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In a photo taken with a fisheye lens, Sen Pat Roberts rides in a parade last month on the campaign trail in Gardner, Kan.

Senate race in Kansas takes new turn

Democrats see hope of unseating Roberts in three-way contest

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

When Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) defeated a pesky tea party challenger last month, it looked as though the longtime senator had extinguished the only real threat standing between him and a fourth term.

But with less than 10 weeks until the election, Roberts finds himself in an unexpectedly competitive three-way race with a Democratic challenger and a surging independent candidate. The close contest has presented Democrats with an opportunity to shift the race in their favor and potentially help themselves in the battle for the Senate majority.

The challengers are Democrat Chad Taylor, a little-known Shawnee County district attorney, and independent Greg Orman, a former Democrat who says he is open to aligning himself with either party in the Senate. One recent automated survey from Democratic firm Public Policy

Polling showed Orman leading Roberts in a head-to-head race, while Roberts led in a two-man race against Taylor.

Taylor has refused help from national Democrats despite raising little money on his own, while Orman has more cash on hand and is independently wealthy as well. The situation presents a quandary for Democrats: Do they continue to support Taylor or instead throw their support behind Orman in hopes he caucuses with Democrats, much as the party did with Sen. Angus King (I-Maine)?

Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee spokesman Justin Barasky declined to comment when asked how the committee views the race. Taylor's campaign says he has received no encouragement from the DSCC to exit, and the national party has not deployed paid staffers to Kansas or run any advertisements in the race.

Roberts is struggling in part because of revelations earlier in the year that he is registered to vote at a home owned by donors and pays rent to stay there when he is in the state. He survived a challenge from a tea party candidate in the GOP primary, but registered a startlingly low ap-

proval rate of 27 percent in the PPP survey.

Kansas Republicans are also grappling with an intraparty fight over Gov. Sam Brownback (R), who has faced a backlash from moderate Republicans over tax cuts and reductions in education spending. Polls show that state Rep. Paul Davis (D) has a real chance of unseating Brownback in November.

In the Senate race, Roberts's campaign still has a well-stocked war chest and the ability to raise a lot more money. Kansas also has not sent a Democrat to the Senate since the 1930s.

Leroy Towns, Roberts's campaign manager, attributes the close race to a crowded field.

"I think it's kind of a new phenomenon in a race where you have three candidates," he said. "That is sort of uncharted waters."

Taylor's campaign account had just \$1,673 in mid-July. Orman, founder of a company that installs energy-efficient lighting systems and co-founder of an investment firm, had nearly \$363,000.

Campaign finance records show that Orman has given to both Democrats and Republicans. He says he voted for Barack Obama in 2008 and Mitt Romney

in 2012. Dubbing himself "fiscally responsible and socially tolerant," he declines to say which party he would caucus with — other than to say he'd probably side with the majority party.

"If I get elected, there's a reasonable chance neither party has a majority in the U.S. Senate," he said in an interview. "And if that's the case, what I would do is sit down with both parties and have a real frank discussion about the agenda they want to follow."

Taylor is preaching fiscal prudence and loyalty to the agriculture industry. He said in an interview that he agrees with "60 to 65 percent" of what Obama is doing but opposes his views on domestic surveillance.

He also says he has heard voters grouse for months that Roberts has lost touch with Kansas. "A lot of people were talking about how he's been there too long, how he's not a Kansan anymore," he said.

A fourth candidate, Libertarian nominee Randall Batson, also could complicate the outcome.

sean.sullivan@washpost.com

This article appeared in some Aug. 31 editions and is being reprinted in all editions today.

Discovery of rock art shows Neanderthals were artistic

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A series of lines scratched into rock in a cave near the southwestern tip of Europe could be proof that Neanderthals were more intelligent and creative than previously thought.

The cross-hatched engravings inside Gorham's Cave in Gibraltar are the first known examples of Neanderthal rock art, according to a team of scientists who studied the site. The find is significant because it indicates that modern humans and their extinct cousins shared the capacity for abstract expression.

The study, released Monday by the journal *Proceedings of*

the National Academy of Sciences, examined grooves in a rock that had been covered with sediment. Archaeologists had previously found artifacts associated with Neanderthal culture in the overlying layer, suggesting that the engravings must be older, said Clive Finlayson, one of the study's authors.

"It is the last nail in the coffin for the hypothesis that Neanderthals were cognitively inferior to modern humans," said Paul Tacon, an expert in rock art at Australia's Griffith University. Tacon, who was not involved in the study, said the research showed that the engravings were made with great effort for ritual purposes, to communicate with others, or both.

