

CBS Mornings

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15 seconds

TONY DOKOUPIL: Four days before the midterms, control of Congress could hinge on Pennsylvania. We spoke to Democratic senate candidate John Fetterman.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE

LT. GOV. JOHN FETTERMAN (D-PA): We have a stark choice between somebody that actually served Pennsylvania compared to somebody that's just here to use Pennsylvania.

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7:03:36 a.m.

6 minutes and 37 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides Campaign '22; 4 Days to Go; Candidates Make Push on Final Weekend Before Election Day]

DOKOUPIL: We're going to begin with Bob, who spoke with Democrat John Fetterman in Pennsylvania.

ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides Campaign '22; Final Push in Pennsylvania; John Fetterman & Mehmet Oz Deliver Their Final Message to Voters]

FETTERMAN: We have a stark choice between somebody that is here with a career to — that actually served Pennsylvania compared to somebody that's here just to use Pennsylvania.

ROBERT COSTA: Pennsylvania voters could decide which party takes control of the U.S. Senate.

DR. MEHMET OZ: We have families all over the commonwealth worried about crime.

COSTA: In our interview, John Fetterman contested Republican Mehmet Oz's claim that he's soft on crime.

FETTERMAN: I'm the only candidate in this race that actually had hands-on kinds of experience against fighting against crime and I made gun violence as — really at the center of my focus.

COSTA: Fetterman, who's recovering from a stroke in May, used a closed captioning during the interview with the stenographer typing out the questions in real time. [TO FETTERMAN] Some voters we've spoken to in recent days say they still have some doubts about your health. What would you say to them to convince them otherwise?

FETTERMAN: I would say we have shown more — and shared more kinds of medical evaluation more than virtually anyone unless you're running for the President. And it's also been a challenge for my family, as well, too.

COSTA: Like most Democrats running this cycle, Fetterman has had to contend with voters dismayed by the high cost of living. [TO FETTERMAN] What do you say to them?

FETTERMAN: What I would say to them is you need a senator that is going to push back against corporate greed and the kind of price gouging as well too.

COSTA: Oz says Democrats' policies are to blame.

OZ: So, you think it's bad now, imagine when Joe Biden is intimidating you into spending trillions more dollars than we've already thrown away, and that your children's money you're wasting and driving inflation up.

COSTA: But Fetterman says he'll be proud to stand alongside the President and former President Barack Obama this weekend.

FETTERMAN: They reject extremism. These are the values that, I think, are the right direction we need to be going about this race.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Battle for the House; GOP Tries to Reclaim House With Its Most Diverse Class of Candidates]

ED O'KEEFE: I'm Ed O'Keefe in Rhode Island where GOP control of the Senate isn't on the mind of Allan Fung. He's running to help Republicans retake the House.

ALLAN FUNG: Have a great day now.

O'KEEFE: He's the former mayor of Cranston, Rhode Island, and the son of Chinese immigrants who grew up in his family's restaurant. Now, he's campaigning on a economic issues.

FUNG: It's a cost of living crisis that's hitting every single individual in Rhode Island, every single business owner on Rhode Island.

O'KEEFE: Fung is running for an open house seat against Seth Magaziner. Republicans are focused on picking up this seat and several others and they're trying to do it with the most diverse class ever of House Republican candidates. 89 black, Latino, Native American, and Asian contenders across the country.

YESLI VEGA [in campaign ad] [in Spanish]: I'm Yesli Vega and I approve this message.

YESLI VEGA's FATHER [in campaign ad]: Me too.

O'KEEFE: The GOP is also competing hard for seats across New England. Rhode Island, for example, hasn't elected a Republican to Congress in more than 20 years. Fung knows that's because the GOP brand is unpopular here and isn't helped by former President Donald Trump. So he's trying to keep his distance. [TO FUNG] He hasn't endorsed you, right?

FUNG: No, he hasn't.

O'KEEFE [TO FUNG]: Would you like his endorsement? Would it help?

FUNG: An endorsement that's important for me and the people in this second district, the people of Rhode Island.

O'KEEFE [TO FUNG]: In 2020, who won the Presidential election?

FUNG: No. Hey, look, I recognize Joe Biden as our legitimate President.

O'KEEFE: 2.5 hours away from the suburbs of New York City, Democratic Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney is also running in a tougher than anticipated race.

CONGRESSMAN SEAN PATRICK MALONEY (D-NY): I understand how to beat Republicans in a tough seat.

