United States Senate (MS) Special Election, 2018

Jungle Primary Election & Runoff Election Analyses

Dallas Breen, Ph.D & Sean C. Conner, MPPA

“Turnout is key to this election.” These words were uttered on news outlets for a majority of the three weeks leading up to the runoff election between incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith and challenger Mike Espy for the Mississippi 2nd Seat in the United States Senate. There were a number of characteristics of this election that helped create the rollercoaster of an election.

Overview

The 2018 special election to fill the final two years of former Senator Thad Cochran’s term was filled with challenges, speculations, accusations, and a number of media attention-grabbing events that created one of the more heavily media-covered midterm elections to take place in the State in several decades. The purpose of this brief is to examine the data and understand any patterns that evolved during the general election and the runoff.

The 2018 election saw incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith face off against Mike Espy, Chris McDaniel, and Toby Bartee. Immediately, one might notice the lack of political affiliation in this last statement. This is done upfront for a specific reason. The unique nature of this particular race is its connotation, “jungle primary”, meaning no political affiliation is listed on the ballot. In a state with open primaries, Mississippi residents normally must choose one of the parties’ ballots to vote during a primary. However, because of the nature of this special election, voters were not required to declare a party in order to vote for any candidate during the jungle primary. For clarity, this brief will refer to the election as the general election and runoff or special election from this point forward.

General Election Overview

The special election resulted in a near-even vote for Hyde-Smith and Espy, with each receiving approximately 41% of the vote. McDaniel received 16.5%, and Bartee wrapped up the field with the remaining 1.5%. The lack of any candidate reaching the 50% threshold signaled the need for a runoff election between the top two finishers, Hyde-Smith and Espy. Based on Mississippi statute, the election was to be held on November 26, 2018, just 3 weeks from the general election and a mere 5 days after the Thanksgiving holiday. Scholars note that turnout for runoff elections is generally lower than that of general elections, and this difference is exacerbated during midterm elections. With a virtual dead-even result from the general election, many wondered whether either candidate could mobilize their bases and rejuvenate the desire to vote from the voting population. While political parties were not listed on the ballot, the analyses from this point forward are based on the
understanding that most were aware of the party differences between the candidates and that this did play a role in the votes in the general election and the following runoff. This point could be contended on a number of fronts as altering the turnout and vote, but none would generate enough foundational support to impact the analyses at this stage.

Examining some key items from the general election, one can gain an understanding of what transpired in the runoff election. Below, Figure 1 shows county-level vote totals, in a party color-coded manner. The general election saw a 41/41/17 (rounding) result for each candidate. However, if we look at the two candidates representing the Republican Party, Hyde-Smith and McDaniel combined, we see that the vote more closely resembles a 58/41 vote along party lines (Figure 3). When plotted, the county-level results bear close resemblance to those of Senator Wicker’s Senate election versus challenger David Baria, which resulted in a 59/39 victory for Senator Wicker. In terms of raw vote tallies by party, the Democratic challenger, Mike Espy, was looking at overcoming a vote deficit of approximately 150,000 votes to beat incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith in a runoff election.

Figure 1: 2018 General Election Results: Republican Candidate (Hyde-Smith and Democratic Candidate (Espy)

Data source: politico.com and nytimes.com. Counties with missing precincts in general election were checked against the Secretary of State’s County Recapitulation Reports, November 28, 2018.
2018 Special Election Runoff

With the general election vote resulting in a virtual deadlock between Espy and Hyde-Smith, the inevitable response from a number of outlets became “turnout matters”. In this particular race, turnout was particularly important due to the timing of the election. With approximately three weeks between the general election and runoff, little time was available for either campaign to mount a widespread get-out-the-vote effort that would overcome the geographical limitations posed by a rural state. Mississippi is only one of four states to hold a runoff less than six weeks from the general election. The limited timeframe between the two elections meant that a challenger hopeful of overcoming a deficit would have to hope for lightning in a bottle, or a significant event that caused a shift in voter turnout, similar to what was seen in Alabama during the Jones/Moore race. However, there did not appear to be any truly landscape-altering events during this election.

