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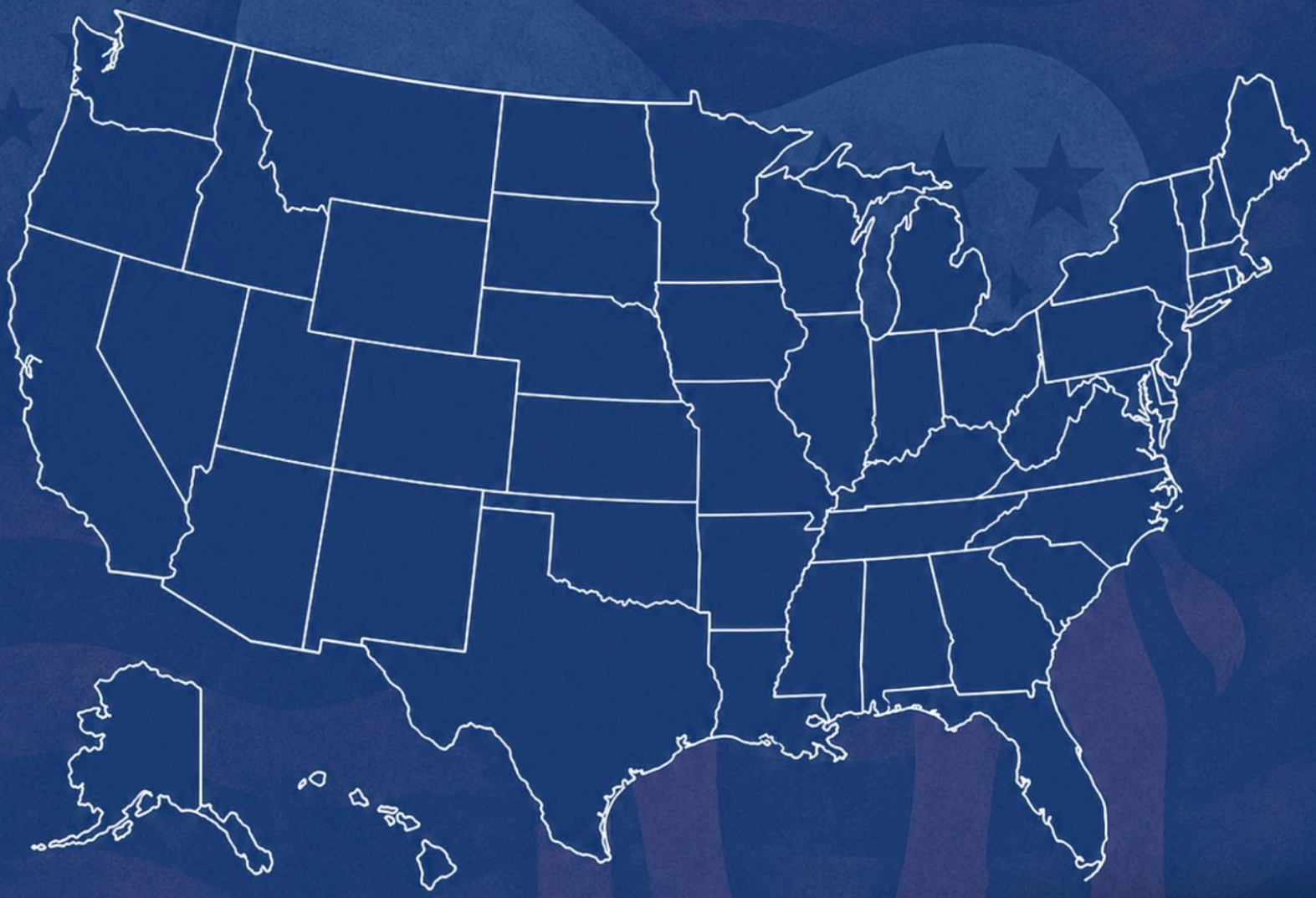

2026 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY ELECTION ANALYSIS SERIES

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Introduction

This special USRESIST NEWS Report is intended to help 2026 mid-term voters analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Democratic candidates running for House and Senate seats.

Our team of reporters provides you with information about each candidate's position and their chances of winning their race against Republican candidates as well as other Democrats.

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Alabama

By Morgan Davidson

- **Announced Alabama Dem. Senate Candidates:** Dakarai Larriett, Lamont Lavender, Kyle Sweetser
- **Announced Dem. House Candidates:** Clyde Jone, Shomari Figures, Lee McInnis. Amanda Pusczek, Shane Weaver, Jeremy Devito, Candice Devieilh, Greg Howard, Andrew Sneed, Keith Pilkington, Terri Sewell

The Yellowhammer State will have all seven of its U.S. House seats on the ballot in 2026, along with one of its U.S. Senate seats. Alabama's current House delegation includes: District 1: Barry Moore (R); District 2: Shomari Figures (D); District 3: Mike Rogers (R); District 4: Tyler Aderholt (R); District 5: Dale Strong (R); District 6: Gary Palmer (R); and District 7: Terri Sewell (D).

Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R) would normally be up for re-election, but he's forgoing a second Senate term to run for governor. His decision leaves one of Alabama's Senate seats open for the first time in years, setting up what could become one of the state's most consequential races of the cycle.

Alabama's seven House districts reveal a stark divide between the state's fast-growing urban centers and its aging rural regions, shaping very different political realities heading into 2026. The Black Belt anchored Districts 2 and 7 remain the most demographically diverse, with younger urban populations surrounded by older rural communities, creating the only reliably Democratic footholds in the state. In contrast, deeply rural districts like the 3rd and 4th continue to trend older and overwhelmingly conservative, while the Huntsville-centered 5th stands out as

a rare pocket of youth, education, and rapid population growth driven by the defense and tech sectors. Suburban strongholds around Birmingham and Mobile add yet another layer, blending upper-income commuters with exurban sprawl. Together, these demographic contrasts set the stage for how competitive each district may be in 2026, defining where either party can realistically expand its influence. The primaries will take place on May 19th of 2026 followed by the General election on November 3rd.

Senate Candidates

Dakarai Larriett, 43, is a gay Black businessman and first-time candidate whose run for the U.S. Senate began after what he describes as a wrongful arrest that pushed him toward public service. A former Whirlpool employee who later launched his own pet-care company, Larriett frames his campaign around the everyday struggles he has seen in Alabama's working communities. He emphasizes criminal-justice reform, better access to healthcare, stronger public education, and a jobs agenda centered on small business and economic mobility. His profile is likely to resonate with younger voters, LGBTQ+ Alabamians, and Black communities who respond to the lived experience he brings to the race. But with no prior political experience, minimal name recognition, and an uncertain donor base, Larriett starts as an underdog. His success will depend on whether his justice-reform message breaks through and whether he can build a statewide operation quickly. His chances of winning the primary remain low to moderate, and he has not yet given any major interviews.

