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The Early Word: Finally, Back to the Districts

By [JANIE LORBER](#)

With Election Day looming, Washington is emptying of lawmakers, who won't [return until Nov. 15](#).

Democrats were particularly eager to return to their districts to start the final five-week rally for campaign cash and voters.

Final Move: Just after midnight, the House passed a stopgap spending measure — with only one Republican vote — to finance the federal government through Dec. 3. The Times's David M. Herszenhorn has [the final update](#) from Capitol Hill.

Final Huddle: Mr. Obama is expected to [discuss election strategy on Thursday afternoon](#) with Democratic Congressional leaders for “one last pre-election meeting to get on the same page,” said a senior Democratic aide.

“For Mr. Obama, holding Democratic losses down a bit would provide a morale boost even if it doesn't fundamentally alter the new partisan dynamic that is all but certain to take hold in Washington next year,” The Times's Michael Shear writes.

Later on Thursday, Mr. Obama is expected to attend two Democratic National Committee events, including a concert starring B.o.B. — Democrats [could really use a wish right now](#) — for [Gen44](#), his party's version of the Republicans' “Young Guns” program.

But Democrats face one significant issue with their large donors. Many of the wealthy patrons who in the past have played major roles financing outside groups to help elect Democratic candidates — like [George Soros](#) and [Peter B. Lewis](#) — are sitting this election out, [The Times Jeff Zeleny and Michael Luo report](#).

Shaping Boehner: Democrats plan to start a major campaign Thursday aimed at defining the Republican House leader, John A. Boehner of Ohio, as an enemy of reform. They are expected to release an Internet video painting him as “the symbol of a Republican Party beholden to the old ways of Washington.”

Lunch Money: During Senate Republicans' weekly lunch on Wednesday, Senator John McCain of Arizona announced [that he was transferring \\$1 million](#) in personal campaign funds to the National Republican Senatorial Committee. (That's just pocket change for Mr. McCain, whose campaign [had nearly \\$19 million on hand](#) as of Aug. 4.)

Meanwhile, Mr. Boehner secured more than \$4 million for the National Republican Congressional Committee. As an incentive, Mr. Boehner offered to contribute \$1 million from

his own coffers if his conference could come up with \$3 million.

The last full fund-raising quarter before the election ends on Friday, a final test of viability “that will suggest which campaigns are competitive, which ones aren’t and which ones are living on a prayer,” as [Politico reports](#).

Palin at R.N.C. Rallies: Former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska is expected to appear at two Republican National Committee fund-raisers next month. These events are planned to be in [Anaheim, Calif.](#), on Oct. 16 and in [Orlando, Fla.](#), on Oct. 23, [CNN and Politico report](#).

Emanuel’s ‘Listening Tour’: Rahm Emanuel, Mr. Obama’s possibly soon-to-be former chief of staff, will kick off his mayoral bid with a “listening tour” of Chicago when he jumps into the race this weekend, [The Chicago Sun-Times reports](#). That’s better than what he did at the White House, if you ask Mr. Boehner, who on Wednesday requested a replacement that would actually listen to Republicans.

Castle Won’t Write-In: Dashing dreams of those hoping for another three-way ballot-box drama, Representative Michael N. Castle of Delaware announced Wednesday night that he [would not wage a write-in campaign](#) for the Senate. He lost the Republican primary this month to Christine O’Donnell, who is backed by the Tea Party movement.

Pawlenty Gets an ‘A’: The Cato Institute on Thursday released [its report card](#) of the country’s governors and their approach to fiscal issues. The libertarian group gives Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, a possible 2012 presidential candidate, its highest rating.

Support for Young Parents: The Obama administration on Wednesday awarded [\\$27 million to state programs](#) supporting pregnant teenagers and young parents; the hope is that this federal aid will be noncontroversial amid the contentious debate over abortion.