Figure 2 shows the combined turnout for Hyde-Smith and McDaniel, as both are widely recognized as candidates representing the Republican Party. Of significant importance in this figure is the overall Republican and Democratic divided vote by county, as it provides context for the runoff election. Particularly interesting from the general election was the vote difference between the two runoff candidates, with many disregarding the approximately 160,000 votes cast for McDaniel, a relatively popular third party candidate. This meant crossover votes would be hard to come by for Espy, the democratic challenger, in the upcoming election. Espy’s best opportunities for success in the runoff were to get voters to the polls who did not vote in the general election, and/or to hope those that voted for McDaniel would choose to stay at home rather than vote along party lines for Hyde-Smith in the runoff. Some have speculated the potential of crossover votes from McDaniel to Espy, however measuring those would be difficult and would likely not be of statistical significance to the overall result.

This narrow election timeframe produced heightened turnout in areas where each of the campaigns centralized efforts, such as Lee County, Hinds County, and the coastal counties of Mississippi. Figure 3 details county vote differences between the general and runoff elections through the use of depth, or height effects. The taller the county polygon, the greater the increase (or decrease if the county outline dips under the graphic) in votes from general election to runoff. Important in this demonstration is the context of get-out-the-vote, as the reader will undoubtedly notice the fairly equal distribution of vote strength with a few caveats. The first, anticipated lack of turnout by voters choosing other candidates from the general election, did take place. However, this drop in votes, presumptively from voters choosing the other Republican candidate, State Senator Chris McDaniel, was countered by a significant increase of votes in a number of counties and a strengthening of the Republican percentage vote. Turnout in the general and runoff elections were unprecedented for the state of Mississippi.

The general election turnout was significantly higher than many anticipated and the runoff election, typically experiencing lower turnout than the general elections, saw only a slight dip from the general elections. Five-Thirty-Eight blogger, Geoffrey Skelley, noted in a live blog during the elections that “Turnout in Mississippi seems on pace to not drop that much from the initial elections... [and] turnout as a share of the voting-eligible population might drop from 43 percent three weeks ago to about 40 percent today.” So when the media states that “turnout matters”, it does. In this case, in
order to overcome a projected deficit ranging from 8-17 points (or 150,000 votes), it was imperative that the underdog Democrat not only meet general election turnout numbers, but well exceed these numbers in order to flip the map. To visualize this deficit, the map below shows the combined Republican vote by county to display the significant challenge that faced the Democratic candidate, Espy. Turnout for the special election runoff, not including provisional or absentee ballots, ended with approximately 880,380 votes for the state of Mississippi. This is roughly 40% of the voting age population of the State. In the election, incumbent Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith claimed victory, tallying 476,015 votes (54.07%). Challenger Mike Espy tallied 404,325 votes (45.93%). The result of the election was certainly closer than some originally believed would be the case.\textsuperscript{vi}

**Figure 2:** 2018 General Election Results: Combined Republican Candidates (Hyde-Smith and McDaniel) and Democratic Candidate (Espy)

Data source: politico.com and nytimes.com. Counties with missing precincts in general election were checked against the Secretary of State’s County Recapitulation Reports, November 28, 2018.
Figure 3 shows the overall county totals and the change in voter turnout by county, providing a more detailed picture of the runoff result. What should be apparent almost immediately is the increase in votes in Lee County, MS (Northeast region of the state). President Donald Trump visited the Tupelo, MS area on the night prior to the election, which could be a significant component for the increased turnout in Lee County. The President also visited the Mississippi gulf coast during the day, yet the same increase in voter turnout was not seen on the coast. There are some other possibilities for the increased turnout in Lee County, but those are outside the scope of this brief.

Lee County saw the greatest increase in voter turnout by 4,728 votes for an increase of 22.54% of the general election turnout. Montgomery County, which saw an increase in voter turnout of 1,610 additional voters, saw a runoff turnout increase of over 48% from the general election and a significant 76.83% increase in Republican voter turnout from general election to runoff. To put this in perspective, if the general election turned out a combined vote total for Republican Party candidates of 1,916 votes, the runoff saw a vote total for Cindy Hyde-Smith of 3,388 for a difference of 1,472 votes from the combined total in the general election while challenger Mike Espy saw an increase of just 138 votes to gather 1,547. Conversely, Noxubee County saw the largest percentage increase from general to runoff election for the Democratic candidate. The county produced a 23.53% increase in total votes, or an 841 vote increase for Espy and a 62 vote decrease for Cindy Hyde-Smith. Table 1 shows the top increases in the top 3 counties, by raw votes, between each candidate from general to runoff elections.