Military veteran and community advocate Lamont Lavender entered the Democratic primary with a message focused on service, security, and economic fairness. While his age and full biography aren't yet publicly documented, Lavender describes himself as a proud U.S. veteran and a champion for the "everyday Alabamian." His stated priorities include lowering crime rates, securing livable wages, expanding veterans' support systems, and pushing for affordable housing and healthcare. He also stresses transparency and government accountability as core values. Lavender's background gives him natural appeal among veterans and working-class Democrats, especially in rural counties. However, his campaign infrastructure remains almost nonexistent: he has no public website, limited digital footprint, and no visible fundraising network. Without rapid organization and visibility, he risks being overshadowed by candidates with clearer profiles. His chances of winning the primary are currently low, and he has no publicly available interviews to date.

Kyle Sweetser, a 36-year-old construction business owner, enters the race with perhaps the most politically compelling story among the Democratic contenders. A former Republican who once spoke at the Democratic National Convention to denounce Donald Trump, Sweetser says the modern GOP "cares more about culture wars than people." His political shift forms the backbone of his campaign- a pitch to Alabamians who feel politically homeless in a polarized climate. Sweetser emphasizes infrastructure as his core issue, arguing that roads, broadband, water systems, and rural connectivity are essential to lifting Alabama's economy. He highlights his work-site experience and frequent conversations with working-class residents as proof that he understands the state's day-to-day challenges. His crossover appeal could attract moderate Democrats, independents, and even disaffected Republicans, giving him a broader coalition

than his rivals. The challenge is whether he can fundraise and organize quickly enough to convert that appeal into votes, but at this early stage, Sweetser stands out as the most viable Democrat in the field. His chances of winning the primary are moderate to high. No recent interviews are publicly available, though his past DNC remarks are archived.

Thirty-two-year-old chemist and emergency-response specialist Mark Wheeler presents himself as an “everyday family guy” bringing practical, science-based leadership to politics. With no prior elected experience, Wheeler leans heavily on his professional background, emphasizing environmental responsibility, clean water access, disaster preparedness, and healthcare affordability. His message focuses on pragmatic governance rather than ideological fights, positioning him as a calm, solutions-oriented alternative to political gridlock. Younger voters, STEM professionals, and environmentally focused Democrats may find his profile appealing, though Wheeler currently lacks the name recognition and organizational strength needed for a statewide campaign. His biggest hurdle is differentiating himself in a field already defined by stronger narratives; Larriett’s justice story and Sweetser’s party-switching momentum. Despite that, Wheeler could gain ground with a disciplined message and active outreach. His chances of winning the primary are low to moderate, and no recent interviews are available.

There is no polling yet on the Democratic side of this primary, but my pick is Sweetsner. His background is more appealing to key voters needed to win a deep red state like Alabama; & the disaffected Trump voter will likely resonate with voters in a midterm election where the President has historically low polling numbers. Sweetsner’s appearance at the DNC will also help him with donations & name recognition. Dakari Larriett also has a strong personal story that went viral which makes him a viable 2nd choice in the primary but either candidate will have an uphill battle against whichever Republican emerges in the wake of Tubberville running for governor. A note of interest here is Paul Finebaum. Finebaum has floated the idea of running as a Republican in this race but the current ESPN/SEC host may gather a unique coalition & govern differently than other Republicans in the race.

House Candidates

District 1 - Clyde Jones

Rev. Clyde W. Jones Jr. is a retired U.S. Army First Sergeant with 21 years of service as a Signal Communications soldier, including deployments in Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom II, where he earned a Bronze Star. After relocating to South Alabama for work in 2013, he spent more than a decade in industrial safety roles before retiring from FMC Agriculture Solutions in 2024. Jones holds a B.S. in Liberal Arts with a focus on Administration and Management from Excelsior University. He currently serves as an Associate Minister in Daphne and holds leadership roles in Alabama Arise, the Baldwin County NAACP, SEEDS (a local education foundation), and the Episcopal Diocese’s racial-justice commission. He positions himself as a veteran-driven, community-grounded public servant.

Platform Priorities

- **Veterans' support:** Expand access to VA care, mental-health services, and transition programs.
- **Education investment:** Strengthen public schools, support local foundations, improve funding for rural and suburban districts.
- **Worker safety & economic mobility:** Draws on his industry background to push for safe workplaces, fair wages, and job opportunities in coastal Alabama.
- **Racial justice & equity:** Advocates for equal access to opportunity, fair policing, and community-based justice initiatives.
- **Healthcare access:** Supports lowering costs and expanding rural and suburban provider access.

Voter & Donor Support

Jones's natural base includes veterans, Black voters, faith-based communities, and civic-engagement organizations connected to Alabama Arise and the NAACP. His network in Baldwin County's nonprofit and church communities gives him early grassroots potential, but major-dollar donor support remains unclear.

Why He Might Win

- Strong leadership credentials from military and community service.
- Deep involvement in local civic and racial-justice organizations.
- Could consolidate Democratic voters in Mobile and Baldwin County who want a community advocate rather than a traditional politician.

Why He Might Lose

- AL-01 is a heavily Republican and structurally difficult district for Democrats.
- Low name recognition outside political and advocacy circles.
- Fundraising capacity and campaign infrastructure are still unknown.

Key Election Variables

- Whether Democratic turnout in Mobile County improves.
- Ability to attract moderate or independent voters in Baldwin County.
- National environment and how energized Democratic voters are in a red-state cycle.
- Strength of the Republican nominee (likely strong).

General: Low due to district partisanship, not candidate quality.
Primary: Uncontested

District 2 - Shomari Figures

Shomari Figures, 40, is the incumbent representative for Alabama's 2nd Congressional District and one of the most prominent rising Democrats in the state. He comes from a well-known civil-rights and political family: his father filed the landmark lawsuit that bankrupted the Ku Klux

Klan, and later served in the Alabama Senate until his passing. His mother succeeded him and continues to hold the seat today, giving Figures deep roots in both legal advocacy and state-level policymaking. First elected under the new court-ordered map that reshaped AL-02 into a majority-Black district, Figures now represents a constituency that aligns strongly with Democratic priorities and demographics.

Platform Priorities

- **Civil rights & justice reform:** Continues his family's legacy advocating for equal protection, voting rights, and community safety.
- **Economic development:** Focus on job creation, small-business support, and federal investment in Montgomery and the Black Belt.
- **Healthcare access:** Supports lowering costs and protecting coverage, especially in rural counties where hospital closures hit hardest.
- **Education:** Pushes for stronger public-school investment and college/job-training opportunities.
- **Good governance & public integrity:** Emphasizes transparency and ethical leadership.

Voter & Donor Support

- Figures benefits from a built-in majority-Democratic district, strong support among Black voters, Montgomery urban voters, and younger progressives. His family's name carries influence in civil-rights, church, community activism, and legal circles. Donor support is expected to remain steady, with national Democratic groups likely to protect the seat.

Why He Might Win

- Incumbency advantage and strong district alignment.
- Deep family legacy in justice advocacy and Democratic politics.
- Represents a newly drawn district designed to empower minority voters.
- National midterm trends in 2026 could disadvantage Republicans down-ballot.

Why He Might Lose

- Realistically, he's unlikely to face a serious threat.
- Only vulnerabilities would come from intra-party disputes, low-turnout anomalies, or unexpected scandals; none currently present.

