



Free Agent Voters to Decide Elections, Analyst Predicts

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(CNSNews.com) - Are voters fed up with the Republican-led Congress or just congressional incumbents in general? Political strategists disagreed Thursday, with one comparing voters to free agents and another speculating that just because voters are “enraged” does not mean that they will become “engaged” in November.

“We believe incumbents are vulnerable. Whether the outcome of primaries has toppled anybody or not, they remain vulnerable by the sheer fact that their incumbency is a handicap this time, not an asset,” said Bernadette Budde, senior vice president of the Business Industry Political Action Committee, during a panel discussion on Capitol Hill.

There are currently 232 Republicans, 202 Democrats and one Independent in the House. Democrats would need to pick up 16 seats to establish a majority.

Budde added that both Republican and Democratic Parties may find it difficult in November to count on their traditional base voters. “Voters don't think of themselves as red or blue, but as free agents able to move from one candidate to the other,” she said.

Mark Mellman, president and CEO of the Democratic polling firm The Mellman Group, said voters this year have more on their minds than an anti-incumbent attitude.

“Republicans would like this to be an anti-incumbent year, but the truth is it's really an anti-Republican year,” Mellman said. “But it really doesn't make a difference because if you look at who the incumbents are, there are a lot more of them than there are of us.

“On almost every issue, you see Democrats trusted more than Republicans,” he added.

Kellyanne Conway, president and CEO of the Republican polling firm The Polling Company, agreed that Democrats may have the kind of opportunity to retake the House that the Republican Party had in 1994 during its “Contract with America” campaign.

“Democrats can win, but they have a big problem,” said Conway, referring to an article published Wednesday in [The Hill](#), which pointed out that many Democrats in Congress have not read and are not aware of the party's agenda titled “New Direction.”

Although many Americans are unhappy with the political status quo, Conway said an upheaval is unlikely because there are a number of “conscientious objectors.”

“There is a tremendous difference between being enraged and becoming engaged,” she said. Many non-voters this year will pay close attention to the candidates and issues, before deciding not to participate, Conway added.

“It could have the opposite effect of 1994 which was huge voter turnout. Inertia is the most powerful physical force in politics until it is overtaken by friction, and friction does not yet exist,” said Conway.