Table 1: Top 3 Counties with Increased Voters from General to Runoff, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 3</th>
<th>Hyde-Smith</th>
<th>Rounded Ratio</th>
<th>Top 3</th>
<th>Espy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>8,569</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hinds</td>
<td>3,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankin</td>
<td>5,489</td>
<td></td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>2,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>4,785</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>1,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18,843</td>
<td>2.70 : 1</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>101,859</td>
<td>2.79 : 1</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>36,521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historical Perspective

Much of the Republican candidate’s campaign focused on the fact that the incumbent, Hyde-Smith, was completely supportive of President Trump’s agenda. This stance was particularly important in Mississippi, as the most recent Morning Consult poll tracking the Presidential approval ratings by state reinforced, since President Donald Trump has seen a fairly steady approval rating in the 60% range in the state. Looking back at the change in Republican voting strength from the 2012 Presidential election between Mitt Romney (R) and Incumbent Barack Obama (D) to the 2016 Presidential election between Hillary Clinton (D) and Donald Trump (R), the increase in Republican votes is readily apparent.

Figure 4: County-level Party Voting Shift, 2012 to 2016 Presidential Elections

As seen in the above chart, only 7 counties in Mississippi voted less Republican in 2016 than in the 2012 election. Even in areas that are historically prone to vote heavily in favor of Democrats, the 2016 election saw a strengthening of the Republican vote in most of the areas. Of note, the largest decrease in Republican vote strength was approximately 1.5%, whereas the average gain of the 75 remaining counties was approximately 4%. Also, voter turnout in 2016 was only slightly less than 2012, with about 95% of the voting turnout of 2012, or approximately 1.2 million votes.

The most notable component of the above chart and the following bubble charts showing the change in party strength is the sheer magnitude of the strengthening of the Republican Party vote between the 2012 and 2016 Presidential elections.
Also, it should be noted that the larger population centers in the State [DeSoto, Hinds, Madison, Rankin] were the primary locations of this Democrat vote shift. DeSoto, it should be noted, along with Lamar county, voted for President Trump by at least 65%, and Madison county provided an almost 57% vote for President Trump. As counties witnessed a shift towards a more Republican base than in the 2012 elections, it is important to note the turnout for the 2016 Presidential election was over 25% more than the special election runoff contest, making direct comparisons difficult.

Noting this difficulty, attention is shifted to comparisons of historical races within the State where voter turnout was similar to the 2018 runoff elections, helping to provide a foundational examination of the possible voting trends. It is also important to keep the comparison within a reasonable timeframe as many of the campaign techniques and approaches have changed since the late 1990s with the advent of new technologies and social media, making any inferences from elections prior less relevant.

The unique findings for this election should be taken with caution. The midterm elections are typically less representative than Presidential elections. In addition, comparisons to other midterm elections should be done with extreme caution, as the turnout out for midterm elections is typically a fraction of the turnout for this election. Turnout for the 2018 general election surpassed 900,000, while the 2014 election saw a turnout of roughly 600,000, or roughly 2/3 of the total vote from 2018.

**Election Comparisons**

Examining past elections where voter turnout equaled 2018 special election runoff totals, the 2003 Gubernatorial Election between incumbent Ronnie Musgrove (D) and challenger Haley Barbour (R) proved to be an exceptionally similar election turnout. The table below compares raw vote counts and percentage of total vote gained by each party’s candidate in the two elections. The column in the center of the table illustrates the remarkably small differences between the two, demonstrating the validity of the comparison. Raw vote totals and turnout percentages from a single election are informative to an extent, but historical trends and comparisons can oftentimes reveal emerging patterns. Figure 5 outlines quantifiable similarities between the two elections presented, indicating opportune fit for analysis.

**Figure 5: A Comparison of the 2003 Gubernatorial Election and the 2018 Runoff Election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate ( R )</th>
<th>2003 Gubernatorial Election</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>2018 US Senate Special Election Runoff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haley Barbour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cindy Hyde-Smith (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes in favor</td>
<td>470,404</td>
<td>5,611</td>
<td>476,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>53.44%</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
<td>54.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate ( D )</td>
<td>Ronnie Musgrove (i)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Espy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes in favor</td>
<td>409,787</td>
<td>5,462</td>
<td>404,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>46.56%</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
<td>45.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Election Votes</td>
<td>880,191</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>880,340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Mississippi Secretary of State, 2018. Data may be incomplete for 2018 due to lack of certified results.*
It is not often that vote counts will be so closely aligned, and it is necessary to note that the 2018 totals are preliminary figures only, having not been certified by the Secretary of State at the time of this writing. However, it is readily apparent that the numeric similarities in turnout between the two elections are abundant. Figures 6 and 7 examine the differences in turnout between 2003 and 2018, as well as strength of party control for each party.