Key Election Variables

- Turnout in Montgomery and the Black Belt.
- Whether Republicans invest resources despite long odds.
- Strength of Figures's community presence and constituent services (currently strong).

Chances of Winning the General Election

Very High: one of the safest Democratic seats in Alabama.

District 3 - Lee McInnis

Lee McInnis, an older Alabama native and Auburn University graduate, is a U.S. Army veteran with an extensive background in defense intelligence. After completing a master's degree in Communications and International Relations at Auburn, he worked in Washington in military intelligence and later deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as a civilian analyst. His service earned him multiple honors, including two NATO medals, the Joint Staff Civil Commendation Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Medal, and the Defense Intelligence Agency Director's Intelligence Award. McInnis has no prior political experience but has taught government at a local college.

Platform Priorities

- **Healthcare:** Repeal sections of the Trump-era budget he argues cut $1 trillion from federal health-care support.
- **Education:** Expand access and funding for public schools and higher education.
- **Middle-class stability:** Advocates for policies that strengthen wages, affordability, and economic opportunity.

Voter & Donor Support

Likely to draw interest from veterans, Auburn-area moderates, and Democratic voters seeking a national-security–experienced candidate. Donor support is expected to be modest given the district's strong Republican tilt.

Why He Might Win

- Uncontested Democratic primary.
- Strong national-security credentials and academic background.
- Appeals to voters who value military and intelligence experience.

Why He Might Lose

- AL-03 is a solid Republican district.
- Limited name recognition and no prior elected service.
- Fundraising obstacles typical for Democrats in deep-red regions.

Key Election Variables

- Turnout in Auburn and surrounding counties.
- Ability to raise funds and connect with younger voters.
- Strength of incumbent Mike Rogers- currently strong last ran unopposed & 10+ years in Congress

Chances of Winning the General Election: Low- district is safely Republican despite a credible résumé.

District 4 - Amanda Pusczek & Shane Weaver

Amanda Pusczek, 35, is a nurse and progressive Democrat focused on strengthening public institutions and expanding opportunities for working families. A political newcomer, she centers her campaign on improving conditions for federal workers, supporting small businesses, and building a fair and humane immigration system. She also emphasizes the need for fully funded public schools and modernized learning environments.

Platform Priorities

Federal workers & small businesses: Policies that improve workplace protections and encourage small-business growth.

Immigration: A fair, humane, opportunity-focused system reflecting America's immigrant heritage.

Education: Fully funded public schools and support for innovative, equitable education models.

Voter & Donor Support

Appeal strongest among progressive Democrats, younger voters, and healthcare workers. Donor support is expected to be limited in this heavily Republican district.

Why She Might Win

- Clear, values-driven progressive agenda.
- Authentic working-class background as a nurse.

Why She Might Lose
AL-04 is one of the most Republican districts in the state.
Very limited name recognition and fundraising power.
Progressive platform may struggle with conservative rural voters.

Key Election Variables
Turnout among progressive and younger Democrats.
Ability to run a shoestring grassroots campaign.
Strength of the Republican incumbent — 28 years in office, deeply entrenched.

District 4 – Shane Weaver

Shane Weaver, 52, is a lifelong Alabamian from a family of coal miners and farmers, bringing a deeply working-class perspective to the race. Raised in Nauvoo and a graduate of Carbon Hill High School, Weaver experienced firsthand the challenges of low-wage jobs before putting

himself through the University of Alabama, where he earned a degree in Management Information Systems. He has since worked as a project manager across multiple industries. Weaver frames his life experience with poverty, long hours, and job insecurity as the foundation of his political philosophy: government should serve working people, not corporations and the wealthy.

Platform Priorities

- **Worker rights**: Fair wages, stronger unions, and shifting economic power away from corporations.
- **Child safety**: Safer schools, better protections, and ensuring children have consistent access to food and support.
- **Financial security**: Policies to address rising prices, housing costs, and basic economic instability for working families.

Voter & Donor Support

- Likely to appeal to working-class Democrats, union households, and voters drawn to economic-populist messaging. Donor support expected to be modest due to district partisanship.

Why He Might Win

- Authentic working-class story with lived experience.
- Populist workers-first platform could resonate with some Democratic voters.

Why He Might Lose

- District is overwhelmingly Republican and historically noncompetitive.
- Low name recognition and limited financial resources.
- Economic-populist message faces an uphill climb against entrenched conservative voting patterns.

Key Election Variables

- Ability to mobilize economically stressed voters.
- Grassroots enthusiasm vs. limited funding.
- Republican incumbent's dominance — 28 years in office, deeply secure.

District 5 – Jeremy Devito, Candice Devieilh, Greg Howard, Andrew Sneed

Alabama's 5th Congressional District, centered on the rapidly growing city of Huntsville, has attracted an unusually crowded Democratic primary field for 2026, with four declared candidates: Jeremy Devito, Candice Duvieilh, Greg Howard Jr., and Andrew Sneed. While the district remains a Republican stronghold, demographic shifts and first-term GOP incumbent

Dale Strong's relatively low profile have prompted Democrats to test the waters, hoping that national midterm trends and Huntsville's urban growth might create a narrow opening.

- **Jeremy Devito**, a mid-30s Army veteran and local activist, is running as an unapologetic progressive. He emphasizes democracy protection, civil rights, and climate action, and has been outspoken in his criticism of Trump-aligned politics. His platform energizes left-wing voters but his aggressive rhetoric, including a viral anti-ICE rant, may alienate moderates in a conservative-leaning district.
- **Candice Duvieilh**, a public policy expert and former educator, brings a technocratic, issue-focused approach. With degrees in education and nonprofit management, she emphasizes school funding, healthcare access, and federal accountability. Duvieilh has earned praise for her credibility and professionalism, but her campaign remains low-profile and underfunded, limiting reach beyond policy circles.
- **Greg Howard Jr.**, a Huntsville-based author and LGBTQ media entrepreneur, brings a bold, progressive vision. A former drag performer and podcast host, Howard's platform includes LGBTQ rights, marijuana legalization, police reform, and abolishing ICE. He is a strong communicator with appeal to younger and activist voters, but lacks political experience or major fundraising capacity.
- **Andrew Sneed**, a 45-year-old small business owner and master plumber, is the early frontrunner. A Huntsville native who built his company from scratch, Sneed presents as a center-left, electable alternative. His messaging centers on protecting Social Security, government reform, and job security in the face of automation. With over $230K raised, far more than his rivals, and a focus on pragmatic solutions, Sneed is seen as the Democrat best positioned to compete in a general election.

Primary Outlook:
Sneed leads in fundraising and viability, but Devito and Howard may split progressive votes, while Duvieilh appeals to moderates seeking experience. The field reflects a growing ambition among Democrats to field credible candidates even in red districts, and to build name recognition for the long haul.

Flip Potential:
Realistically, AL-05 remains a steep climb. The GOP has held the seat for decades, and Dale Strong won with over 65% in 2022. However, Huntsville's rapid growth, a shifting workforce, and potential Republican midterm fatigue may allow Democrats to tighten the margin. If any seat outside AL-02 is flippable, this is it, but it would take near-perfect conditions and a strong nominee to pull it off.

