

| Abandoning All Pretense: A Game-Theoretic Model of the Senate Confirmation Process of Judge Amy Coney Barrett

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Supreme Court nominations are a way for a president to exercise some measure of control on policy beyond the bounds of his term. In October 2020, the close proximity of Amy Coney Barrett's nomination to the November presidential election, as well as the symmetry with President Barack Obama's failed 2016 nomination of Merrick Garland made this nomination and confirmation process particularly contentious. Despite heavy media attention on this appointment, fairly little focus was paid to President Donald Trump's decision-making, while the decision-making process of the senators was highly scrutinized. This paper will analyze, through a game-theoretic lens, the strategic voting process of the Senators of the 116th Congress in the roll call vote on the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. Using the factors affecting confirmation vote decision-making established in previous research on Supreme Court nomination politics, such as ideology, public opinion, and the relative importance of the nomination, this paper uses a game-theoretic model to show how each senator made a rational decision in saying 'yea' or 'nay' to the appointment of Justice Barrett.

Les nominations à la Cour suprême sont souvent perçues comme un moyen pour le président américain d'exercer un certain contrôle sur la politique au-delà des limites de son mandat. À la fin d'octobre 2020, le processus de nomination et de confirmation d'Amy Coney Barrett s'avérait notamment controversé en raison des parallèles vis-à-vis l'élection présidentielle et l'échec de la nomination de Merrick Garland par le président Obama en 2016 ainsi que la proximité entre l'élection et la nomination dans les deux cas. Bien que cette nomination ait reçu une importante couverture de presse, il y avait peu d'intérêt sur la prise de décision de M. Trump par rapport à la prise de décision des sénateurs qui a été examinée minutieusement. À travers une lentille de théorie des jeux, le présent document analyse le processus de scrutin stratégique des sénateurs du 116^e Congrès lors

du vote par appel nominal sur la nomination d'Amy Coney Barrett à la Cour suprême. En employant des facteurs qui influencent la prise de décision lors du vote de confirmation constaté dans les recherches précédentes sur les politiques de nomination à la Cour suprême--y compris l'idéologie, l'opinion publique et l'importance relative de la nomination--cet article montre comment chaque sénateur a pris une décision rationnelle en disant « oui » ou « non » à la nomination de juge Barrett.

Introduction

In late September 2020, Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. With weeks until the next presidential election, President Donald Trump and his Senate copartisans rushed to confirm a new Associate Justice to the Supreme Court, Trump's third such nomination. In record time, Amy Coney Barrett breezed through her Senate hearings, and by October 26th, 2020, had been approved to sit in the late Justice Ginsburg's former seat on the bench (BBC 2020).

Given the polarized political climate in the United States, the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett received a great deal of media attention. Supreme Court nominations are a way for a president to exercise some measure of control on policy beyond the bounds of his term, and in this regard, Trump has been exceptionally effective. Six of the nine Justices sitting on the nation's highest court are now Republican appointees, half of those having been appointed by Trump himself (Supreme Court of the United States n.d.) This considerable shift in the partisan politics of the Court, Judge Barrett's personal ideological stance, and the shadow cast by the symmetry of the situation with President Barack Obama's failed 2016 nomination of Merrick Garland made this appointment particularly contentious.

At the same time, little media attention was spent examining Trump's unsurprising, although controversial, decision to nominate another judge to the court. The spotlight seemed to instead be focusing on Judge Barrett's Senate confirmation vote, where the decision-making process of some individual senators was highly scrutinized. This paper will analyze, through a game-theoretic lens, the strategic voting process of the Senators of the 116th Congress in the roll call vote on the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. With critical nominations like the confirmation of Justice Barrett, it is extremely important for analysts to understand the factors at play. This paper uses a game-theoretic model to confirm that the variables identified in the academic debate over Supreme Court nomination politics do contribute to the decision-making of the senators and argues that party goals generally appear to have more influence than individual goals when the two are at odds.