O'KEEFE: He's facing Republican Mike Lawler and millions of dollars in GOP attack ads.

LAWLER AD NARRATOR: His lies are costing you.

MALONEY: If they're going to blow \$9 million trying to beat me, that's \$9 million they could have spent winning races somewhere else.

O'KEEFE: Part of the reason Maloney is a favorite Republican target is because he's also in charge of getting other Democrats elected to the House. And he says his party needs to find a way to talk about the economy and issues important to Democratic voters like the future of abortion rights.

MALONEY: Family budgets always on the ballot. But, you know what? You can't take away 50 years of reproductive freedom and not talk about it. My god. What would we be doing if we weren't pushing back against that?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America Decides Campaign '22; 4 Days to Go; Candidates Make Push on Final Weekend Before Election Day]

TONY DOKOUPIL: And Bob and Ed now join us at the table in from the road, in from the cold, for some insights into what you've been learning. Let's start with you, Bob. There are big names out on the campaign trail, some people call them surrogate, some people call 'em political wing man. I think that's Ed's terms. What — what should we look for this weekend as people make big

speeches?

COSTA: There are surprises in the works in the final days. In fact, late last night just after I got off a bus from northeastern Pennsylvania to New York City to be here this morning, Oprah Winfrey threw her support —

DOKOUPIL: Wow.

NATE BURLESON: Mmmm.

COSTA: — behind John Fetterman in Pennsylvania's tossup of a Senate race. Big news.

DOKOUPIL: Yeah, it really is.

DANICA JACOBSON: Dr. Oz obviously someone she had supported in his TV career there. Ed, we saw former President Trump was in Iowa last night. Not a huge surprise giving another signal to Americans that he may be running again. Let's take a look and a listen.

[TRUMP CLIPS]

O'KEEFE: That is someone who has talked to the campaign lawyers who said don't you dare say it before election day because it triggers some things.

JACOBSON: What does it trigger when you look at the battleground states. We're just days away from the election?

O'KEEFE: Democrats would love nothing more for him to do already. And they certainly know that it helps them especially in these tossup races in the Senate and House. Here's the thing, guys like Allan Fung, who you just met in that piece, would probably — if they win this year would probably be in far more precarious situations two years from now because a lot of the places where Republicans are poised to win —

BURLESON: Mhmm.

O'KEEFE: — both in the Senate races, governor's races, House races, are the kind of places where the GOP wasn't doing well —

BURLESON: Right

O'KEEFE: — when Donald Trump was President.

BURLESON: Right.

O'KEEFE: So, that is the ongoing ying and yang of the Republican Party. Do we want control? Yes, but it requires electing Republican who are not at all like Donald Trump: who embrace

realities, who — you know, have different opinions on immigration rights, on other issues of concern.

BURLESON: Yeah.

O'KEEFE: And it's part of why you may see, despite the fact he may run a big competition among Republicans —

BURLESON: Hmm.

O'KEEFE: — to see who should really be their nominee.

(...)

7:31:31 a.m.

5 minutes and 2 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: March to the Midterms; Leslie Sanchez & Ashley Etienne on State of Races & GOP Momentum]

DOKOUPIL: Ashley, let's start with you.

ASHLEY ETIENNE: Okay.

DOKOUPIL: Democrats and Republicans, very different closing messages.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

DOKOUPIL: Democrats want to make it about the future of democracy, democracy is on the line. The polls suggest that the economy is top of mind for voters. Are Democrats doing it wrong?

ETIENNE: Well, I mean, we're hitting on both messages. We're not walking away from the economy at all, but democracy is at stake, I mean, as the President has said. One way to look at this is it's actually working. When you look at early voting happening right now, if people feel like democracy is being threatened, they're going to run out to the polls and that's happening all over in states that matter like Georgia, Ohio, early vote numbers are up. Democrats are feeling very encouraged by that because, you know, the — the larger the turnout, the better it is for Democrats.

DOKOUPIL: Yeah.

ETIENNE: So the idea now is to not just to — to focus more on low propensity voters now that we're turning out high-propensity voters.

DOKOUPIL: Yeah.

ETIENNE: I think democracy is what we should be hitting on.

DOKOUPIL: And, Ashley, I was so excited to talk to you that I forgot to give you your due. You are — you were communications director for vice President Kamala Harris and also for Nancy Pelosi.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

DOKOUPIL: So, your insights are significant here and I'll cede the floor.

