

# RNC Research BRIEFING

## Senate Summertime Blues

*For Democrats' Senate Candidates, The End Of Summer Can't Come Soon Enough*

### WEST VIRGINIANS NOW KNOW WHO NATALIE TENNANT STANDS WITH ON THE ISSUES: OBAMA

**Natalie Tennant's Campaign Chairman, Maj. Gen. Allen Tackett: "Because On Most Of His [Obama's] Policies And Stuff, She [Tennant] Supports."** (Maj. Gen. Allen Tackett, Remarks At Campaign Event, Logan, W.V., 8/2/14)

- **On Saturday, Maj. Gen. Allen Tackett Exclaimed That Tennant Agrees With Obama "On Most Of His Policies."** "The campaign chairman for Democratic Senate nominee Natalie Tennant recently said Tennant agrees with President Barack Obama 'on most of his policies.' Maj. Gen. Allen Tackett, the retired head of the West Virginia National Guard, misspoke when he made the statement Saturday in Logan before a Democratic campaign event, Tennant campaign spokeswoman Jenny Donohue said." (Dave Boucher, "Tackett: Tennant Supports The President 'On Most Of His Policies,'" [Charleston Daily Mail](#), 8/5/14)
- **Following Tackett's Comments, Both He And Tennant Left And Walked Away.** "Tackett, who was standing to the side, steps over and answers, 'because on most of his policies and stuff she supports.' Tennant quickly says 'well' while Tackett and the man try to talk over one another. Then Tennant and Tackett say they need to leave and walk away." (Dave Boucher, "Tackett: Tennant Supports The President 'On Most Of His Policies,'" [Charleston Daily Mail](#), 8/5/14)

### IN VIRGINIA AND LOUISIANA, MARK WARNER AND MARY LANDRIEU ARE FACING HEAT FOR FLYING HIGH ON TAXPAYER DOLLARS

**Last Year, Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) Chartered A Private Jet To Travel Across Virginia At A Cost To Taxpayers Of \$8,500.** "Last summer, Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., embarked on what his office trumpeted as a four-day, 1,000-mile trip across his state, with press releases noting he "woke up early to hit the road," making stops at a minor league ballpark, a craft brewery and a Roanoke rail yard, among others. But for several hundred of those miles, Warner was not hitting the road — he was flying a chartered jet at a cost to taxpayers of \$8,500." (Donovan Slack and Paul Singer, "Senator's Spent \$1 Million On Charter Flights Last Year," [USA Today](#), 7/31/14)

- **Warner's Democratic Colleague In The Senate, Tim Kaine (D-VA) Chose To Make The Same Trip By Car.** "But a month earlier, Virginia's other U.S. senator, Tim Kaine, made a swing to the same corner of the state by car; his travel cost taxpayers \$691. Both Warner and Kaine are Democrats representing the state that is closest to the U.S. Capitol." (Donovan Slack and Paul Singer, "Senators Spent \$1 Million On Charter Flights Last Year," [USA Today](#), 7/31/14)

**Warner Also "Chartered A Government Paid Private Plane" To Travel From North Carolina, "Where He Was Helping To Move His Daughter Move Into College."** "U.S. Senator Mark Warner (D) chartered a government paid private plane to travel from Durham, N.C., where he was helping to move his daughter move into college, to Jonesville, VA to begin a swing of meetings with constituents in Southwest Virginia. The trip occurred between August 21-24, 2012." (Ryan Nobles, "Warner Chartered Taxpayer Funded Flight After Daughter's College Move," [NBC 12](#), 8/5/14)

- **Warner's 2012 Charter Flight Trip Cost Taxpayers More Than \$11,000.** "The flight cost taxpayers \$4,680.05. He then flew from Blountville, TN (the airport that serves the tri-cities portion of Southwest Virginia) back to D.C. on another chartered flight. That flight cost taxpayers \$6,357.70. These flights are in addition to the flights attributed to Warner in a USA Today report that outlined chartered air travel by members of the U.S. Senate." (Ryan Nobles, "Warner Chartered Taxpayer Funded Flight After Daughter's College Move," [NBC 12](#), 8/5/14)