This paper will be organized into the following sections; First, it will discuss the historical background of Supreme Court nominations and review the relevant literature on the determinants affecting senators when casting confirmation votes; Second, it will outline the methodology and data sources used to analyze the decisions of several subsets of the Senate; lastly, it will apply the described model to the grouped and individual cases to better understand the motivations and considerations of the implicated actors, before considering some counterarguments. Through this process, this paper aims to shed light on the constraints, goals, and payoffs considered by senators when making consequential and highly visible votes.

Literature review

Supreme Court nominees have historically seen largely consensus approval votes, even in the cases of more ideologically extreme candidates (Sulfridge 1980, 560). From the nomination of Hugo Black in 1937 to the 2005 nomination of John Roberts, only about 11% of the over 3700 roll call votes casted were 'nay' (Epstein et al. 2006, 298). Overall, there have been 28 nominations that were defeated by various forms of Senate opposition, including the Senate's 2016 refusal to vote on the nomination of Merrick Garland (McGrath & Rydberg 2016, 324). There is a consensus in the academic literature that since the 1987 nomination of Robert Bork, the Senate confirmations of Supreme Court justices have become more divisive and politicized (Epstein et al. 2006, 296). While clashes over nominations used to be rare, they have become the norm (Basinger & Mak 2012, 737), and there was no reason to think that the Barrett case would be an exception.

Not all nominations are created equal, for there are certain variables regarding the nature of the nomination itself that seem to indicate its likelihood for success. For instance, unsuccessful nominations frequently take place in the last year of a president's term, especially when the party opposing the President controls the Senate (Ruckman Jr. 1993, 797; Segal 1987, 1001). It is also important to consider the nature of the nomination, as well as the vacancy created by the departing Justice (Zigerell 2010, 394). Certainly, the qualifications and the ideological background of the nominee are important variables, but so is the ideology of the former Justice whose seat they hope to fill, as a great number of unsuccessful nominations took place when there was an attempt to replace a former Justice with a member of the opposite party (Ruckman Jr. 1993, 797). In this vein, one must also consider how the new appointee will affect the median of the bench as a whole (Zigerell 2010, 393). Critical nominations, meaning those nominations which would create considerable change in the partisan make-up of the court, are naturally more divisive (Ruckman Jr. 1993, 793). While each of these factors might influence the senators uniquely, there are also some variables to consider that may only apply to some individual senators' decisions.

With such a closely watched decision, individual senators will be calculating not only how their decision might impact not just their party, but their own individual goals. The academic literature shows that senators will carefully consider a great deal of electoral factors, such as the support for the nomination in their home state, from their constituents as well as their partisan base (Kastellec et al. 2010, 787) and how competitive their individual race might be (McGrath & Rydberg 2016, 325). Senators will also have concerns based on personal characteristics such as their level of party loyalty (Basinger & Mak 2012, 738) and the ideological distance between themselves and the nominee (Sulfridge 1980, 562). All these competing considerations must be distilled into a single 'yea' or 'nay' vote.

Research methods

There are 100 senators representing the 50 states, and therefore 100 unique cost-benefit analyses took place to form the result of Judge Barrett's confirmation vote. Although each has exactly the same set of strategies in front of them, the varying motivations affecting each senator will make them consider the decision differently. This being said, it is clear that for some senators this decision would be simpler than for others. This could be because some senators have fewer factors to consider in making their vote, or perhaps because the factors they are considering are easily aligned with each other.

In separating the senators into distinct groups for analysis we will consider their party identification and their ideology, as well as several electoral factors - namely whether they are retiring, whether they are up for reelection in 2020, 2022, or 2024, the relative competitiveness of their state-level race, and the level of support for Judge Barrett by the median voter and by copartisans. These individual factors will affect senators differently and might lead them to weigh certain considerations more heavily than others.

