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In this blog, we look beyond the headlines to understand how political developments throughout the country affect our Israeli-American community and the issues we all hold dear. Our goal is to provide basic context and foster understanding that encourages greater civic engagement and informs decision-making by our community members.

As we head into the final stretch of primaries in the 2026 election cycle, we get one final taste of the dynamics we saw in play for each party. For Democrats – these primaries were not just a competition between progressive and moderate factions within the party, but evidence of growing frustration Democratic voters have with those that've represented them for decades. Among Republicans, this was another test of President Trump's influence within the party – one that he's passed every time with flying colors.

Southern pop quiz – a final, surprise test of Trump's hold on the GOP

Over the summer, South Carolina Republicans were asked to cast their ballots four times: The state observes a two-round primary system, where a "runoff" election is held if no candidate secures 50% of the votes in the 1st round. After these two rounds were held in June (the Governor's race advanced to such a runoff), and following the passing in July of Sen. Lindsey Graham, who had won his primary election, a special Republican Senate Primary was called in the state.

The late Senator's sister, Darline Graham, was appointed to serve in the Senate through the end of her brother's current term. With the blessing of President Trump, she has chosen to also seek a full term and become her brother's permanent successor. She was one of 10 candidates in the first round of the primary and came out on top with 33% of the votes. Behind her was Congressman Ralph Norman, who had unsuccessfully run for Governor this year, who came in 2nd with 24%.

On Tuesday, the two faced each other directly in the runoff. Ahead of the election, a debate was held between Graham and Norman. When the debate's moderator asked Graham a question about U.S. policy on Taiwan, Graham admitted that she was "not that informed on national security". Graham's answer was widely circulated and used by her opponent to demonstrate that she was unqualified to be a full-term Senator. While Graham has no prior political experience, Norman has been serving in Congress since 2017, and served before that in South Carolina's state legislature since 2009. This contrast was a major point in his campaign.

Still, Graham had one major advantage over Norman – a formal endorsement by President Trump. On Tuesday, that proved to be all that really mattered, and she secured the Republican nomination with 52.6% of the votes.

A final showdown between young & old in Massachusetts

There are several valid ways to frame this cycle of Democratic primaries – Progressive vs. Moderate, Pro-Israel vs. Anti-Israel, Liberal vs. Socialist, and others. One that many seem reluctant to acknowledge, but is in my view the only way to frame next Tuesday's Massachusetts Senate Democratic Primary – is Young vs. Old.

Ed Markey has served as a Senator from the Commonwealth since 2013. Before that, he was a member of the U.S. House of Representative for 37 years. After having been on Capitol year for half a century, Markey is now seeking a third Senate term at the age of 80. While incumbent Senators are rarely challenged by high-profile candidates in their primary, Markey's seat is being contested with a bid from Congressman Seth Moulton, a 47-year-old veteran who's been serving on Capitol Hill since 2015. Moulton was a U.S. Marine, who enlisted for a period of seven years following the September 11th attacks, and fought in Iraq.

The irony: If we could frame this Primary battle as ideological – Progressive vs. Moderate or Liberal vs. Socialist - it would likely not be in the way you'd imagine. Markey is a reliable Progressive voice in the Senate, authored the Senate version of the "Green New Deal", and enjoys the formal endorsement of his fellow Massachusetts Senator, Progressive powerhouse Elizabeth Warren. Moulton, on the other hand, is a war veteran, more focused on national security, and a member of the New Democrat Coalition – a bloc of moderate Democratic House members. He's notably not a member of the Progressive Caucus. Both would likely vote similarly on Israel-related issues. His main appeal to voters is the fact that he's younger, and will be a much-need fresh face in the Senate. This appeal will be put to the test next week.