

Major U.S. Weapon Makers Bet Big on Freshman Senator

By JOHN T. BENNETT

The five largest U.S. weapon makers are betting big on a freshman northeastern senator, donating substantially more to Sen. Scott Brown than to several high-profile veteran lawmakers.

The so-called "Big Five" — Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman — have poured \$107,600 into the Massachusetts Republican's campaign war chest, according to data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics (CFRP). Brown is in the homestretch of a tough campaign against Democrat Elizabeth Warren, and it appears the five companies have not given her one cent.

The total donated to Brown is substantial because it places him among the Big Five's favored campaign cash targets, eclipsing a number of longtime members who should be key to finding a way around deep cuts to planned defense budgets. The totals cover January 2011 through August of this year.

Brown is second among Big Five recipients only to their chief Capitol Hill ally: Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. He has received \$206,500 so far. The companies also have given \$84,000 to the panel's top Democrat, Rep. Adam Smith of Washington.

The Massachusetts freshman — a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee — has received more from the companies than the House speaker, Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, who will be a key figure in efforts to stave off a possible \$500 billion, decadelong reduction to planned national defense spending. The speaker so far has received \$71,900 from Lockheed, Northrop, Boeing and Raytheon.

Notably, Brown received more than twice the amount from the five weapon makers than did senior veteran lawmakers such as House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Mich., \$48,750; Rep. Hal Rogers, R-Ky., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, \$45,400; and Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., \$39,500.

CFRP and U.S. Federal Election Commission data indicate the Big Five so far have not donated any money to Warren's campaign.

Christopher Preble, an expert with Washington's Cato Institute,



COLIN KELLY/STAFF

Winning Support: Five of the largest defense contractors in the U.S. have donated more than \$100,000 to the campaign of Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass.

noted that since taking office in February 2010, Brown "has weighed in [on Capitol Hill] on a few occasions that had very clear constituent services and very parochial state interests."

Loren Thompson, an expert with the Lexington Institute, Arlington, Va., called Brown "a godsend for Bay State defense contractors."

"Companies have lots of reasons for liking Brown," said Thompson, who also is a consultant to defense companies. "He has helped the [General Electric] engine plant in Lynn by backing an alternate engine for the F-35 fighter."

"He has helped the General Dynamics plant in Taunton by backing the Warfighter Information Network, and he has helped Waltham-based Raytheon on a slew of programs."

Opposing Defense Cuts

Brown, like most sitting Republican and many Democratic lawmakers, has spoken against allowing a pending \$500 billion reduction to planned national defense spending.

Defense companies like that, and they count Brown as a staunch ally in their fight to ensure the cuts, which would occur under a budget process known as sequestration, are blocked — or at least delayed.

While Warren has not discussed defense spending much in the sometimes testy campaign, political realities likely would steer her to resist deep cuts, analysts say.

"Like Brown, Warren is not calling loudly for military spending

cuts," Preble said. "She probably would rather military spending not be cut because it would hurt Massachusetts."

"But she says Republicans should raise revenues to pay for" their desired levels of DoD spending, he said. "That's been Democrats' standard line for some time."

Defense industry advocates have called for changes to federal entitlement programs as a way to free up dollars to keep the annual Pentagon budget at the current level of around \$520 billion — or higher, as desired by House GOP members and Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney.

Warren appears to diverge from the defense sector on how to pay for sustaining military spending.

What's more, the five companies have been working with and monitoring Brown's legislative behavior for more than two years. That makes him a known quantity, while Warren is a huge question mark at a time when every sector needs allies on Capitol Hill, as lawmakers look for programs to cut while tackling the nation's debt problems.

"The defense industry almost always favors incumbents over challengers when it makes campaign contributions," Thompson said. "In the case of Massachusetts, companies know that Senator Brown serves on the armed services, veterans, homeland security and small business committees, but they have no way of knowing what committee assignments Elizabeth Warren might receive." □

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Elections Unlikely To Purge U.S. Senate Defense Panels

Battle Looms Over Deficit Reduction, Sequestration

By JOHN T. BENNETT

An Election Day shake-up of the U.S. Senate panels that oversee Pentagon policy and budgeting is unlikely, but several other races and committee changes will affect the defense sector's fate.

