

CNN's *Inside Politics with Dana Bash*

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12:00:04 p.m.

1 minute and 31 seconds

DANA BASH: [B]ut in Alaska, there's new explosive *New York Times* reporting alleging democratic dirty tricks. I'm Dana Bash. let's go behind the headlines and inside politics. There are just six days until the election, and we're tracking the races, candidates, and stories that could shift the balance of power here in Washington and around the country. Here's what's on our midterm radar. We start with that breaking news on the Alaska Senate race. *The New York Times* is reporting evidence that they say come from text messages and source interviews, that it was, in fact, Democrats who recruited the other Dan Sullivan into that Senate race to run against the incumbent GOP senator with the same name, Dan Sullivan. According to *The Times*, a "Peltola staffer" — Peltola is the Democrat running, Mary Peltola — said, "received unusual instructions from top campaign aides: Find as many people named Dan Sullivan in Alaska as you can. The staffer compiled...The plan, worked" — "complied" — rather, "the plan worked," when a retired teacher named Dan Sullivan jumped into the race. It goes on to say, "from Washington to Anchorage, advisers participated in regular conversations about the effort." Now, the Peltola campaign told *The Times* it "has no involvement with either Sullivan campaign and did not recruit any candidates into the race." More on that in a minute.

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12:04:25 p.m.

4 minutes and 34 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America's Choice; 2026; *NYT*: Dems Looked for People Names Dan Sullivan to Run in Alaska; *NYT* reports that Mary Peltola staffer combed through voter records to find Dan Sullivans]

DANA BASH: Mark Preston, let's start with this *New York Times* story, because if you read through it, they have some pretty detailed information based on, as I said, interviews that they've done and some text messages that they have received that shows that the people who are at least in and around the Peltola campaign and Democratic strategists here in Washington were hunting for somebody who also has the name Dan Sullivan to appear on the ballot, and also others who could be spoilers. Alaska is a state that votes by ranked choice. So, this is not illegal. It is not new, but given the fact that there is so much focus on this particular issue right now, the two Dan Sullivans and that the DOJ filed a lawsuit to try to pause any kind of — you know, formalizing the vote until things are worked out. If the incumbent Republican, Dan Sullivan, doesn't win — this is something that is sending Democrats scrambling, no doubt.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America's Choice; 2026; *NYT*: Dems Looked for People Names Dan Sullivan to Run in Alaska; Idea was to take votes from GOP Sen. Dan S. Sullivan; Dan J. Sullivan is now in the race]

MARK PRESTON: Yeah. Listen, two things you said are very important. It's not illegal, and it's not new. But what is new is that nowadays that you really can't get away with doing these things. There's always going to be some kind of trail, you know, and in this case, these are text messages. And then, of course, probably led to live interviews by *The New York Times*. A couple of things. One is I want to find out who in Washington actually was involved, because I think at that level, you can discern how involved the national party was in, you know, making this happen. The second thing is — is it really hurts Democrats on the credibility issue. And I just mean, you know, a week before the election, it doesn't help the Democratic candidate right now in Alaska to be answering questions about whether or not she is a trustworthy person, given what we've seen from polling and what people think about Donald Trump and many people in his administration where the level of trust is really taking down Republican candidates across the country.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America's Choice; 2026; Peltola Campaign: We Had "No Involvement With Either Sullivan Campaign and Did Not Recruit Any Candidates"]

BASH: Yeah, and I use the term dirty tricks intentionally because it's — it's not illegal. This is something that — is untoward. It is something that Democrats have tried to do in races where they think it could be to their advantage to run candidates that could siphon votes away from Republicans, and Republicans do the same. I mean, just in Alaska alone, Mary Peltola, who's now on the ballot for the Senate, she lost her House race two years ago. On that ballot, there was a candidate who was literally in prison who was reportedly recruited and — and kept on the ballot at the behest of Republicans. There's a socialist running in Ohio with the hopes of taking votes away from the Democrat, Sherrod Brown. These are dirty tricks. They are legal, dirty tricks. But again, at a time when you have a President and his — supporters, particularly those with very big platforms, trying to undermine the election, and Alaska is a potentially key and even pivotal, pivotal Senate seat that could determine the outcome of the control of Senate, it's a big deal.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: America's Choice; 2026; NYT: Dems Looked for People Names Dan Sullivan to Run in Alaska]

ALAYNA TREENE: It's absolutely a big deal, and I think there's no question, despite as you all have pointed out, and I think it's worth saying, again, this was not illegal, something that they are going to blow up. I mean, I've already been trying to chat with some of my sources at the White House about what the President's reaction is to this. I am sure we will hear a lot from him on this subject, especially because of, as you mentioned, I think the important thing is that preemptive lawsuit from the Justice Department saying we're going to challenge the certification of this if Dan Sullivan doesn't win.

BASH: And I just want to add, before we move on to other things, that this went through the Alaska Supreme Court. It was challenged. The ballot that Alaskans are going to see is going to say that the incumbent senator — you see there — is the incumbent senator. It's going to say Republican Dan Sullivan. And because you mentioned, I just want to quickly play what Todd Blanche, the attorney general, said to me on Sunday about the reason they're pushing for a

lawsuit in Alaska.

ATTORNEY GENERAL TODD BLANCE [on CNN's *State of the Union*, 10/25/26]: The only reason this man is on the ballot is to confuse voters. I mean, if everybody would start with that premise, then I think the — the awe and the — the frustration people are having towards the Department of Justice would dissipate because we're doing the right thing.

BASH: So, I don't — the law is the law, and it's unclear whether or not the federal government has a role here, but we will — we will see.