**Last Week, It Was Revealed That Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) Has Spent \$47,000 In Taxpayer Dollars For Private Air Travel.** "For instance, Sen. Mary Landrieu, a Democrat, spent \$47,000 on charter flights in 2013, including a \$5,500 round trip flight between New Orleans and Lake Charles, La., 200 miles to the west. Landrieu spokesman Matthew Lehner said chartering planes allowed the senator to reach more areas of the state more quickly." (Donovan Slack And Paul Singer, "Senators Spent \$1 Million On Charter Flights Last Year," [USA Today](#), 7/31/14)

## **AFTER HIS BLATANT PLAGIARISM WAS EXPOSED, JOHN WALSH'S POLITICAL FUTURE IS IN DOUBT IN MONTANA**

**Sen. John Walsh (D-MT) "Is Engaged In Internal Deliberations" About His Political Future.**

"Montana Sen. John Walsh is engaged in internal deliberations with his political team about whether to stay on the ballot this year, sources said Tuesday, in the wake of a plagiarism scandal that has tarnished the appointed Democratic lawmaker's standing." (Manu Raju, "Sources: Sen. John Walsh Weighs Political Future," [Politico](#), 8/5/14)

**Missoulian: "Walsh Should Drop Out Of Race"** (Editorial, "Walsh Should Drop Out Of Senate Race," [Missoulian](#), 8/3/14)

- **Missoulian: "The Bottom Line Is, Montanans Simply Cannot - And Won't - Trust A Senator Who Portrayed The Words And Ideas Of Others As His Own For His Own Personal Gain."** (Editorial, "Walsh Should Drop Out Of Senate Race," [Missoulian](#), 8/3/14)
- **Missoulian: "Walsh Stands Very Little Chance Of Winning In November."** "Indeed, that might be the party's best hope of getting a Democrat elected, because as it is, Walsh stands very little chance of winning in November." (Editorial, "Walsh Should Drop Out Of Senate Race," [Missoulian](#), 8/3/14)

**Billings Gazette: "Walsh Reaches End Of Campaign Trail 3 Months Before Election"** (Editorial, "Walsh Reaches End Of Campaign Trail 3 Months Before Election," [Billings Gazette](#), 8/3/14)

- **BG: Walsh Should Do The Honorable Thing, "Stop Campaigning."** Having repeatedly said that he wants to do the honorable thing, Walsh should stop campaigning and do his utmost to serve Montanans well in the remainder of his brief Senate appointment. That is the honorable course." (Editorial, "Walsh Reaches End Of Campaign Trail 3 Months Before Election," [Billings Gazette](#), 8/3/14)

- **BG: “Walsh Is Finished As A U.S. Senate Candidate.”** “Haunted by a serious lapse in academic honesty, Walsh is finished as a U.S. Senate candidate. But he should work even more diligently to finish the Senate job he already accepted.” (Editorial, “Walsh Reaches End Of Campaign Trail 3 Months Before Election,” [Billings Gazette](#), 8/3/14)

**Great Falls Tribune: “Sen. Walsh’s Plagiarism Was Reprehensible.”** (Editorial, “Sen. Walsh’s Plagiarism Was Reprehensible,” [Great Falls Tribune](#), 7/26/14)

- **GFT: Walsh’s Opponent “Will Have An Easy Gallop En Route To Winning The Nov. 4 General Election Contest.”** “If Walsh remains the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, we think U.S. Rep. Steve Daines, the Republican candidate for Senate, will have an easy gallop en route to winning the Nov. 4 general election contest.” (Editorial, “Sen. Walsh’s Plagiarism Was Reprehensible,” [Great Falls Tribune](#), 7/26/14)