District 6 - Keith Pilkington

Pilkington, a middle-aged Army veteran and registered nurse, is the only declared Democratic candidate in Alabama's 6th Congressional District for 2026. He has framed his campaign around economic fairness, declaring *"war on high costs"*and calling for a future *"we all can afford."* Beyond that messaging, however, little public information exists. There is no official campaign website, public policy platform, or visible organizing presence.

Platform Priorities

- **Cost of living:** Reduce financial strain on working families and improve economic access.
- **Veterans & healthcare:** Background suggests likely concern for veterans' issues and medical care, though specifics are unknown.
- **General economic reform:** Broad messaging about affordability and economic fairness.

Voter & Donor Support

Minimal public footprint; no evidence of donor network, endorsements, or active grassroots support. Unclear whether the campaign is ongoing or dormant.

Why He Might Win

- Military and healthcare background could appeal to select voters if effectively communicated.
- Uncontested in the Democratic primary as of now.

Why He Will Likely Lose

- No online presence, press coverage, or concrete campaign activity.
- Lacks clear messaging, infrastructure, or visibility.
- District 6 is a deep Republican stronghold.

District 7- Terri Sewell

Terri Sewell, 60, is a multi-term Democratic incumbent and the clear favorite to retain her seat in Alabama's 7th Congressional District. A Selma native and proud African American leader, Sewell has long represented the state's only majority-Black district. She boasts deep personal and historical ties to the area: her mother was a librarian, her father a beloved local coach, and she was the first Black valedictorian of Selma High School. Sewell later graduated with honors from Princeton, earned a master's at Oxford, and completed her law degree at Harvard. She began her legal career in New York before returning to Alabama, becoming the first Black woman partner at a Birmingham law firm.

Platform Priorities

- **Job creation & economic development:** Focused on workforce expansion and support for small businesses.
- **Healthcare**: Supports expanding access and affordability, particularly in underserved areas.
- **Veterans**: Advocates for stronger VA support and transitional services.
- **Education**: Invests in public school funding and college access.
- **Infrastructure & preservation:** Prioritizes rebuilding roads and broadband while defending civil rights landmarks and history in the district.

Voter & Donor Support
Sewell has longstanding, deep support from Black voters, community leaders, and national Democratic donors. She is consistently one of Alabama's strongest fundraisers and has national visibility through her work on voting rights and historic preservation.

Why She Might Win

- Highly popular and well-established.
- Represents a safe Democratic stronghold.
- Deep roots and unmatched resume in the district.

Why She Might Lose

- No realistic path to defeat based on current electoral dynamics.

Key Election Variables

- Turnout in the Black Belt and urban centers like Birmingham and Tuscaloosa.
- No serious Democratic primary challengers or Republican threats expected.

Overall, Alabama is poised for significant turnover in its congressional delegation, though none of the seats are currently expected to flip from red to blue. Still, if Trump's unpopularity drags on down-ballot Republicans, there's a narrow path forward for a few of the more credible Democratic challengers, especially in rapidly shifting districts like AL-05.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go to for candidates & races at all level: https://ballotpedia.org/Alabama_elections,_2026
- Dakarai Larriett Arrest Footage- https://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/2024/10/30/bodycam-video-sober-man-gets-arrested-for-alleged-drunken-driving/75946312007/
- Kyle Sweetsner- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3QVmx5vdbM
- Andrew Sneed Interview- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNRmBtT5LZw
- Terri Sewell Interview- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XyvK7yXlds
- Lee McInnis TownHall- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOZlOyXKfuo

Alaska

Nate Iglehart | 11/29/2025

- **Announced Alaska Democrat Senate Candidates: Ann Diener and Mary Peltola**
- **Announced Alaska Dem. House Candidates: Matt Schultz, and (potentially) Mary Peltola.**

Announced Alaska House Candidates

There are two seats up for grabs this coming election season in Alaska: the first is Alaska's single, at-large House of Representatives seat, and the second is the Senate seat of Republican Dan Sullivan. The current delegation consists of Republican Representative Nick Begich III, Republican Senator Dan Sullivan, and Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski.

Alaska has long been a Republican stronghold at the federal level, and while that still remains the case, the grip that the Republican party has on the state has begun to wane over the past few election cycles. In 2000, Democrats only received 27.7% of the vote, but that number has risen to 43% and 41% in the 2020 and 2024 elections respectively. Anchorage's legislature and mayor have both slowly shifted to the center, and with affordability being one of the key issues this election season, Democrats may have a rare opportunity to gain some ground. The potential expiration of ACA subsidies at the end of this year is also a main sticking point, and some polls suggest that Senator Dan Sullivan's seat may be less secure than previously thought.

Alaska is an exceedingly rural state outside of Anchorage, and takes the title of least densely populated state. However, its population of roughly 733,391 people with a median age of 35.6 years makes it one of the youngest states in the nation. This dichotomy of rural life and a young population will be a test of the Democratic platform, which has often focused more on the latter than the former. It will also make the issues of affordability more prevalent, while the ACA subsidy issue may carry less weight. The primary will be held on August 18th, with the general election following on November 3.

Announced Senate Candidates

Anna Diener

Ann Diener, 52, seems to be the main candidate for Democrats in Alaska. She is a journalist, having worked for the newspaper sales executive at the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, and only arrived in Alaska in 2021. Without experience in governance, she relies on her background in media and her time working with Les Gara's campaign for Governor in 2022, which ultimately lost. Diener's platform prioritizes workers' rights, infrastructure, housing, natural gas expansion, and foreign policy. While Alaska's Senate races rarely draw many eyes, Democrats may see this seat as one with potential to flip, as polls show that Sen. Dan Sullivan is not particularly popular. Diener may not have name recognition or an extensive resume in government, but she may have just enough relatability, bipartisan policies, and political tailwind to take the general election as the sole Democratic candidate at the moment.

Platform Priorities

- **Infrastructure**: Building adequate roads, with a focus on improving the Dalton Highway and a full extension of the Alaska Railroad to Alberta, Canada.
- **Housing**: Focus on building and refurbishing housing, making use of the new proposed infrastructure projects.
- **Agriculture and Tourism**: Expanding the Alaska Grown program, which establishes farms and agriculture across the state. Also promoting tourism to the state.
- **Energy**: Expanding the use of LNG (natural gas) along with its pipelines and other sustainable mining operations. The focus here is on lowering energy costs for Alaska's citizens, as well as an "all-in" approach on energy that seeks to make LNG, clean coal, and other mining pursuits as sustainable and affordable as possible.

Voter & Donor Support

- No data yet on available donor support, nor on Diener's voter appeal in comparison to Sullivan.

Why She Might Win

- Sullivan isn't a very popular opponent
- Trump's endorsement of SUllivan could backfire if Trump's popularity continues to fall
- New figures in politics often capitalize in chaotic times

- Energy policy that caters to Alaska's strengths will be perceived as common sense

Why She Might Lose

- Alaska is still decently Republican-leaning, and while Sullivan isn't particularly popular, incumbency carries with it some advantages in voters' minds.
- Lack of true government experience could make Diener seem unqualified.
- Media presence is minimal, with mainly a campaign website, Facebook, and a handful of other social media accounts. Also has not done an interview yet.