At the time of the vote the 100 Senate seats were held by 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats, and 2 independent senators, both of whom caucus with the Democrats. Of these, 45 seats, 23 held by Republicans and 12 by Democrats, were up for election in the November 2020 election, just one week after the confirmation vote took place. The FiveThirtyEight Senate forecast and aggregate polling averages will be used to determine the relative competitiveness of these races. In this analysis, the polling averages will be more useful than the actual election results they are attempting to predict, as this information should be closer to the data that the senators themselves had contemporaneously when making their votes. Given the variables described here and through the literature review, the senators can be divided into two larger groups based on their electoral position.

Table 1. Groupings based on strength of electoral position. For individual senator breakdown, see Appendix A.

Name	Description
Strongly positioned partisan votes	These senators are retiring, not up for reelection in the 2020 races or else are in non-competitive races (described by FiveThirtyEight as either 'Solid R/D' or 'Likely R/D' in their favour).
Weakly positioned partisan votes	These senators are up for reelection in the 2020 races and in competitive races (described by FiveThirtyEight as either 'Lean R/D' or 'Toss-up', or 'Likely R/D' in favour of the opposing party).

These divisions are based on the varying electoral costs that a given senator might consider to be attached to this highly divisive vote. Given that actors tend to discount future payoffs over current benefits, the specter of future electoral consequences will be much stronger for those senators who face an election only a week later, and especially weak in those senators not considering running for reelection at all. The 'weakly positioned' senators are those whose personal goal of reelection might clash with their party's goal of confirming or blocking Judge Barrett's nomination, and may have to choose between these objectives.

We must also consider that there are some senators whose personal ideology and opinion might differ from that of their party on this particular decision. In those cases, a senator might also have to decide between their personal objectives and those of their party, although in this event the senator's personal objective would be ideologically rather than electorally motivated.

In summary, some goals can be clearly determined, especially those that apply to a larger group. It is reasonable to assume that the Republican Party wishes to see Judge Barrett confirmed to the Supreme Court, while the Democratic Party does not. It is also reasonable to assume that the average senator hopes to be reelected if they are in fact running for reelection, be it in 2020, 2022, or 2024, though it is more likely for those whose reelection vote took place only a week later that they may feel this confirmation vote may have an effect. How each senator personally feels about this particular vote is difficult to measure, but it can be assumed that they would prefer to vote their conscience on all decisions. All the actors involved in this decision would hope to ideally see their personal goals realized, as well as those of their group. However, where these goals do not align, senators will have to carefully evaluate their motivations and preferences.

Game theory is well suited to analyzing this interaction. It is exceedingly rare to find a political game which is played only once. Interactions are usually one of a long string, and as

such, reputation and the weight of future payoffs must remain at the forefront of consideration. This confirmation vote is of course not taking place outside the bounds of normal senatorial politics. That being said, it is exceptional that an American president, especially a single-term president, has the opportunity to nominate a third judge to the United States Supreme Court. The confirmation of Justice Barrett is critical to the make-up of the Supreme Court, likely for decades to come. While many political decisions could be reversed by a future administration, Supreme Court Justices are nominated for life, and extremely difficult to remove from the bench.

Even from the Democratic point of view, being successful in blocking this nomination could be just as long-term a success. Given how close the 2020 election was to this confirmation vote, if the Democratic senators were able to block or even delay Judge Barrett's nomination, it was possible that after the election, they would have taken over the majority in the Senate as well as the office of the President. In this environment, they, not the Republicans, would be able to choose the judge to fill Ruth Bader Ginsburg's seat. As such, the long-term impact this one decision will have might lower a senator's considerations for the repeated nature of the political game and focus more fully on the immediate payoffs of their decision: whether or not Judge Barrett becomes Justice Barrett, and how this affects their electoral prospects in the next week.