The Pentagon and industry likely will keep in place many of their closest Senate allies. That's because authorization and appropriations panels have become homes for members who support the issues over which particular committees have responsibility — and the defense panels are perhaps the best examples of this trend.

Among Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) members, only a handful are in competitive races or retiring.

Two Democrats, Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Joe Manchin of West Virginia, are locked in competitive battles with Republicans Rep. Todd Akin and John Raese, respectively. Polls show McCaskill leading in her battle and Manchin comfortably ahead for now.

Freshman Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass., is in a close and sometimes testy fight with Democratic challenger Elizabeth Warren. A Boston Globe poll gives Warren a 5 percentage point lead, but a WBUR-TV poll puts Brown ahead by 3 points.

The five biggest U.S. defense contractors have donated more than \$100,000 to Brown's campaign, second only to their top congressional ally, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif.

A Brown loss would remove a key defense sector ally from the Senate; liberal Democrat Warren's insertion into the upper chamber would hurt GOP efforts to block the kind of deficit-cutting plan that Democrats want and Republicans oppose.

Senators Stepping Down

Three SASC members are retiring: Sens. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii; Ben Nelson, D-Neb.; and Jim Webb, D-Va. The race to replace Akaka appears likely to remain in

Democratic hands, with the Nebraska race likely to flip to a Republican-held seat.

The Virginia race currently is being led — but not by much — by former Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine, a key ally of President Barack Obama. His opponent is George Allen, a former Republican governor and former senator.

The membership of the Senate Appropriations Committee likely will remain nearly the same in the next Congress. Nelson also sits on that panel, but no other member is

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Christopher Preble
Cato Institute

leaving or in a competitive race.

Sources said whoever replaces the retirees on the Armed Services Committee will be pro-defense.

"For the most part, those people who would come onto Armed Services and Appropriations would mainly want to keep the money flowing [to the Pentagon]," said Christopher Preble, a senior analyst at the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank.

But other races could impact defense issues, most prominently efforts to avoid defense cuts that will kick in Jan. 2 unless lawmakers pass a \$1.2 trillion deficit-reduction plan.

One longtime Pentagon and defense-sector ally, Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, the outgoing Republican whip, is retiring. Polls show the race to replace him is a dead heat between GOP Rep. Jeff Flake and Democratic challenger Richard Carmona. Given Raytheon's large presence in the state, it's unlikely the eventual winner would favor big defense budget cuts.

Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., also is considered a defense-sector ally, and is locked in a close battle with GOP Rep. Connie Mack. Most
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polls give Nelson a single-digit edge.

Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., a key Boeing ally who was a vocal proponent of that company's successful bid to secure the \$35 billion

contract to build Air Force tanker planes, has opened a comfortable lead in her re-election race and appears likely to win.

But a big change that could impact the Pentagon is the retirement of the Senate Budget Committee chairman, Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D.

"My sense is the [Finance] and

Budget committee folks will have a big say about all of this," Preble said. "Frankly ... the real competition is between defense and everything else. ... So the big question will be: Are there going to be new people on these other committees that rise to positions of authority and are in a better position to force the issue?"

Conrad has long supported the kind of "balanced" deficit-paring strategy many Democrats favor: one that features some defense cuts, tax hikes on the wealthiest Americans and domestic entitlement program changes.

The race to replace him is a virtual tie, according to an average of multiple polls, but that new mem-

ber would not have the kind of power to strike a grand bargain on the budget that Conrad would have possessed.

Some potential good news for Pentagon officials and defense-sector executives? The most senior Democrat on the Budget Committee after Conrad is Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, a longtime Boeing ally. And the top Republican is Sen. Jeff Sessions from Alabama, who many sources doubt would favor big cuts to the Pentagon's budget to help pay down the deficit.

Prospects for a Deal

The ability of the upper chamber to pass either a massive deficit-reduction package or a deal that would delay the sequester cuts could depend on which party gains the most seats Nov. 6.

RealClearPolitics.com, an online organization that tracks congressional races, projects Democrats taking 46 seats, with Republicans taking 43, and 11 seats up for grabs.

To kill a filibuster threat in the Senate, one party would have to have 60 votes. It appears doubtful either the Democrats or the Republicans will achieve that crucial number, and that makes achieving a so-called "grand bargain" even tougher.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, which would have a big say in any tax reforms included in a sweeping package, told Defense News last month that the lone path to passing a deficit-cutting package is if Mitt Romney becomes president.