Key Election Variables

- Sullivan's sliding popularity and the nationwide perception of Republicans
- Energy and housing costs
- Extent to which dissuaded voters vote for a Democrat instead of Green or independent party candidates.

General Election Odds: Medium-low due to district partisanship, but opponent is not popular.

Primary Odds: Currently uncontested

Mary Peltola

Mary Peltola, 52, would be the other Democratic candidate for the seat, but she has yet to file to run as she navigates a lawsuit involving the death of her husband. She also may yet turn her eyes to the race for Alaska's House of Representatives seat. Pelotla was the Alaskan Representative in the House from 2022 to 2025, after defeating Republican former Governor Sarah Palin and Republican Alaska Policy Forum board member Nick Begich III. Her win was one of many firsts, including first Alaska Native member of Congress, first woman to represent Alaska in the House of Representatives, and the first Democrat to serve as Alaska's representative in the House since Nick Begich Sr. in 1972. If she were to run again, it's likely that her platform would be similar to the one that she won her 2022 election with: infrastructure improvements, advocacy for Alaskan fisheries, and cooperation with the Alaska Native Communities. But without any indication that she will file for a run for the seat, it is unclear how much longer she can wait to decide if she runs for the Senate seat or for the House seat.

Platform Priorities

- Fishery Advocacy: She worked to ban predatory foreign trawlers to protect salmon and worked to revise the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
- Infrastructure Improvements: Her first term was marked by a $2 billion boon she helped secure from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act for Alaskan projects
- Aid to Native Communities: She addressed long-standing promises to Alaska Native communities, and sponsored the Native American Millennium Challenge Demonstration Act to assist remote communities with economic development.

Voter & Donor Support

- Voters and donors who are embedded in Alaska's Democratic campaigns would know her name and know her ability to get things done.
- Her bipartisan streak may gain some independent votes, but her 2024 loss showed that Republicans and Independents disillusioned by Trump and MAGA would rather vote for a third party, and could under Alaska's Ranked Choice Voting system.

Why She Might Win

- Name recognition and a history of service for Alaska already.
- A growing demographic shift towards the center may lend her additional support.
- Dan Sullivan is not particularly popular.
- Bipartisan stances could be a welcome sight in an election that will be extremely divisive.

Why She Might Lose

- Her refusal to start her campaign so far is costing her valuable money and time
- Voters already showed that they preferred Dan Sullivan over her in 2024.
- Alaska still remains a relatively red state.

Key Election Variables

- How popular Dan Sullivan is approaching election day.
- How late Peltola starts her campaign.
- Voter fatigue for Trump-style politics and Trump-endorsed politicians.
- The seriousness of the cost-of-living crisis, and who is blamed for it.

General Election Odds: Medium-low due to district partisanship, but opponent is not popular.

Primary Odds: High if she did run, but the later she declares, the lower her odds get.

Announced Alaska House Candidates

Matt Schultz

Matt Schultz, 53, is a progressive pastor with a decently strong online following, and he is taking his first stab at governance with this race to represent Alaska's at-large district. As the pastor of Anchorage's First Presbyterian Church, he has an extensive history of support for progressive policies and ideals, having spoken at Anchorage's No Kings day rally while focusing on homelessness in Anchorage, food insecurity, and raising the minimum wage. The New York-born pastor moved to Alaska in 1997, and his work as a pastor has garnered him respect amongst Anchorage's populace. While he has often denounced Trump, he wants to run a campaign that focuses on issues rather than people, with his key policy areas being the cost-of-living, protecting health care and medicaid, protecting LGBTQ+ rights, and growing the diversity of Alaska's energy sector. With his name recognition alongside his progressive

Christian identity, he stands out as a candidate who can reach parts of both parties while also having lived in Alaska for decades now. Both of these aspects may help him gain momentum, but that same progressive Christian identity could also backfire and make many Alaskans see him as a Democrat first.

Platform Priorities

- **Healthcare**: Safeguarding access to health care and clinics, cutting travel and wait times, and making medicine more affordable are all key elements of Schultz's platform. He is also in favor of continued funding for providers like Planned Parenthood.
- **Infrastructure and Energy**: Schultz supports investment in infrastructure, including addressing issues at the Port of Alaska in Anchorage and exploring options for rail development. He also believes in a diversified energy sector in order to lower energy prices.
- **Social Justice**: His speeches at the No Kings protests go hand-in-hand with his historical support for the BLM movement and LGBTQ rights. He also has previously advocated for an ordinance banning conversion therapy for minors, and wants to fight the rise of Christian nationalism across the nation.
- **Cost-Of-Living**: On top of housing, Schultz says that one of the key reasons he began his campaign is the high cost of groceries, fuel, housing, and child care. He also opposes federal tax cuts for the wealthy and the cutting of social programs.

Voter & Donor Support

- There aren't any figures regarding his fundraising yet, but his identity could draw attention from Democratic donors and voters who may see a chance to flip Alaska blue or support a more progressive brand of Christianity. He also has a good media presence, both in interviews and in speeches he's given. Importantly, her has connections through his uncle, Tom Begich, who is running for governor as a Democrat and his other uncle, Mark Begich, is a Democratic former U.S. senator. But his lack of experience could also hinder support from all sides, and his opponent has already raised a decent war chest.

Why He Might Win

- Community service experience could go a long way in a rural state.
- Savvy media presence and his relative youth may shine, becoming an alternative to the status quo that is guided by a set of religious moral values.
- A growing demographic shift towards the center may lend him additional support.
- Dan Sullivan is not particularly popular.

Why He Might Lose

- Alaska is not a particularly religious state, so his pastor background might not carry enough weight.
- Lack of experience and proven track record could hinder voters' opinions of his potential.

- Progressive social justice stance could alienate many voters more concerned with pocketbook issues, something that rang true in the 2024 elections.
- It is unclear how good Schultz is at fundraising, and his opponent has a headstart.
- Alaska still remains a relatively red state.

Key Election Variables

- How popular Dan Sullivan is approaching election day.
- Whether or not Peltola enters the race.
- Voter fatigue for Trump-style politics and Trump-endorsed politicians
- The seriousness of the cost-of-living crisis, and who is blamed for it.

General Election Odds: Medium-low due to district partisanship, but opponent is not popular.

Primary Odds: Medium-high, his identity is intriguing and his decorum could stand well against his opponents.

Recent Interviews:

15 minutes with Matt Schultz, new Democratic candidate for U.S. House

Mary Petola

Overall, Alaska may not be the most exciting race going up to the election, but Democratic campaign planners are actively eying developments as we inch towards the election. Shifting demographics, a rising cost-of-living, and some interesting candidates could mean Alaska regains Democratic representation. While the state won't carry much weight in the electoral college, a Democratic win here would spell out the writing on the wall for the current Republican stronghold, and perhaps be a part of a larger blue wave in 2026.