Findings & discussion

Based on previous academic debate, the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett was not a guarantee. Though the Senate majority and the President belonged to the same party, this nomination did have some of the variables that have caused the downfall of previous Supreme Court nominees. Not only was Judge Barrett nominated during the last year of Trump's presidency, but she was also nominated only weeks before the presidential election. Moreover, the Judge herself faces some complicating factors in her qualifications and ideology. Amy Coney Barrett is exceptionally young for such an appointment at 48 years old, although she does come from the United States Appeals Court, which is common among Supreme Court nominees (Thompson-Deveaux in Druke, 2020). Ideologically, this nomination was considered critical by many observers, given the solid Republican majority it would create on the Court, and Judge Barrett's own conservative views on controversial issues such as abortion (Thompson-Deveaux in Druke, 2020). Judge Barrett's ideology puts her rather at odds with former Justice Ginsburg, whose seat she will fill, a quality found in many previously unsuccessful nominations (Ruckman Jr. 1993, 797). Given Amy Coney Barrett's political ideology, her jurisprudence, and the nature and timing of her appointment, the American public opinion was very divided over her possible confirmation. According to the Gallup poll conducted over the course of Judge Barrett's nomination and subsequent Senate hearings, only 3% of the American public had not formed an opinion on her nomination, a historic low, especially compared to the average of 25% (Brenan, 2020). Additionally, the partisan divide was starker even than it was for Brett

Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch, Trump’s previous nominees, with 84% of Democrats against Barrett’s approval and 89% of Republicans in support (Brenan, 2020). Using this information, the senators should rationally analyze the proportional partisan make-up of their constituents, and attempt to vote as their constituents wish, or else expect to incur some electoral costs as a result of disregarding the position of their constituents (Cameron et al. 1990, 527).

Applying the framework set out above (Table 1) to this case, we find that nine senators find themselves in strategically ‘weak’ positions, leaving 91 with fairly clear-cut strategies in front of them. The payoff matrix below shows only a number corresponding with the payoffs of the vertical player, the senator in question, in regard to the outcome. The number assigned is simply to be used in relation to other possible outcomes.

Tables 2 and 3. Strongly positioned partisan (Democrat on the left, Republic on the right) payoff matrices

Strongly positioned Democrat	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	1	2
Nay	3	4

Strongly positioned Republican	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	4	3
Nay	2	1

For the senators in stronger electoral positions (Appendix A), their individual electoral ideological goals likely align with that of their party, making this cost-benefit analysis calculation simple by giving them a dominant strategy (on Tables 2 and 3 in bold). To gain electorally, they should follow the wishes of their constituents, which also happen to be in line with what their Party wants them to do. In the case of a Democratic senator in a largely Democratic-voting constituency, the rational decision is to vote against Judge Barrett’s appointment to the Supreme Court, as is the preference of both their Party and a majority of the voters in their constituency. In the case of a Republican senator in a largely Republican-voting constituency, the rational decision is to vote for Barrett’s confirmation. The numerical values given illustrate this calculation. In the best-case scenario (4), the senator’s personal and party goals are both attained, while in the worst case (1), neither is successful. In the second-best case (3), the senator votes with their party, in keeping with the wishes of their constituents, but their party’s goal is unsuccessful, though through no fault of their own. This is given preference above the alternative scenario (2), where the party goal is successful through no help from the senator, as in this case the senator has needlessly hurt themselves politically among their constituents and copartisans in the Senate. This payoff matrix gives the 91 senators deemed to be electorally strong clear, dominant strategies (see Tables 2 and 3, in bold).

We might find the game that the senators in a weaker electoral position must play to be something synonymous to the classic Stag Hunt, or assurance game. In this quintessential game, each hunter within the group must make a decision: to either work with the group to hunt a stag or work individually to catch a hare. If all the hunters choose to hunt the stag, they will be successful and bring down a much larger animal which they can share, but if even one chooses to deviate from this plan to chase a hare, the stag will escape. The individual hunter might have his smaller meal, but the rest of the hunters will go hungry.

Table 4. The Stag Hunt payoff matrix.