Fueled by a strong performance in the first debate with Obama on Oct. 3 in Denver, a Pew Research poll released last week put Romney ahead of the incumbent.

"A Romney win certainly paints a much different picture," one senior congressional GOP source said. "In the long term, that clearly is the better choice for finding an appropriate response to this crisis."

In response, several Democratic senators bristled at the notion Obama would be unable to negotiate with congressional Republicans and reach a deal.

"The Republicans don't want to work with Obama, and they are willing to wait and see what happens on Election Day," Preble said.

"They think they can get a better deal — even in a lame-duck session, and especially if they know Romney would be coming into office on Jan. 20," he said. "I'm not ready to buy the notion that they won't work with Obama at all." □

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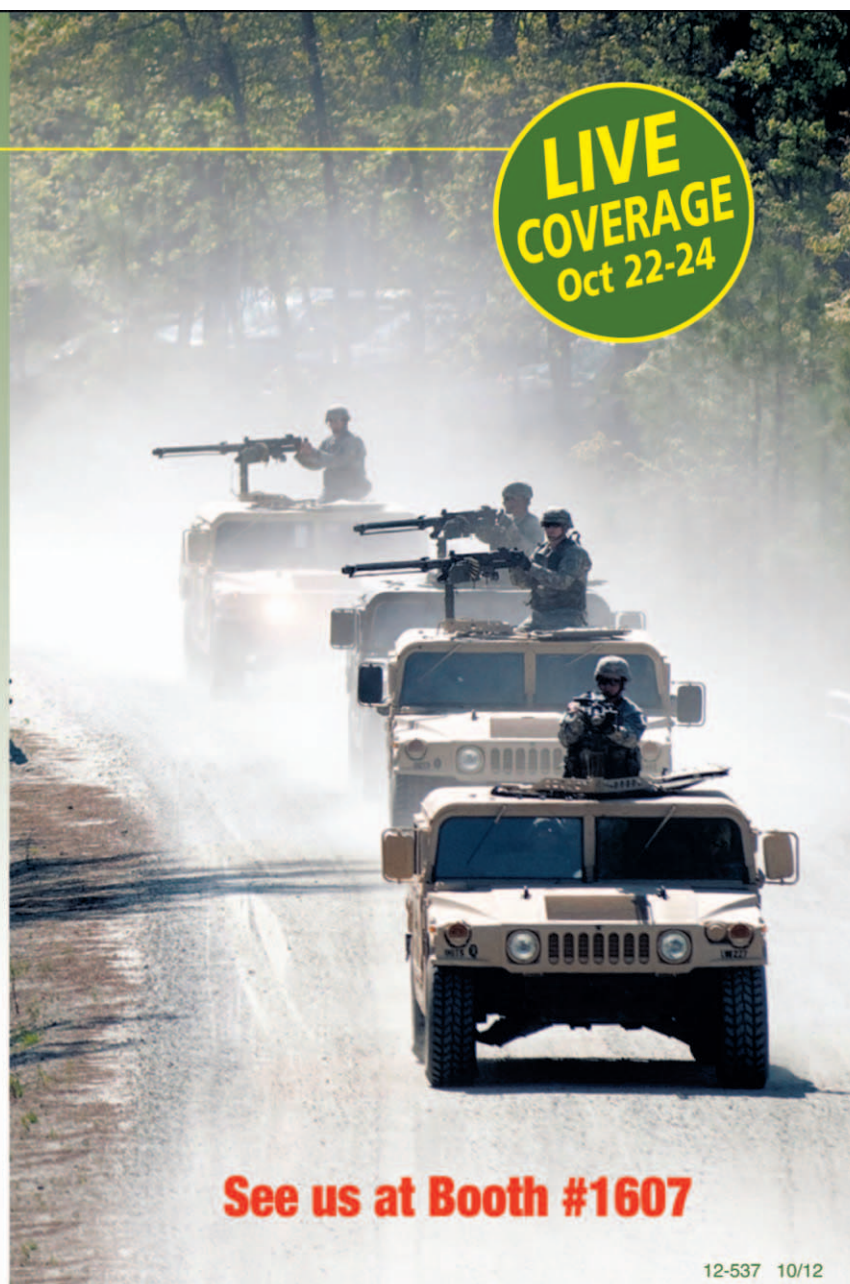
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