



## Six vie for Kennedy's Senate seat

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(CNN) -- Massachusetts voters head to the polls Tuesday to narrow the field of candidates vying to succeed the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, a fixture in national politics who established himself as one of the most powerful lawmakers to serve in the Senate.

Four Democrats are battling for their party's nomination, while two Republicans are competing for the GOP nod in a special primary election. The general election to fill the remaining two years of Kennedy's six-year term will take place on January 19, 2010.

Attention in the race has focused primarily on the Democratic nomination, which features a congressman, state attorney general, professional basketball team owner and a nonprofit executive.

Kennedy died in August of brain cancer at 77. Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick appointed longtime Kennedy confidante Paul Kirk in September to fill the seat until the January special election.

A University of New Hampshire poll conducted for The Boston Globe in late November showed state Attorney Gen. Martha Coakley leading her closest rival, U.S. Rep. Michael Capuano, by 21 percentage points. Of those surveyed by UNH, 43 percent chose Coakley, 22 percent picked Capuano, 15 percent selected Boston Celtics co-owner Steve Pagliuca and 6 percent said nonprofit executive Alan Khazei was their choice. The UNH/Globe poll is consistent with surveys conducted by other academic institutions.

The Republican candidates, state Sen. Scott Brown and attorney Jack E. Robinson, were not included in the poll. But Brown, who was endorsed by the Globe and The Boston Herald, is expected to win the GOP primary.

Although surveys show Coakley holds a comfortable lead, the winner of the Democratic primary will be the candidate who is able to persuade political supporters to head to the polls. While 4.1 million people are registered to vote in Massachusetts, the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office estimates that only between 300,000 and 500,000 will cast ballots on Tuesday.

Steve Kerrigan, who served as Kennedy's political director, said each candidate has different turnout goals. Coakley will be successful if there is medium turnout and people recognize her name because she is a statewide officeholder, he said. Capuano would benefit from low overall turnout, but high turnout in urban areas such as Boston and

smaller cities. Pagliuca and Khazei are counting on very high turnout as they seek support from a large swath of voters, Kerrigan said.

Of all the candidates, Coakley has been the least likely of the quartet to invoke Kennedy's name on the campaign trail.

But Kerrigan said he thinks Kennedy's presence has loomed large in the campaign.

"I think every candidate is trying to make it clear that these are huge footsteps to follow," said Kerrigan, who is staying neutral in the race. "It is obvious by the way they are campaigning and what they are saying. They understand that this election is about more than just filling a Senate seat."

Kennedy, who was the brother of the late President John Kennedy and late New York Sen. Robert Kennedy, was the fourth-longest serving senator in history.

The Democratic candidates have turned to television to promote their campaigns and boost name identification with voters. Pagliuca had spent the most money on TV advertising through Saturday, said Evan Tracey, president of Campaign Media Analysis Group, CNN's consultant on political advertising.

Pagliuca has spent at least \$4.3 million; Coakley, \$1.7 million; Capuano, \$1.4 million; and Khazei, \$462,000, on television commercials.

Pagliuca also appears to be the top overall spender in the race, according to Federal Election Commission data. The latest FEC filings, which cover campaign balances and transactions through November 18, show that Pagliuca has spent more than \$5.6 million; Coakley, \$2.6 million; Capuano, \$2.1 million; Khazei, \$1.7; Robinson, \$325,500; and Brown, \$210,000.

Massachusetts officials estimate it will cost at least \$12.6 million to hold the election.

— *CNN's Robert Yoon contributed to this report*