Engagement Resources:

Ballotpedia - serves as an initial go to for candidates and races at all levels:

Alaska elections, 2026 - Ballotpedia

Arizona

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series Brief #3 | Ryan Dulaney | 12/30/2025

- **Announced Arizona Democrat Senate Candidates:** Ruben Gallego
- **Announced Arizona Democrat House Candidates:** Amish Shah, Marlene Galán-Woods, Brian del Vecchio, Daniel Lucio, Rick McCartney, Jonathan Treble, Eric Descheenie, Jonathan Nez, Yassamin Ansari, Blake Bracht, Brian Hualde, Chris James, Elizabeth Lee, Evan Olson, Justin Poff, JoAnna Mendoza, Jonathan Buma, Samantha Sevenson, Adelita Grijalva, Jillian Barfield, Maria Flores, Bernadette Greene Placentia, Jessie Martines, Keith Lara, Danielle Sterbinsky, Camelia Ward

There are ten federal seats up for election in Arizona in 2026. All nine of Arizona's U.S. House of Representatives seats and one of two Senate seats. Arizona's Federal congressional delegation reflects its status as a pivotal battleground state. Multiple House districts and a Senate seat are held by Democrats in a state that has historically leaned Republican.

Arizona's political landscape has changed over the past two decades. Previously a deep red state in federal races, it has become increasingly competitive, especially in densely populated areas of the state. The Democratic support in presidential elections has steadily increased. Republicans retain strength in more rural districts, while Democrats have made inroads in urban areas such as Maricopa and Pima counties, leading to newly contested House and Senate races.

The state's population of roughly 7.4 million people, has a median age of 38, and is concentrated primarily in metropolitan areas, particularly around Phoenix and Tucson. This urban-suburban core has been the centerpiece of Democratic gains, while rural communities remain more conservative. These demographics, combined with concerns over affordability,

healthcare access, immigration, and reproductive rights, are expected to shape the 2026 federal contests.

Arizona's primary election is scheduled for August 4, with the general election on November 3.

Democratic Primary Candidates (House + Senate)

U.S. Senate

Sen. Ruben Gallego is the Democratic incumbent, elected to the U.S. Senate in 2024. He previously served a decade in the U.S. House before winning the Senate seat by narrowly defeating a Republican opponent. Gallego represents a statewide Democratic presence in a closely divided state. His tenure in both the House and Senate, combined with his background as a Marine Corps veteran and Latino leader, positions him as a central figure for Arizona Democrats heading into 2026.

Status: Incumbent — expected to seek re-election.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Latino voters, veterans, urban and suburban Democrats
- Strong institutional Democratic donor support, labor unions, national party-aligned PACs

Why he might win?

- Incumbency advantage
- Proven statewide electoral coalition
- Strong name recognition

Why he might lose?

- Narrow partisan margins statewide
- Republican turnout surge in a midterm environment

Key election variables

- Maricopa County suburban margins
- Latino turnout levels
- National political climate

Chances of winning: Moderate

U.S. House — Democratic Primary Fields

AZ-01

Open or competitive seat with a crowded primary.

Amish Shah – Former state legislator and 2024 candidate, running again with a focus on issues like healthcare and affordability.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Suburban Democrats, healthcare-focused voters; some carryover donor support
- Why he might win? Prior district-wide exposure; policy clarity
- Why he might lose? Vote splitting in a crowded field
- Key election variables Primary turnout, consolidation
- Chances of winning: Moderate

Marlene Galán-Woods – Democratic candidate with local civic engagement experience.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Community activists, local Democratic groups
- Why she might win? Grassroots appeal
- Why she might lose? Lower name recognition
- Key election variables Voter familiarity
- Chances of winning: Low–Moderate

Brian del Vecchio, Daniel Lucio, Rick McCartney, Jonathan Treble – Additional Democratic candidates who have filed or announced intentions to run.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Limited, mostly small-donor or activist support
- Why they might win? Fragmented field
- Why they might lose? Limited resources and visibility
- Key election variables Field consolidation
- Chances of winning: Low

AZ-02

Eric Descheenie – Former Arizona state representative focusing on rural infrastructure and community investment.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Rural and tribal voters
- Why he might win? Legislative experience
- Why he might lose? Competition from higher-profile challenger
- Key election variables Tribal turnout
- Chances of winning: Moderate

Jonathan Nez – Former Navajo Nation president emphasizing tribal advocacy and regional economic development.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Native American voters, tribal leadership networks
- Why he might win? Strong executive leadership record

- Why he might lose? Limited appeal outside core base
- Key election variables Coalition expansion beyond tribal voters
- Chances of winning: Moderate

AZ-03

Yassamin Ansari – Democratic incumbent representing this urban district, seeking re-election with an emphasis on urban policy issues.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Urban progressives, institutional donors
- Why she might win? Incumbency in a safe Democratic district
- Why she might lose? Low probability primary upset
- Key election variables Progressive turnout
- Chances of winning: High

Sandy Cano-Bravo – Democratic primary challenger.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Grassroots activists
- Why she might win? Anti-incumbent sentiment
- Why she might lose? Incumbent strength
- Key election variables Primary turnout
- Chances of winning: Low

AZ-05

Suburban district with multiple Democratic contenders:

Blake Bracht, Brian Hualde, Chris James, Elizabeth Lee, Evan Olson, Justin Poff — A field of Democratic candidates signaling interest but without an established frontrunner.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Limited; mostly early-stage or grassroots
- Why they might win? Low-turnout dynamics, late consolidation
- Why they might lose? Lack of clear frontrunner or funding
- Key election variables Turnout, candidate withdrawal
- Chances of winning: Low–Moderate (collectively)

AZ-06

Competitive swing district:

JoAnna Mendoza – Veteran and former public service professional; emphasizes cost-of-living and economic issues.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Veterans, working-class voters

- Why she might win? Compelling biography
- Why she might lose? Swing district volatility
- Key election variables Suburban swing voters
- Chances of winning: Moderate

Johnathan Buma – Former FBI agent focusing on accountability and national security experience.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Law-and-order voters, moderates
- Why he might win? National security credentials
- Why he might lose? Crowded primary
- Key election variables Message resonance
- Chances of winning: Moderate

Samantha Severson – Academic and policy-oriented candidate

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Policy-focused voters
- Why she might win? Issue depth
- Why she might lose? Lower visibility
- Key election variables Voter awareness
- Chances of winning: Low

AZ-07

A strongly Democratic district:

Adelita Grijalva – Democratic incumbent who won a special election and is running in the regular cycle.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Progressive voters, Latino communities
- Why she might win? Safe Democratic seat, incumbency
- Why she might lose? Unlikely primary challenge
- Key election variables Turnout
- Chances of winning: High

AZ-08

West Valley district with a small Democratic field:

Jillian Barfield, Maria Flores, Bernadette Greene Placentia, Jessie Martines — Democratic candidates running in a Republican-leaning district.

- Which population groups support? Donor support? Limited Democratic base
- Why they might win? Favorable national environment
- Why they might lose? District partisanship

- Key election variables GOP turnout
- Chances of winning: Low

AZ-09

Mixed partisan suburban district:

Keith Lara, Danielle Sterbinsky, Camelia Ward — Democratic candidates focusing on healthcare, education, and housing affordability.

