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Schumer uncorks \$6.2 million to aid Senate races

Money flows from senator's campaign account to key contests

By Dan Freedman Published 10:19 pm, Wednesday, October 5, 2016



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WASHINGTON, DC - SEPTEMBER 07: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) (C) joins Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) (R) and Senate Minority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL) for a news conference following the weekly ... [more](#)



Washington

Not only has Sen. **Charles Schumer** put his money where his mouth is, he put it where his political future lies — or so he hopes.

New York's senior senator has taken \$6.2 million out of his own Senate

campaign fund and plunked it down on **Democratic Senate** candidates in tight races. It's a gamble that enough Senate victories on Election Day will make his long-cherished dream come true: Becoming Senate majority leader when Congress gathers anew in January.

Of the \$6.2 million he delivered in September, \$3 million went to the **Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee** — the party arm in charge of electing **Democrats** to the Senate — according to Democratic aides familiar with Schumer's activities. The rest, \$3.2 million, went to Democratic parties in states with close races.

The exact destinations will be disclosed when the **Federal Election Commission** later this month releases campaign-finance reports for the third quarter of 2016, which ended Sept. 30.

The aides insisted Schumer's bankroll is not a calculated effort to vault himself into the majority leader's position, which would give him tremendous power to set the Senate's agenda in the coming years. Rather, he is doing it for the benefit of the nation as a whole, as well as the **Democratic Party's** legislative agenda, they said.

But among political observers and players, it was hard not to see at least a bit of calculation and self-promotion on the part of the never-bashful Brooklynite, first elected to the Senate in 1998 when he ousted incumbent **Republican Sen. Al D'Amato**.

"He's always been an aggressive campaigner and he's making a tactical judgment," said **Gerald Benjamin**, director of the **Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives** at SUNY New Paltz. "He has a major opportunity in his grasp and he doesn't want to let it slip away."

Until recent weeks, Democrats had bright hopes that voter disenchantment with Republican nominee **Donald Trump** would have a down-ballot impact, diminishing GOP hopes of retaining Senate control.

But Trump is closer to Democratic nominee **Hillary Clinton** than many of his detractors would have imagined. And several big Republican spenders are offsetting upset over Trump's bluster and business tactics with big investments in House and

Senate races.

Las Vegas casino magnate **Sheldon Adelson**, for instance, has given a paltry \$5 million to a group run by TD Ameritrade founder **Joe Ricketts**, who endorsed Trump only after he emerged victorious in the primaries.

But Adelson has forked over a whopping \$20 million each for PACs supporting **Republican House** and Senate candidates.

The large size of Schumer's contribution "is a necessity in a world in which Republicans dark-money groups are flooding down-ballot races with unprecedented amounts of money," a Democratic aide said.

Republicans control the Senate 54-44, with two independent senators caucusing with the Democrats. So Democrats need four seats to control the Senate if Clinton wins and her vice-president, Sen. **Tim Kaine**, D-Va., casts the deciding vote, or five votes if she loses to Trump.

Some Republicans in battleground states have proven resilient. Sen. **Rob Portman**, R-Ohio, is way ahead of former Ohio Gov. **Ted Strickland** in the polls. And although Rep. **Tammy Duckworth**, D-Ill., maintains a lead over incumbent Sen. **Mark Kirk**, R-Ill., polls show a tightening race.

But races in states like New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Nevada remain fluid. All are battleground states at the presidential level.

"Anybody who says they know for sure is just guessing, because there are just too many close races," said **Larry Sabato**, director of the **University of Virginia's Center for Politics**.

On a statewide level, the Schumer wallet-opening shows he is not at all worried about Republican Senate challenger **Wendy Long**. Even with the \$6.2 million out of his war chest, Schumer still retains somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20 million in cash. He had \$27.5 million as of June 30, the close of the previous FEC quarterly reporting period.

By contrast, Long showed \$31,915 cash on hand as of June 30, according to her FEC

filing.

State Republican chair **Edward Cox** said that dollar disparity notwithstanding, no one should count Long out.

"This is one of those years that has proven to be very unusual, so who knows what can happen," said Cox, who supports Trump and Long. "Who could predict Trump would be the nominee?"

As for Schumer and his hope of becoming Senate majority leader, Cox said Democrats are still a long way from winning back the Senate.

"You need a majority before you can become a majority leader," he said.

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