DANA JACOBSON: Thank you. Leslie, I'm going to go to you because we've seen that Latino voters now — the Republicans are making big inroads with them. Do we know what message specifically might be resonating?

LESLIE SANCHEZ: Sure. There's a — there's a lot of significance about a Latino working class that is realigning like the white working class in this country and supporting more of a populous conservative message that they saw under Donald Trump. So, you see these kind of new candidates who have emerged who were very supportive of outer suburb, working class families on very conservative values, and they're resonating, particularly in South Texas. You're seeing a diversity of candidate as well that are running. So, Republicans are optimistic about this, but it's not just going to be in states like Texas — states like Texas, you'll start to see it in Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, states -- and --

JACOBSON: Battleground states --

SANCHEZ: — some of those battlegrounds where it's not, you know, 1,000 votes, it's several hundred votes, and Latinos can make the difference.

BURLESON: Speaking of optimism, we saw the shift this summer from the Democrats having some momentum and now the Republicans. What are the Democrats seeing on the ground that is cause for some optimism?

ETIENNE: Well, I'll just say first let me caution over-investing in polling, right? Polls don't vote. People actually vote.

BURLESON: Okay.

ETIENNE: There was never a poll in 2016 that ever predicted Donald Trump was going to be the President, so I think we should level set with American people on that issue.

BURLESON: That's true, right.

ETIENNE: But you know, on the ground, as I mentioned earlier, 34 million people are voting,

have already early voted. That's good for democracy, that's good from the Democrats' perspective for the party. So, a lot of optimism enthusiasm on the ground, long lines in Georgia, long lines in Pennsylvania. So we're feeling very encouraged by that.

DOKOUPIL: As results start rolling in on Tuesday night, what races will each. You be watching as a barometer of where the overall night may go? Leslie, go ahead first.

SANCHEZ: Sure. I was talking previously about Texas. Texas has three Latinos running in the Rio Grande State.

ETIENNE: Our home state.

SANCHEZ: Our home state. We're very proud of that. And they're really tough in the sense that they've taken on their own political party, they've raised a tremendous amount of money outside the state, Tex — and they're against some incumbents who faced scandals, different challenges, so the area for the three particular Latinos is great. But if you start to see movement also in Oregon and New York, areas that are deeper blue and Republicans don't necessarily say today they can win, but I think there's going to be a lot of incumbents on the Democratic side who have challenges.

BURLESON: Now, Ashley, there has been disapproval of President Biden. We've seen --

ETIENNE: Some —

BURLESON: — yeah, some. They've dispatched Obama out there. And he's packing his bag, doing what he does best, right? But are candidates — are they hesitant to attest themselves to Biden in a moment like this?

ETIENNE: I would say absolutely not. I mean, the President has done — I don't know the number off the top of my head, but he's hit all the major battleground states. So, but here's —

BURLESON: But why is Obama out there?

ETIENNE: Well, because people love and adore Obama, and he's fantastic on the stump.

BURLESON: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Here's the — here's the point I would like to make -- all races are local, right? And so, when you're the President and you're up — and you're facing a midterm election, the most important thing for you to do — I'm going to use a sports analogy -- is to really set up the assist.

BURLESON: I like that.

ETIENNE: Thank you.

DOKOUPIL: Leslie, these two are sportscasters. They're into sports.

JACOBSON: She knows her audience.

ETIENNE: That might be the end of my knowledge of sports. But nevertheless — but the idea is that you set up the assist. And the assist is he's established a record that no matter which state or how competitive the races are, there's something you can talk about.

BURLESON: Of course.

ETIENNE: You know, the economy's doing better. Record low unemployment. Ten million jobs created.

BURLESON: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Shots in arms.

BURLESON: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Veterans' health care, lower health care costs. All of that.

BURLESON: Yeah.

ETIENNE: So he's kind of equipped the candidates to localize these races in a way that I think we'll see some surprises.

DOKOUPIL: Ashley, give me one state if Democrats win you feel like we're good?

ETIENNE: I'm watching Nevada. So, yeah. I'm watching Steven Horsford's race in — in Las Vegas, right? It's going to matter for the — for Cortez Masto.

BURLESON: Yeah.

ETIENNE: That's the one I watch. And he's young, he's won in competitive races before.

BURLESON: Of course.

ETIENNE: He's the future of the party.