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November Elections: A View from the Midwest

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NOVEMBER ELECTIONS: A VIEW FROM THE MIDWEST — Despite the trend of dwindling voters in off-year elections, the November races may draw many Republican voters to the polls. And it won’t be just a reaction to the Clinton scandal, according to Gerald E. Kerns, professor of political science at the University of Dayton.

“Much of that turnout would have been there anyhow, for many hard-core conservatives hate Clinton and did so before any of this tawdry little sex scandal emerged,” Kerns said. “They hate him because he opposes some of the things they hold dear to their hearts.” Kerns says key issues for Republicans are prayer in public schools, abortion laws, gun control legislation, affirmative action and discrimination against homosexuals. Also, Clinton would “stand fast against a tax cut that was too partial to those at the upper levels of the income ladder,” Kerns said.

Two Midwest Congressional races have caught his attention. “Illinois Sen. Moseley-Braun is in deep trouble as she seeks re-election because of a number of things she has done during her first term that irked many of her constituents,” Kerns said. “She may lose and lose for that reason primarily — not having anything to do with Clinton.” The match-up in his own 6th Ohio Congressional district pits incumbent and Democrat Ted Strickland against Republican Nancy Hollister in a district that “has gone back and forth since 1992.”

Any deep meaning behind the eventual turn-out of voters nationally? “If Republicans score big, explained by heavy Republican turn-out and lackluster Democratic turn-out, that could certainly be attributed in part to the impeachment factor,” Kerns said. “If the Democrats come out in sizable numbers, a big wind will have been taken out of impeachment sails.”

Kerns said he’s seen no evidence that Republicans will change allegiance and support Democratic candidates to show their displeasure with the Starr investigation and impeachment proceedings. “The one piece of hard evidence was a poll showing that Congress is held in less regard than it was four or five months ago,” Kerns said. “It’s dipped quite a bit since the tape of Clinton testifying was aired. So Congress is taking some hits and taking some blame.”

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