## IN KENTUCKY, ALISON LUNDERGAN GRIMES HAS TURNED INTO A GAFFE MACHINE AND A TARGET FOR CRITICISM

**Last Week, Alison Lundergan Grimes Mistakenly Said That Israel’s “The Iron Dome Has Been A Big Reason Why Israel Has Been Able To Withstand The Terrorists That Have Tried To Tunnel Their Way In.”** “As foreign policy inches its way into a debate that has largely focused on the economy, Grimes was asked about congressional efforts to aid Israel’s missile defense system, known as the Iron Dome. ‘Obviously, Israel is one of our strongest allies in the Middle East, and she has the right to defend herself,’ Grimes said. ‘But the loss of life, especially the innocent civilians in Gaza is a tragedy. The Iron Dome has been a big reason why Israel has been able to withstand the terrorists that have tried to tunnel their way in.’ She continued: ‘My hope is that a ceasefire can be structured. Ultimately, I think the longterm solution though is not one we can impose. It has to come from within. It’s a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.’” (Sam Youngman, “Grimes Opens Lexington Office; Says Women Will See Her As ‘Future Of Kentucky,’” [Lexington Herald-Leader](#), 7/29/14)

**A Recent Bowling Green Daily News Editorial Blasted Grimes For Her Ads That Are “Blatantly Untrue” And “Misleading.”** “When political candidates make a TV ad, they should have their facts straight. Twice in U.S. Senate candidate Alison Lundergan Grimes’ first wave of ads, we have watched her run two blatantly untrue, misleading ads against her opponent, U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell.” (Editorial, “Grimes Ads Filled With Dishonesty,” [Bowling Green Daily News](#), 7/27/14)

- **BGDN: Grimes “Is Being Dishonest With Voters.”** “She is being dishonest with voters. Kentucky voters are intelligent. They see through these phony ads and the pattern of dodging questions. They also see the same people you hold fundraisers with in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York are the one’s waging the war on coal, not McConnell. These ads show a very inexperienced candidate who stands by these ads even after they’ve been discredited by various news organizations.” (Editorial, “Grimes Ads Filled With Dishonesty,” [Bowling Green Daily News](#), 7/27/14)

## ONCE A TOP RECRUIT, GEORGIA’S MICHELLE NUNN CONTINUES TO STUMBLE

**Leaked Internal Campaign Memos Revealed Michelle Nunn’s Campaign Strategy.** “The guts of Democrat Michelle Nunn’s U.S. Senate campaign were laid bare Monday in leaked internal memos, providing an unusually frank window into her strategy, strengths and vulnerabilities. The 144-page collection of memos, obtained by the National Review, offers a snapshot of the Nunn campaign as of December, seeking to ‘enforce message discipline’ and school the first-time candidate on policy.” (Greg Bluestein and Daniel Malloy, “Nunn Memo Reveals Strategy, Weaknesses,” [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), 7/28/14)

- **The Leaked Memos Are An “Embarrassment” To Nunn’s Campaign.** “But the public revelation served as an embarrassment to the campaign, as it gears up for a general election fight with Republican businessman David Perdue.” (Greg Bluestein and Daniel Malloy, “Nunn Memo Reveals Strategy, Weaknesses,” [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), 7/28/14)

**The Memos Highlight The Nunn Campaign’s Concerns That She Is “Not A ‘Real’ Georgian,” A “Lightweight” And That She Is “Too Liberal” For Georgia.** “But it also lists potential political liabilities in a way the Nunn campaign surely did not expect to become public, saying that Ms. Nunn might be attacked as a ‘lightweight,’ ‘too liberal’ and ‘not a ‘real’ Georgian,’ and laying out strategies to respond to criticisms of her biography and record.” (Alan Blinder, “Georgia Democrat’s Senate Campaign Plan, Not Meant For Public Eyes, Is Published,” [The New York Times](#), 7/28/14)

**The Augusta Chronicle Editorial: Nunn’s Leaked Campaign Memos Has “Erased” Any “Edge Her Political Pedigree Afforded Her.”** “Despite being the daughter of an enormously popular senator – she was 6 when her father, Sam Nunn, was first elected – Nunn has relatively shallow roots in the Peach State. She grew up in the D.C. area, and studied at the University of Virginia and Harvard University before returning to Georgia to perform nonprofit work and seek higher office. Whatever edge her political pedigree afforded her over Perdue – also a political newcomer – likely has been erased by the stark revelations contained in the leaked documents.” (Editorial, “Leak Looks Hard To Repair,” [The Augusta Chronicle](#), 7/31/14)