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STEM education produces innovation, officials say

BY WESLEY ROBINSON

Although a recent study found that almost 75 percent of those who have science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) bachelor's degrees have jobs in other fields, policymakers, advocates and executives continue to push STEM education as a way to close achievement gaps and produce U.S. innovation.

Senior officials with the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy say the focus on STEM education is a response to global achievement trends, with an effort to develop students' skills rather than drive them to specific careers. Officials point to 12 countries that have higher test scores in science and 17 with higher scores in math.

Experts say that STEM education builds basic skills for all students, skills that make it easier to find a job in almost any field. The Obama administration has set a goal of producing 1 million additional STEM undergraduate degree holders by 2022, with an emphasis on teaching students how to explore the scientific method and to increase critical thinking at early ages.

"There's no question for us that in order to compete and win in an innovation economy, we have to do better to develop strong skills in STEM learning," said Roberto Rodriguez, deputy assistant to the president for education. "Teaching in our schools needs to be informed by the science of learning and support real-world knowledge and experiences for our students."

But some economists and labor analysts see a different story regarding STEM, noting data that they say shows no need for additional graduates in many STEM-related fields.

Hal Salzman, a professor of planning and public policy at Rutgers University, says there is no shortage of STEM workers. He says that technology companies profess a need for STEM employees, allowing them to push for lower-paid workers and to reform education policies to help their corporate goals.

"Wages have been stagnant at 1990s levels, the same as when Bill Clinton was president," Salzman said. "It's not a belief, it's the data."

He says there is no compelling evidence to support claims of worker shortages, using the example of engineering, which has the highest rate of college graduates going into the field. Salzman says there are 50 percent more graduates than there are jobs, sending people to other disciplines for work.

Others say looking strictly at such data ignores what is happening in the job market. Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland Baltimore County, said it's important to look at people getting jobs across the spectrum and putting their STEM backgrounds to use in myriad ways.

"The report misses the point when you talk about people with bachelor's degrees not being in STEM jobs," Hrabowski said. "I think the analysis is not taking into account a lot of complicated factors."

Hrabowski, a mathematician, said students at UMBC get jobs before they graduate because of the need for talented workers in fields such as information technology. His university has been praised for innovation, because it works to teach students to collaborate, find patterns and learn scientifically, he said. Hrabowski says reform at the K-12 level will develop better-prepared college

students, which in turn will produce graduates capable of filling almost any job.

James Brown, executive director of the D.C.-based STEM Education Coalition, says that even in a bad economy, STEM wages generally remain steady while other occupations see significant drops. He also says success is often seen in the employability of STEM grads, rather than what kind of job the graduates land.

"The reward for an engineering degree is better career success," Brown said. "There are no guarantees in this economy, but you know you're going to do better if you're in a STEM field than any other field."

Brown says he would like to see the country make elementary and secondary math and science as fundamental as English, which would give more U.S. students basic skills and learning strategies to succeed, whether as an auto mechanic or a physicist.

"We want to make sure the education system is aligned with where the jobs will be. . . . The future of the economy is going to STEM skills," Brown said.

Ryan Carson has a degree in computer science, but he is working in a non-STEM occupation, in part because he believes U.S. higher education doesn't do a good job teaching students modern technologies.

Carson, co-founder and chief executive of Treehouse, took this complaint and turned it into a business that helps teach people skills in Web, mobile and business development. He says business models like his — less expensive and with a focus on specific skills — will help draw minorities and students with lower incomes into STEM fields.

Treehouse has 72,000 students, many of whom joined to sharpen

existing skills, not to get a new job, he says. Carson says there is an "explosion" in jobs requiring computer coding, an area of study many schools don't support. With job-specific training, he says, students can learn quickly if the area isn't right for them, at little cost.

"Worst-case scenario, you realize coding isn't for you and you lose \$25 and a month of your time," Carson said.

Nam Pham, 21, a rising senior at the University of Virginia, says he sees a future in STEM. As a summer intern with Honeywell and a passion for STEM education, he thinks he has a good shot at a job after college.

Pham has seen friends get jobs shortly after graduation because of their high-level skills, especially those who study math. But he says there are some limits, and he sees peers choosing other fields as a result.

"There are a finite number of jobs. . . . The best and brightest get hired, but the rest don't get those jobs," Pham said.

David Cote, Honeywell's chief executive, says the education debate is an issue of spending more efficiently to teach STEM to see better payoffs. Cote, a member of the Simpson-Bowles National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, points to more than 100 programs receiving federal funding for education, but a lack of synergy with the groups.

"We've got really great intent and really poor execution," Cote said.

Cote says STEM education improves employment and innovation, which in turn brings more people into the field to solve problems and create new solutions.

"More people thinking about how to make something better" is generally a good policy, Cote said.

wesley.robinson@washpost.com