Player 1	Player 2	
	Stag	Hare
Stag	4,4	1,3
Hare	3,1	2,2

For the senators in weaker electoral positions, this Stag Hunt game is a useful comparison, the difference being that while the analogous stag or hare would both serve to fill the hunter's stomach, though to different extents, the group and individual goals in the senator's case serve different purposes. In this case, the group, the Republican or Democratic Party, can work together to achieve a larger goal with a higher payoff; putting a Justice on the Supreme Court who will be able to affect policy for decades to come (or blocking such an appointment), or the individual senator might choose to pursue their individual goal, the metaphorical hare, of improving their reelection chances by voting against their party and with their constituent's desires. The key similarity this case has with the Stag Hunt game is should the group lose too many senators, their group's goal will be unattainable. With their 53-seat majority in the Senate, the Republicans can afford to lose a maximum of 3 votes, assuming no Democrats join their side, as this vote requires a simple majority to pass. With this in mind, an individual weakly-positioned Republican senator might note that they can vote 'nay' and still have the confirmation vote pass, thus achieving both their party and individual goals, so long as not too many of their colleagues are thinking similarly.

Tables 5 and 6: Weakly positioned partisan payoff matrices

Weakly positioned Democrat	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	x	4
Nay	1	y

Weakly positioned Republican	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	x	1
Nay	4	y

$$1 < x, y < 4$$

Similarly, to the previous payoff matrices, the worst (1) and best (4) case scenarios for these senators is clear, managing to obtain both their personal and group goals is ideal and failing in both would be the worst-case scenario. Unlike the previous case, however, for the best-case scenario to occur for these senators, they must vote against their group’s goal while still hoping that it will ultimately be successful, giving them no clear dominant strategy. This creates a situation where the weakly positioned senators have to weigh carefully whether they would prefer to pursue their individual electoral goals or their party’s aim for this confirmation vote. This creates the uncertainty shown in the payoff matrices above by the x and y symbols. While both x and y are between 1 and 4, it is not clear where they land between them, and which is higher than the other.

The amount of electoral jeopardy between the weakly positioned senators is not equal, and so they will be split further into three groups as described below.

Table 7: Descriptions and members of the sub-groupings within the weakly positioned senator group

Group	Description (based on FiveThirtyEight forecast)	Members
Likely losses	The forecast is predicting a ‘likely’ victory for the party opposing the sitting senator. 4	Doug Jones (D-Alabama), Martha McSally (R-Arizona), and Cory Gardner (R-Colorado)
Learning seats	The forecast is predicting a ‘lean’ in the race towards the opposing party.	Kelly Loeffler (R-Georgia) and Thom Tillis (R-North Carolina)
Toss-ups	The forecast is predicting a ‘toss-up’ race between the two parties.	David Perdue (R-Georgia), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), and Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Between these groups we can discern that the calculations of x and y might yield different results. For the three senators already likely to lose their seats in the upcoming election, they might assume that their personal goal of reelection is already out of their grasp,

and thus vote their conscience, with their party's goals, or both, should these two align. All three of these senators did in fact vote with their party on this vote, and subsequently lost their reelection bids.

For those senators whose race was leaning slightly against them, a small uptick in favourability could be the difference in winning or losing their reelection race. However, the level to which a vote in favour of their constituent's goals would help them electorally is unclear. Additionally, with a margin this close it is important to consider how the senator's ideology might affect their decision. Both senators in this group are Republicans in races that were leaning towards the Democratic candidate at the time of the confirmation vote, who ultimately both decided to vote for Judge Barrett's confirmation. This decision could have been made based on their own ideology, a judgment that this decision likely would not sway a significant number of voters towards or against them, or a determination that the Republican goal of confirming Judge Barrett was worth a possible electoral loss. Ultimately, Sen. Tillis did hold onto his seat, while Sen. Loeffler netted only 25.9% of the vote share in the 2020 election, and eventually lost her Senate seat in a January 2021 special election.