Figure 6: Change in Strength in Democrat Voting Percentage by Voting Age Population 2003 Gubernatorial Election to 2018 US Senate Special Election Runoff

Size of Circle = Number of Votes increased from 2003 to 2018

Darker Blue = Higher % Democrat Vote in 2018

Darker Gray = Lower % Democrat Vote in 2018

Data: Mississippi Secretary of State and politico.com
In Figure 6, we can see that there was a significant increase in Hinds, DeSoto, Madison, and Rankin in Democrat turnout when compared to 2003. Madison, Rankin, and DeSoto all voted majority Republican in the 2018 election, however the Democrat vote was significantly increased from the 2003 levels. For comparison, Itawamba, Tishimingo, George, Prentiss and Pearl River counties all saw a significant move towards a more Republican vote, as noted by the gray shading.

**Figure 7: Change in Strength in Republican Voting Percentage by Voting Age Population**
2003 Gubernatorial Election to 2018 US Senate Special Election Runoff

- Size of Circle = Number of Votes increased from 2003 to 2018
- Darker Red = Higher % Republican Vote in 2018
- Darker Gray = Lower % Republican Vote in 2018

Data: Mississippi Secretary of State and politico.com
In both Figure 6 and Figure 7, the two charts mirror one another. The purpose of showing both is to demonstrate that the Democrat vote is significant in larger, urban counties, while the Republican vote is strengthening in the rural areas, much in the way of the recent national trends. However, even with the increased turnout by the Democrat voters in the urban area, the gap between the two parties has not tightened enough to witness a flipping of party control in the State to put a Democrat in office for the US Senate.

Turnout for the 2018 special runoff election compared to the 2003 runoff saw a shift in voter turnout around the Jackson, MS metropolitan area, including the counties of Rankin, Madison and Hinds county, which contains the city of Jackson. In addition, Lee County saw a significant increase in voter turnout, as noted previously, that could be assumed to have some correlation with the visit by President Trump to the area, as both Republican and Democrat votes increased as a result. Surrounding areas of the Lee County area saw increases in voter turnout for the Republican candidate, while also increasing where some of the coastal counties, increasing the Republican presence in the coastal counties. So with turnout of virtually identical numbers, patterns in many of the same counties expose the overall patterns in voting of the Mississippi electorate, with only a few counties standing out as shifting in voting patterns; Lowndes and Madison counties. Lowndes County saw a change in majority vote from both the 2003 and 2016 elections, while Madison has not seen the same flip, but has seen a steady decrease in Republican Party strength over the course of the 15 years. Coastal counties continue to be Republican Party majority as well as the northeast quadrant of Mississippi. The Mississippi Delta region along with Hinds County continues to be primarily Democratic in voting majority, along with the east-central portion of the State.

Tying it all Together

The 2018 general election and runoff created a renewed interest in elections outside of Presidential elections between opposing political party candidates. The unique nature of the jungle primary combined with the national media attention provided interesting moments in Mississippi politics. Most of the county-level results from the election were expected based on previous voting patterns, with the exception of a few counties. The party change in Lowndes County and the decreasing Madison County Republican vote, combined with the significant increase in Lee County votes for Republicans, created a small percentage shift of the voting population in the State of Mississippi. This election has given political scientists and researchers a few new angles for future analyses on Mississippi elections for the future.

Before wrapping up, it is important to recap the vote turnout for the general and runoff elections. The 2018 general special election saw three candidates split votes in a significant three-way manner while the fourth challenger was unable to collect more than 2% of the vote. Two of the candidates, Cindy Hyde-Smith and Chris McDaniel, used their platforms to suggest they served the interests of the Republican Party while Mike Espy represented the Democrat Party. To gain a perspective of the shifts in votes, Figure 8 depicts areas of interest for readers. Figure 8 shows the progression of the election, including the “combined Republican” result (map B), from general to runoff, providing county-level, color-coded voting results and the resulting flip of majority political party vote. Areas highlighted in Figure 8 show the progression from one party control in a head-to-head examination of the general election to the county party control if a combined Republican vote is considered, to final the runoff results.
In Figure 8, Map A shows the 2018 general election results when examining Espy and Hyde-Smith in a head-to-head contest. This provides context into the runoff vote when previewing a race including the top two candidates from the general election. Map B provides a “combined republican” vote picture. This assumes people would vote for their political party disregarding the candidate. There are a number of caveats to this approach, however it is important for future discussion. Map C shows the results of the runoff.

