon' Website, Twitter Handle," [The Des Moines Register](#), 6/17/14)

IN OHIO, ED FITZGERALD'S NEWLY-APPOINTED FUNDRAISING TEAM IS STRUGGLING TO BRIDGE THE "MASSIVE GAP"

For The Second Straight Reporting Period, Ed FitzGerald (D-OH) Lags Far Behind In Fundraising. "As the race for governor heads into summer, Republican incumbent John Kasich continues to lead the race for money by a wide margin. Kasich has \$9.3 million on hand after raising nearly \$1.8 million in the most recent reporting period, according to the campaign finance report he filed Friday. Far behind is Democratic challenger Ed FitzGerald, the Cuyahoga County executive, who has \$1.9 million in the bank after raising about \$836,000 since late April." (Henry J. Gomez, "Gov. John Kasich Keeps Big Cash Lead Over Ed FitzGerald, Latest Round Of Fundraising Reports Show," [Northwest Ohio Media Group](#), 6/13/14)

FitzGerald's Previous Fundraising Numbers Show A "Massive Gap" Between His Campaign And Gov. Kasich's Re-Elections Campaign. "Fundraising numbers disclosed Friday in the race for governor show a massive gap between Republican incumbent John Kasich and Democratic challenger Ed FitzGerald ... The Cuyahoga County executive surely is trying to keep the faith alive among his supporters. But is it truly ideal for FitzGerald to be down more than 5-to-1 at this point in the money race?"

(Henry J. Gomez, "Can Ed FitzGerald Overcome His Cash Deficit? Will John Kasich Benefit From The Chris Christie Fallout? Ohio Politics Roundup" [Northeast Ohio Media Group](#), 2/3/14)

- **In February – After Facing A 5-To-1 Cash Disadvantage – FitzGerald Was Forced To Hire A New Fundraising Team To Assist His Bid For Governor.** "Down more than 5-to-1 in the money race, Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald has hired a new fundraising team to assist his bid for governor ... Two others -- at least one of whom is replacing another departed campaign employee -- have recently joined the fundraising effort. Sean Marcus will take over as deputy

finance director for northern Ohio. He has served in the White House under former President Bill Clinton and worked as a political fundraiser for former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, according to the campaign.” (Henry J. Gomez, “New Fundraising Team For Ed FitzGerald” [Northeast Ohio Media Group](#), 2/19/14)

IN WISCONSIN, MARY BURKE’S CAMPAIGN CUTS TIES WITH ITS TOP FUNDRAISING OFFICIAL

Mary Burke’s (D-WI) Finance Director, Aaron Fielding, Left The Campaign To Become The Finance Director For The Iowa Democratic Party. “Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mary Burke’s campaign has cut ties with its top fundraising official...Fielding ‘left to pursue other opportunities,’ Zepecki said.” (Daniel Bice, “Top Mary Burke Staffer Exits Campaign To Pursue Other Opportunities,” [Journal Sentinel](#), 6/12/14)

Fielding Left The Campaign Just As Burke Said She “Would Not Be Able To Underwrite The Entire Cost Of Her Campaign.” “Fielding’s departure came at a time when Burke -- whose family owns Trek Bicycle -- began pressing the point that she would not be able to underwrite the entire cost of her campaign. ‘I will put into this race what I can, but I can’t self-fund it,’ the Madison millionaire told Wisconsin Public Radio on March 26.” (Daniel Bice, “Top Mary Burke Staffer Exits Campaign To Pursue Other Opportunities,” [Journal Sentinel](#), 6/12/14)

IN TEXAS, WENDY DAVIS’S TEAM FACES A SHAKEUP AS HER CAMPAIGN FLOUNDERS

State Sen. Wendy Davis (D-TX) Has “Abruptly Replaced” Her Campaign Manager As Her Once Promising Campaign Begins To Flounder. “Texas Democratic gubernatorial candidate Wendy Davis abruptly replaced her campaign manager Wednesday — the latest sign that a run that began with national fanfare and sky-high hopes of a major blue victory in one of America’s reddest states has floundered against a strong Republican favorite.” (Will Weissert, “Davis Replaces Campaign manager Amid Struggles,” [The Associated Press](#), 6/11/14)

- **Texas Monthly: “All I Can Say Is, ‘It’s About Time.’ The Davis Campaign Has Been A Disaster.”** (Paul Burka, “The Shakeup In The Davis Campaign,” [Texas Monthly](#), 6/11/14)

Just Last Month, Bo Delp, Davis’s Communications Director Resigned After “Some Tough Sledding With The Media.” “Bo Delp, spokesman and former communications director for Sen. Wendy Davis’ campaign for governor, has resigned. Davis reorganized her communications department earlier this year after running into some tough sledding with the media.” (Peggy Fikac, “Davis Spokesman Resigns From Campaign,” [San Antonio Express-News](#), 5/1/14)

With All Of Davis’s Campaign Shakeups, It’s No Surprise That Recent Polling Shows Her With A Double-Digit Deficit

The Latest Polls Show Davis Trailing Attorney General Greg Abbott (R-TX) By 12 Points In The Race For Texas Governor. “Republican Greg Abbott leads Democrat Wendy Davis by 12 percentage points in the race for governor, according to a new University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll. That result is close to the 11-point spread, also in Abbott’s favor, in the February UT/TT Poll.” (Ross Ramsey, “UT/TT Poll: Abbott Leads Davis By 12 Points,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 6/12/14)