For the senators in the third group, any minute change to the electorate could make the difference in their race. As such, these senators need to make a careful calculation as to the voters they are appealing to, as swaying more voters away from them than they are able to attract would create a net loss. Clearly, the senators within this group made different calculations as to the best move to make, as while Sens. Perdue and Ernst voted yea, Sen. Susan Collins was the only senator to deviate from their party on this vote, and each subsequently netted a different outcome.

Tables 8 and 9. Payoff matrices of toss-up race senators (Perdue, Ernst on the left, Collins on the right), with bold emphasis to show the decision made and ultimate payoff reached.

Sens. Purdue, Ernst	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	x	1
Nay	4	y

$$1 < x, y < 4$$

Sen. Collins	Overall Senate Vote	
	Yea	Nay
Yea	x	1
Nay	4	y

In analyzing the tables above, both Sens. Ernst and Collins managed to vote in the way they felt would most appeal to their constituents in Iowa and Maine respectively, while also seeing the Republican Party's goal of having Justice Barrett confirmed be successful. Assuming these decisions were also in line with each senator's ideological stance on this vote, they were both able to achieve their best-case scenario, while choosing opposing strategies. Like Sen.

Loeffler, Sen. Perdue faced a run-off election in January 2021, although with a slight lead over his opponent that Loeffler did not share. Given that Sen. Perdue could have, along with Sen. Collins, voted against Judge Barrett and still seen her be confirmed in a 51-49 vote, it is possible that a 'nay' vote could have been more electorally advantageous to him than his 'yea'. This does not, however, take into account Sen. Perdue's own ideological stance on the matter. This was a unique case where not only were Judge Barrett's qualifications and ideology part of the debate, but so was the strength of the precedent set by the Senate Republicans' 2016 decision to block Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court during an election year. In her dismissal of Judge Barrett's nomination, Sen. Collins chose to focus on the precedent set by the 2016 case rather than make any judgment on Amy Coney Barrett's qualifications to serve on the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, in Sen. Perdue's press release, he focused on what he found to be Judge Barrett's strengths and qualifications for the position, using this to explain his 'yea' vote. It is difficult to make assumptions on what the personal stances of these senators might be towards these votes, but what can be said is that Sen. Perdue chose to use his vote to appeal to the Republican Party, both those in Georgia and in the Senate, and quite possibly himself, while Sen. Collins chose to appeal to those voters in Maine opposed to Judge Barrett's nomination.

It is also relevant that Sen. Collins' choice to vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh's nomination in 2018 received a great deal of backlash and saw the donations to her competitor's Senate campaign skyrocket (Ackley 2020). Her weakened electoral position in the 2020 election as opposed to her previous landslide victories is largely considered to be tied to her Kavanaugh confirmation vote (Higgins 2020). It is therefore notable that Sen. Collins is not just a senator facing a very close race, but one who is generally accustomed to winning by a significant margin. Given this information, either Susan Collins felt the precedent set by 2016 was truly the differentiating factor in her positions towards these two similar cases, or else the looming election one week later had a greater influence on her vote this time than the anger she faced over her decision in 2018. These two decisions give another example of the level of future discounting taking place between an election two years away, and one only days away.

Addressing counterarguments

This model makes certain assumptions to create its outputs, including on the points of ideology and reelection rate. While this paper does clearly show that the variables identified in previous literature on Supreme Court nomination politics do influence the decision-making of senators, it is difficult to measure or quantify determinants such as ideology except through proxy indicators, such as party membership. This means the model assumes that the views of the senators' party and copartisan constituents align with their own personal opinions. There is the possibility that an individual senator might be ideologically opposed to their party's views on this particular vote, in which case their calculation will vary slightly with the addition of another personal and diametrically opposed goal. We might consider that some moderate

senators might find themselves in this camp, regardless of what their electorally rational decision should be. It was for this reason that Senator Mitt Romney, who is seen as a moderate Republican, received a lot more media attention surrounding his vote than other strongly positioned Senators. On the other hand, given the results of the roll call vote, all the 'strongly positioned' senators voted as would be considered electorally rational for them, meaning that either they personally agreed with the decision, or else their electoral concerns outweighed their desire to vote their conscience.