The most noteworthy shift in this election was the “flipping” of five counties from the combined general election results and the runoff results. These five counties had a combined vote for the Republican Party during the general election, yet voted majority Democrat Party in the runoff. Of these five counties, four voted in the majority for Republican Party candidate Donald Trump during the 2016 election. Only Pike County voted in the majority for Democratic Party candidate Hilary Clinton during the 2016 Presidential election. Chickasaw and Lowndes counties voted for President Trump by margins greater than 5 points, and Lowndes voted Republican majority during the 2012 election. This might be the most significant shift of the election, as the four other counties all voted majority for Democratic nominee Barack Obama during the 2012 election. Each of these counties displayed their ability to vote majority Democrat during an election, so the flip during the 2018 runoff is not unprecedented. From a demographic perspective, Chickasaw and Lowndes counties are majority white while Panola, Pike, and Warren are majority African American. One final note from analyzing these counties; Panola and Pike...
counties saw an increase in total votes from the general election to the runoff. Of the 40 counties experiencing increases in voter turnout from general to runoff, only 9 saw a strengthening of vote percentages for the Republican Party.

Given the similar turnout numbers from general to runoff election, the number of votes from counties would need to significantly shift in favor of the Democrat candidate to overcome the vote deficit, and that did not take place. As seen in the Figure 9, there was simply not enough of a significant shift in the voting strength at the county level to provide the necessary foundation for a successful challenge to unseat the incumbent Senator Hyde-Smith. Many of the Mississippi counties are sparsely populated areas and several included areas with a significant decline in votes from general to runoff election, therefore the voter turnout needed to overcome the vote deficit from the general election in favor of the challenger was simply not seen in the runoff election.

Figure 9 is annotated for counties where each candidate gained more than 2,000 votes between the general election and the runoff election. Note that the scale of votes is the same for each, so the overall height of the bar chart is similar, showing raw vote differences case for each candidate. Figure 9 depicts counties where the challenger Espy was successful in obtaining 2,000 or more votes (bottom blue, Hinds and Madison) and the corresponding votes for the incumbent Hyde-Smith (top red). Figure 9 also depicts counties where incumbent Hyde-Smith was able to gain more than 2,000 votes (DeSoto, Forrest, Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lamar, Lee, Madison, Pearl River, Pontotoc, and Rankin) and the subsequent gains (or losses) in these counties by Espy.

Without the presence of a significant shift (more than 2,000 votes) in a number of areas, any significant opportunity of contesting the election fell short, which is expected given voting patterns of the State over the last few decades in Senate elections.

Take Home Points

The 2018 November elections were characterized by a heightened media presence, increased speculation on events surrounding the elections, and comparisons to other elections in neighboring states. The State of Mississippi provided the US with a look into Mississippi politics in the 21st century. A number of events had the opportunity to change the resulting landscape of the election, such as; 1) control of the Senate coming down to the runoff vote, 2) other States’ votes still remain with uncertainty, or 3) a lightning-rod event that changed the perception of the campaigns. However, without any of these events being present in the runoff election, the runoff saw a predictable outcome based on historical voting patterns in the State. Incumbent Senator Hyde-Smith was able to secure a victory in the campaign. Mike Espy showed that while ground could be gained through significant fundraising efforts and other additional support, obtaining the support of rural voters in the State is critical for success. Mississippi is a rural state and by that nature, voters are particularly interested in rural-focused issues. Agriculture, farming, the economy, and other rural-based policy areas remain at the forefront of Mississippi attention.
Figure 9: Differences in Vote Totals Between General and Runoff Elections, By County, 2018

State / County

Overall Decrease: Claiborne
Hyde-Smith: 2,012
Espy: 315

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: George
Hyde-Smith: 2,012
Espy: 2

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Forrest
Hyde-Smith: 2,356
Espy: 316

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Hinds
Espy: 6,011
Hyde-Smith: 1,021

Significant Overall Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,024
Espy: 154

Overall Decrease: Claiborne
Hyde-Smith: 33
Espy: 92

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lee
Hyde-Smith: 4,182
Espy: 116