    - Which population groups support? Donor support? Suburban Democrats, educators, healthcare advocates
    - Why they might win? Issue alignment with suburban voters
    - Why they might lose? Fragmented primary field
    - Key election variables Suburban turnout
    - Chances of winning: Moderate

Arkansas

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | 12/5/2025

Announced Arkansas Democrat Senate Candidates: Ethan Dunbar and Hallie Shoffner

Announced Arkansas Democrat House Candidates: Terri Green, Zack Huffman, Chris Jones, Robb Ryerse, Steven O'Donnell, and James Russell

Arkansas is approaching an election season where five of its six congressional representatives are up for election. The current delegation consists of Republican Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton, and Republican House Representatives Rick Crawford, French Hill, Steve Womack, and Bruce Westerman for districts 1-4 respectively. The only one not up for election is Boozman.

For the last 15 years, Arkansas has been represented in Congress exclusively by Republicans, and that is a grip that has tightened over the last decade. In the presidential elections, the state hasn't voted for a Democrat since 1996. But there is still support for Democrats in Arkansas; after all, Bill Clinton was once the governor of the The Natural State. Places like Little Rock and a handful of eastern counties voted blue in the most recent election, and Trump's MAGA agenda may be starting to lose its appeal to rural voters after his embrace of Big Tech and tariffs that hurt American farmers.

Arkansas is a state dominated by white Americans and Christians, both of which are demographics that make up some 70% and 80% respectively of the population. But there is trouble brewing in the 3,045,637 person-strong state. Arkansas ranked 48th in a nationwide assessment of health care access, affordability, equity and outcomes, and while its population is still growing, the rate of its growth has slowed to around 1% as of 2022. Now, the economic

outlook of the state has been rapidly improving over the past few years, and its ranking on this front has jumped between 5 and 13 places depending on which index is used. Agriculture dominates the economy, creating around $16 billion (or 8.5% of the state's GDP) annually. The question now is how much longer this growth can continue, and how much goodwill this growth buys for the Republicans in power. The primary elections will take place on March 3, 2026, and in races where no candidate receives over 50%, runoff elections will take place on March 31, 2026.

Announced Senate Candidates

Ethan Dunbar, 61, is the current Lewisville mayor and a retired Command Sergeant Major, the highest enlisted rank in the Army. Raised in the small rural town of Lewisville, he served in the military for 33 years before being elected in 2018 and re-elected in 2022 as the mayor of his hometown. His focuses as mayor were on infrastructure, housing opportunities, restoring civic pride, and leading with ethical Christian faith. Ethics and civility both are major themes of his Senate campaign, and in fact, he earned his PhD in Interdisciplinary Leadership from the University of Central Arkansas with a dissertation on the ethical leadership of elected officials. He is also very involved in community service organisations, such as the Democratic Party of Lafayette County, the Lafayette County Leadership Council, and the Lions Club International. With his military and religious background, and a history of public service focused on community, it is likely that his story will play well to voters, but his opponent is well-liked amongst the Republican party and especially the MAGA voter base.

Platform Priorities

- Respect, Civility, and Ethics: Holding leaders accountable and returning the political process to one focused on respect and cooperation
- Jobs and Rural Growth: Protecting Arkansas' lithium and advanced manufacturing sectors, as well as providing support for small farms.
- Education and Healthcare: Protecting rural hospitals, preventing healthcare costs from rising, and growing support for schools and skilled trades.

Voter & Donor Support

No official donor support data is yet available, but he is a well connected Democrat in Arkansas. This will help in the primary, but Arkansas is a strong red state, and while he has the background that many Arkansas voters will like (retired soldier, religious, and an Arkansas native), his opponent is popular and checks many of the same boxes.

Why He Might Win

- His heavy emphasis on religion and Christianity may play well in a core state of the Bible Belt.
- As Trump's popularity continues to decline, voters might be turned off by Tom Cotton and his embrace of MAGA issues such as CRT in schools.

- Ethics is an increasingly important value when it comes to leaders, and as corruption scandals and disrespectful politics expands in government, Dunbar's focus on ethics may be a welcome stance for Arkansas voters.

Why He Might Lose

- Arkansas is a Republican stronghold, and while he has qualities that many might find admirable, there is still a team mentality in Arkansas politics (vote red, no matter who).
- His platform is heavy on rhetoric but light on more explicit policy moves

Key Election Variables

- How much a religious electorate wants a religious Senator
- With ACA subsidies expiring soon, healthcare might become a massive boon for candidates like Dunbar who are running lowering healthcare costs.

General Election Odds: Low

Primary Odds: Medium

Hallie Shoffner, 38, is a fellow Arkansas native who is focusing heavily on farmers and supporting local farms across the state. As a 6th generation farmer, she ran her family's farm until it was forced to shut down in February due to high input costs and inadequate federal assistance. She is also the founder and CEO of Delta Harvest, which builds local food infrastructure and supports farmers with marketing and producing specialty goods like rice. Now she is turning her eyes towards Washington, wanting to fight the rigged system that she sees Republican incumbent Tom Cotton having bolstered over his 10-year tenure. With a focus on the trials and tribulations of rural farmers in Arkansas, and a promise to restore medicaid in a state suffering a crumbling healthcare system, she is looking to capitalize on the populism that seems to be spreading across American politics.

Platform Priorities

- Agricultural Support: Citing Cotton's nay votes against the 2018 Farm Bill, she says that she will push for more federal support for farmers and try to lower costs across the board.
- Restoring Medicaid: Restoring Medicaid and saving social security are both major focuses of Shoffner, citing them often as an issue that hits rural citizens more than rich, urban citizens.
- Affordability: Between healthcare, food costs, and housing, Shoffner is focusing on lowering costs for Arkansas voters.
- Lowering the deficit: Once a constant Republican talking point, Shoffner has blasted Cotton's "blowing up of the deficit" while normal people still suffer.

Voter & Donor Support

With her history of helping farmers, a massive Arkansas industry that has been feeling pain of late, it is likely that this will help her garner support across the state. She also has raised $663,452 as of September 30, a relatively small amount likely buoyed by individual donations.

Why She Might Win

- Despite having a small platform, it is focused on an industry that Arkansas prides and that she has actively worked to support. Recent elections like Mamdani's NY win show that experience only matters so much, and having popular policies and great interpersonal skills matter a lot more.
    - This also has likely led to far more exposure to far more people in Arkansas, which could lead to a huge bump in support.
- Populism is in vogue, and her background as a farmer pushing back against Cotton's establishment stance may win over people disillusioned with how things are currently going.

Why She Might Lose

- Her Clinton-like background as a Democratic farmer from Arkansas is a bit risky, as Clinton's popularity in the state is a bit of a mixed bag.
- Lack of experience still will matter to some, and her experience is far more concentrated on farms than in Senates.
- Her farm-focused platform may run into a hitch with Trump's recent $12 billion aid package for American farmers, meaning voters may be more willing to vote for the status quo than they were a few months ago.
- Her platform has some explicit policy stances, but it still lacks a diversity that is important for attracting a broad coalition of voters.