Another argument against this model might be the amount of focus placed on those senators who were in a difficult electoral position at the time of this vote, as it is difficult to quantify if and how much this confirmation vote actually affected voting results in the 2020 elections. Additionally, incumbency is usually used as a key indicator in measuring electoral chances, a factor which is ignored in this model. This is because all the players in this game, the senators making individual decisions in the Barrett confirmation vote, were necessarily incumbents. While it is impossible to tell how much a rogue decision, which we did not see in this confirmation vote, could have impacted electoral outcomes, it is logical that a high-profile decision taking place immediately before an election would likely create a situation wherein the senators would be weighing all decisions against the backdrop of the quickly approaching election.

Conclusions

Many factors about this particular confirmation vote, notably its magnitude, made it feel more like a singular game than most other political interactions. This is not to say that the small set of strategies available to the senators in this game, "yea" or "nay," did not have a multitude of different effects. The goals, strategies, and foresight utilized by the senators themselves to analyze this game with the incomplete information they had contemporaneously, make this vote particularly apt to be analyzed through a game-theoretic lens. This model allows us to measure the ways in which ideology and public opinion affected the decision-making of the Senators of the 116th Congress. We can see that all but Senator Collins (R-Maine) voted with their party. This, despite the varying individual reelection considerations at hand, shows that overall, the party goal, rather than the individual goal, generally won out when senators were faced with opposing options.

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Appendix A – Senators’ groupings based on electoral strength

Senator	State	Party	2020 Election Forecast	Vote Share D (%)	Vote share R (%)	Grouping
Doug Jones	Alabama	D	Likely R	45.6	54.4	Likely losses
Richard Shelby	Alabama	R				Strong
Dan Sullivan	Alaska	R	Likely R	44.6	50.4	Strong
Lisa Murkowski	Alaska	R				Strong
Martha McSally	Arizona	R	Likely D	52.6	47.4	Likely losses
Kyrsten Sinema	Arizona	D				Strong
Tom Cotton	Arkansas	R	Solid R	23.9 (I)	76.1	Strong
John Boozman	Arkansas	R				Strong
Dianne Feinstein	California	D				Strong
Kamala Harris	California	D				Strong
Cory Gardner	Colorado	R	Likely D	51.7	44	Likely losses
Michael Bennet	Colorado	D				Strong
Richard Blumenthal	Connecticut	D				Strong
Chris Murphy	Connecticut	D				Strong
Chris Coons	Delaware	D	Solid D	63.9	33.1	Strong
Tom Carper	Delaware	D				Strong
Marco Rubio	Florida	R				Strong
Rick Scott	Florida	R				Strong
Kelly Loeffler	Georgia	R	Lean D	32.8	21.9	Leaning race

David Perdue	Georgia	R	Toss up	49	49.3	Toss up
Brian Schatz	Hawaii	D				Strong
Mazie Hirono	Hawaii	D				Strong
Jim Risch	Idaho	R	Solid R	34.8	58.7	Strong
Mike Crapo	Idaho	R				Strong
Dick Durbin	Illinois	D	Solid D	59.5	35.5	Strong
Tammy Duckworth	Illinois	D				Strong
Todd Young	Indiana	R				Strong
Mike Braun	Indiana	R				Strong
Chuck Grassley	Iowa	R				Strong
Joni Ernst	Iowa	R	Toss up	48.2	49.6	Toss up
Pat Roberts	Kansas	R	Likely R	45.8	51.6	Strong
Jerry Moran	Kansas	R				Strong
Mitch McConnell	Kentucky	R	Solid R	42.5	55.5	Strong
Rand Paul	Kentucky	R				Strong
Bill Cassidy	Louisiana	R	Solid R	15.1	41.1	Strong
John Kennedy	Louisiana	R				Strong
Angus King	Maine	I				Strong
Susan Collins	Maine	R	Toss up	51	49	Toss up
Ben Cardin	Maryland	D				Strong
Chris Van Hollen	Maryland	D				Strong
Ed Markey	Massachusetts	D	Solid D	65.7	31.5	Strong
Elizabeth Warren	Massachusetts	D				Strong