## **ON THE CUSP OF LOSING A THIRTY-YEAR DEMOCRAT SEAT, IOWA DEMOCRATS ARE WORRIED ABOUT BRUCE BRALEY**

**Democrats Are Worried That Rep. Bruce Braley’s (D-IA) Campaign Gaffes Are Jeopardizing The Party’s Hopes Of Keeping The Iowa Senate Seat.** “Democrats never expected that the 2014 candidate most likely to put his foot in his mouth would be their own Bruce Braley. The national Democrats who had long touted the four-term House member as a top Senate recruit in Iowa are the same ones who privately worry that Braley’s missteps are putting his chances at holding longtime Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin’s seat in jeopardy.” (Emily Schultheis, “Braley’s Missteps Have Democrats Worried In Iowa,” [National Journal](#), 7/28/14)

- **Democrats Had Expected “An Easy Race For Braley.”** “Braley entered the race in early 2013 after the veteran Harkin announced his retirement, quickly clearing the Democratic field and posting big fundraising quarters while the big and largely unknown Republican field battled against itself. That led to expectations that this would be an easy race for Braley, which one Democratic operative with Iowa experience said were ‘unreasonable’ for such a perennially competitive state.” (Emily Schultheis, “Braley’s Missteps Have Democrats Worried In Iowa,” [National Journal](#), 7/28/14)
- **“All Three Top Political Prognosticators ... Now Rate It As A Pure Toss-Up.”** “All three top political prognosticators—The Cook Political Report, The Rothenberg Political Report and Larry Sabato’s ‘Crystal Ball’—have shifted the race toward Republicans in recent weeks and now rate it as a pure toss-up.” (Emily Schultheis, “Braley’s Missteps Have Democrats Worried In Iowa,” [National Journal](#), 7/28/14)

**Obama’s “Increased Unpopularity Is Hurting” Braley’s Electoral Prospects.** “The press has been mostly focused on how the president’s increased unpopularity is hurting Democratic Senate candidates in red states. But it’s a blue state issue as well. Just ask Bruce Braley.” (Jason L. Riley, “Braley’s Obama Problem,” [The Wall Street Journal](#), 7/30/14)

***Braley Has Even Jettisoned His Campaign Advisors – But It May Be The Candidate Himself Dragging Down The Campaign***

**Earlier In The Summer, Braley Replaced His Admaker And Pollster.** “Iowa Democratic Senate hopeful Bruce Braley has shaken up his campaign, parting ways with admaker Larry Grisolano and pollster Diane Feldman after Republican Joni Ernst emerged from the primary with more momentum than anticipated, three sources confirmed to POLITICO. The mid-summer move by Braley quietly took place roughly a month ago, according to two of the sources, who asked to remain anonymous in order to speak about internal campaign maneuvers. The pair were replaced sometime in June by admaker Saul Shorr and pollster Geoff Garin, both of whom have worked on a number of Democratic Senate campaigns.” (Maggie Haberman, “Struggling Bruce Braley Shakes Up Campaign,” [Politico](#), 7/25/14)

- **“The Shakeup Came Amid Rising Concern From Democrats About Losing A Seat That’s Been Held By Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin For Nearly Three Decades.”** (Maggie Haberman, “Struggling Bruce Braley Shakes Up Campaign,” [Politico](#), 7/25/14)

**“The Main Source Of Concern About Braley’s Performance Has Tended To Be The Candidate Himself.”** “The main source of concern about Braley’s performance has tended to be the candidate himself. Still, the race between Braley, a Democratic congressman whose time on the trail has been marked by unforced errors, and Ernst, a military veteran who had support from establishment and tea party factions in her primary, has become razor-close in the past few weeks.” (Maggie Haberman, “Struggling Bruce Braley Shakes Up Campaign,” [Politico](#), 7/25/14)