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,025
Espy: 154

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Pearl River
Hyde-Smith: 3,502
Espy: 184

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Rankin
Hyde-Smith: 3,489
Espy: 562

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Tunica
Hyde-Smith: 2
Espy: 237

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Wells
Hyde-Smith: 2,000
Espy: 315

Significant Overall Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,265
Espy: 154

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Itawamba
Hyde-Smith: 1,845
Espy: 4

Significant Overall Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,024
Espy: 154

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lauderdale
Hyde-Smith: 4,980
Espy: 713

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Jackson
Hyde-Smith: 4,480
Espy: 713

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lauderdale
Hyde-Smith: 4,785
Espy: 769

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Hinds
Espy: 3,601
Hyde-Smith: 1,021

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Jones
Hyde-Smith: 4,569
Espy: 655

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lamar
Hyde-Smith: 3,733
Espy: 721

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lee
Hyde-Smith: 4,180
Espy: 1,116

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,265
Espy: 154

Significant Overall Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,024
Espy: 154

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Lee
Hyde-Smith: 4,180
Espy: 1,116

Significant Hyde-Smith Gain: Madison
Hyde-Smith: 2,265
Espy: 154

Overall Decrease: Claiborne
Hyde-Smith: 33
Espy: 92
About the Stennis Institute

The John C. Stennis Institute of Government performs a threefold mission: (1) to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Mississippi state and local governments through basic and applied research, training, technical assistance, and service; (2) to provide technical assistance and research for both rural development in Mississippi and regional activities in the Southeast; and (3) to promote civic education and citizen involvement in the political process.

By providing meaningful, applied research to both local and state units of Mississippi government, the Institute brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to bear on real-world issues. Through its executive development programs, training opportunities, and technical assistance programs, the Institute provides support for today’s policy-makers from the courthouse to the classroom. And, by playing an active role in the development of tomorrow’s governmental leaders, the Institute is working to ensure that Mississippi’s future remains strong.

Like the majority of public servants in the State, the staff of the Institute are generalists, bringing the wide range of their experiences and talents to bear on a diverse range of issues. From political analysis and commentary to economic development activities, the topics delineated on any list of ongoing Institute projects clearly illustrate this diversity. Likewise, projects range in size and scope from specific work with Mississippi’s smallest towns to federally-funded grants with multi-state application.

About the Authors

Dr. Joseph “Dallas” Breen is Executive Director at the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Community Development and an Assistant Research Professor in the Political Science and Public Administration department at Mississippi State University. Dr. Breen is a political analyst and expert on state and local government while providing political commentary for outlets such as ABCNews, FOXNews, Vox, Christian Science Monitor, and more.

Sean C. Conner, MPPA is a Graduate Research Assistant at the Stennis Institute and Ph.D. candidate in the Political Science and Public Administration Department at Mississippi State University. Sean has extensive expertise in data management, research methods, with research experience in policy diffusion, elections, and voter behavior.

**Appendix included for county visualization clarity**

---

3 Arkansas and South Dakota hold their “runoffs” three weeks after the general election. South Carolina holds their runoff elections two weeks after the general election.
5 https://fivethirtyeight.com/live-blog/mississippi-senate-runoff-election-results/
6 Politico.com, Vox.com, and Cook Political Report, to name a few.
7 While citations are necessary in most cases, this is one that can be searched for and return voluminous results and is also part of the Hyde-Smith campaign’s motto
8 https://morningconsult.com/tracking-trump/
2018 US Senate Special Election Runoff

GENERAL Election Results (11/6)
Candidate Totals: Head to Head

- Espy >75%
- Espy 60-75%
- Espy 50-60%
- EVEN
- Hyde-Smith 50-60%
- Hyde-Smith 60-75%
- Hyde-Smith >75%
2018 US Senate Special Election Runoff

RUNOFF Election Results (11/27)
Candidate Totals: Head to Head

- **Espy >75%**
- **Espy 60-75%**
- **Espy 50-60%**
- **EVEN**
- **Hyde-Smith 50-60%**
- **Hyde-Smith 60-75%**
- **Hyde-Smith >75%**
Percent Vote Change Between Elections
Change in Voter Turnout, by VAP

-5.08% - -2.04%
-2.03% - -0.53%
-0.52% - 0.37%
0.38% - 2.15%
2.16% - 20.29%

Counties voting Espy in Runoff selection