Gary Peters	Michigan	D	Likely D	52.3	45.3	Strong
Debbie Stabenow	Michigan	D				Strong
Tina Smith	Minnesota	D	Solid D	54.8	42.5	Strong
Amy Klobuchar	Minnesota	D				Strong
Cindy Hyde-Smith	Mississippi	R	Likely R	44.8	54	Strong
Roger Wicker	Mississippi	R				Strong
Roy Blunt	Missouri	R				Strong
Josh Hawley	Missouri	R				Strong
Jon Tester	Montana	D				Strong
Steve Daines	Montana	R	Lean R	48.4	51.6	Strong
Ben Sasse	Nebraska	R	Solid R	30.6	62.6	Strong
Deb Fischer	Nebraska	R				Strong
Catherine Cortez Masto	Nevada	D				Strong
Jacky Rosen	Nevada	D				Strong
Jeanne Shaheen	New Hampshire	D	Solid D	57.7	40.6	Strong
Maggie Hassan	New Hampshire	D				Strong
Cory Booker	New Jersey	D	Solid D	61.5	36	Strong
Bob Menendez	New Jersey	D				Strong
Tom Udall	New Mexico	D	Likely D	54.9	42	Strong
Martin Heinrich	New Mexico	D				Strong
Chuck Shumer	New York	D				Strong

Kirsten Gillibrand	New York	D				Strong
Thom Tillis	North Carolina	R	Lean D	50.5	47.3	Leaning race
Richard Burr	North Carolina	R				Strong
John Hoeven	North Dakota	R				Strong
Kevin Cramer	North Dakota	R				Strong
Sherrod Brown	Ohio	D				Strong
Rob Portman	Ohio	R				Strong
Jim Inhofe	Oklahoma	R	Solid R	37.5	59.7	Strong
James Lankford	Oklahoma	R				Strong
Jeff Merkley	Oregon	D	Solid D	60.3	35.9	Strong
Ron Wyden	Oregon	D				Strong
Bob Casey Jr.	Pennsylvania	D				Strong
Pat Toomey	Pennsylvania	R				Strong
Jack Reed	Rhode Island	D	Solid D	74	26	Strong
Sheldon Whitehouse	Rhode Island	D				Strong
Lindsey Graham	South Carolina	R	Likely R	46.6	51.7	Strong
Tim Scott	South Carolina	R				Strong
Mike Rounds	South Dakota	R	Solid R	38.1	61.9	Strong
John Thune	South Dakota	R				Strong
Lamar Alexander	Tennessee	R	Solid R	36.6	59.6	Strong
Marsha Blackburn	Tennessee	R				Strong
John Cornyn	Texas	R	Likely R	45.3	52.6	Strong
Ted Cruz	Texas	R				Strong

Mike Lee	Utah	R				Strong
Mitt Romney	Utah	R				Strong
Patrick Leahy	Vermont	D				Strong
Bernie Sanders	Vermont	I				Strong
Mark Warner	Virginia	D	Solid D	58.2	40	Strong
Tim Kaine	Virginia	D				Strong
Patty Murray	Washington	D				Strong
Maria Cantwell	Washington	D				Strong
Shelley Moore Capito	West Virginia	R	Solid R	36.4	60.7	Strong
Joe Manchin	West Virginia	D				Strong
Ron Johnson	Wisconsin	R				Strong
Tammy Baldwin	Wisconsin	D				Strong
Mike Enzi	Wyoming	R	Solid R	32.3	67.7	Strong
John Barrasso	Wyoming	R				Strong