Key Election Variables

- How much hurt farmers are feeling as November approaches.
- Whether or not ACA subsidies expire and how much healthcare in Arkansas deteriorates.

General Election Odds: Low

Primary Odds: Medium to High

Recent Interviews:
Hallie Shoffner talks farmers and challenging Sen. Tom Cotton | THV11+ Interview

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Announced House Candidates

District 1 - Terri Green

Terri Green, a retired pathologist in her 60s, has thrown her hat into the ring against incumbent Rick Crawford. With a progressive platform based on lifting up the poor and middle class, inclusion and tolerance for all, and fighting authoritarianism and facism, she is angling to be a minor test case for the progressive wing of Democrats. Having studied history and law at Baylor before going to medical school, her intelligence and work ethic can't be questioned. She specialized in pathology before becoming a clinical laboratory director. Now, she wants to give voters in Arkansas a real choice between the status quo of Crawford and a new future under Green.

Platform Priorities

- Economic equality: She is leaning into the cost-of-living crisis as one that has only gotten worse under the Republican leadership of Arkansas, and wants to bring up the poor and middle classes.
- Human Rights: Green has seen the treatment of immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community by this administration as morally abhorrent, and she aims to return Arkansas's 1st district seat to one filled with someone who protects human rights.
- Corruption and Oligarchy: She sees the values of transparency, equity, and inclusion and tolerance for all pillars of Democracy, and in taking no PAC money, Green wants to lead the charge against the tightening grip of politics that oligarchs and fascists have.

Voter & Donor Support

A relatively unknown name, and no PAC support both mean she is starting her campaign heavily on the back foot.

Why She Might Win

- She is a political outsider in Arkansas and the only competition to Crawford, meaning that anyone who has lost interest in Crawford will either not vote or turn to Green.
- Her policy policies will resonate with independents who see an increasingly authoritarian and corrupt administration in Washington.
- The potential size of the coming blue wave in 2026 could very well buoy her to a victory, as long as a few other dominos fall in her favor.

Why She Might Lose

- Practically no media presence yet, with a campaign page with grammatical errors show a lack of attention to detail that many voters are likely to notice.
- No government focus, and her medical background is not conducive for government work or endearing herself to rural Arkansas voters.
- Her opponent, Rick Crawford, is incredibly popular since his election in 2010 and even ran unopposed in 2020. This district is also the most red in the state, further cutting her chances of winning

- Lack of clear policy stances besides very general statements on affordability and morals in politics.

Key Election Variables

- How disillusioned voters could become with Crawford and Republicans.

General Election Odds: Extremely low

Primary Odds: Uncontested

District 2 - Zack Huffman and Chris Jones

Zack Huffman, 34, is a former elementary math teacher and a current Director of Development for Teach for America since 2018 who is coming from the Democratic stronghold city of Little Rock. Having studied public policy and leadership at the Clinton School of Public Service and the University of Mississippi, his focus is heavily on the little guy. Arkansas' 2nd District is the least Republican in the state, and while it contains the capital of Little Rock, his background is one that comes from rural living and the challenges that come with that hard lifestyle. Much of his platform is focused on the main issues of the time: affordability, healthcare, and housing. But his opponent is one who is the definition of the status quo, and as time goes on, it seems increasingly possible that this district will flip blue.

Platform Priorities

- Education: As a teacher, his focus on equipping Arkansas schools and teachers with the best support to raise the next generation is a primary focus of his.
- Housing: Huffman believes that every person in Arkansas deserves a home and that everyone should have at least a pathway to homeownership.
- Food: His experience in elementary schools exposed him to the extent of child hunger in Arkansas, where some estimates say 1 in 4 children go to sleep hungry. He believes that hunger can be ended in Arkansas in a way that doesn't break the budget.
- Healthcare: Rural hospitals and communities remain a primary political issue in Arkansas, and his emphasis on the "Grannies and Papaws" of those communities is grounded in ensuring that zip code doesn't determine health outcomes.

Voter & Donor Support

As of September 30, Huffman has raised $6,301, a very meager sum. However, he will likely find a lot of support in Little Rock and the surrounding towns, despite the county still leaning red for the past few election cycles.

Why He Might Win

- In the least Republican Arkansas county, the best chance the state has in electing a Democrat lies here, and a potential blue wave in 2026 could push him past the post.

- His opponent, French Hill, has been hit with some controversy after misleading campaign ads.

Why He Might Lose

- Education isn't a hot-button issue, so his background as a teacher may not carry him super far.
- His policy areas are relevant to Arkansas, but the depth of his policy plan leaves a lot to be desired.
- French Hill, while increasingly unpopular, is still a Republican incumbent in a safe Republican state who is now running for his 7th straight election win.

Key Election Variables

- His success relies heavily on riding a blue wave across Arkansas, and if Hill continues to slowly lose support.
- If education becomes a primary issue, then he will be in a prime position to capitalize. If not, his background will only do so much to bolster his electoral position.

General Election Odds: Low to medium

Primary Odds: Low to medium

Chris Jones, 45, is a pastor and scientist who ran a bold but unsuccessful campaign for governor in 2022 against Sarah Huckabee Sanders. He garnered a respectable 35% of the vote, but since then has co-chaired the national Dirt Road Democrats political action committee and continued his work as a banker. His message is one that has four main elements: economic equality, reinforcing citizens' power over special interests, continuing sustainable development across Arkansas, and empowering entrepreneurs. The last point is especially important to Jones, as in addition to being a banker and pastor he was the executive director of the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub, which gave support to entrepreneurs. He also holds five degrees, ranging from math and physics bachelor's degrees to an M.S. in technology and policy from MIT, and a Ph.D. in urban studies and planning from MIT. This election represents a new test for Jones, and his more narrow focus from the gubernatorial race to a House seat may give him just enough of an advantage to take the race.

Platform Priorities

- Economic Equality: He wants to foster an economy that allows people to prosper, and this is much in line with his policy of supporting entrepreneurship.
- Democracy: Jones wants to be the representative for a state that increasingly feels poorly represented, as shown by its elected officials' down votes for continuing Medicare and food system support. He also wants to ensure electoral maps are fair, and that rules are both just and followed.
- Sustainable Development: Jones wants to invest in keeping hospitals open, improving resources for teachers, and backing apprenticeships for the next generation.

- Entrepreneurship: His background is strong in allowing new business to grow, and Jones wants to continue this work in “unleashing innovation, empowering small business, and turning ideas into jobs.”

Voter & Donor Support

He has great name recognition, especially amongst Democrats, and also has a lot of wealthy connections through his network of Democratic donors and his experience as a banker. So far, he has raised $198,101, the most outside of Hill’s $2.4 million.

Why He Might Win

- Name recognition is king, and he is well connected across the state. His intelligence and education is no secret, and while his platform shies a bit away from farmers, it hits policies that help everyone
- He has experience running a race and winning a primary, and while the general election is another story, experience also is important
- Although he didn’t perform super well in the gubernatorial race, he narrowed his electorate from a strong red state to instead its least red district, giving him as good a chance as he could ask.

Why He Might Lose

- However, he still lost his gubernatorial race by a decent margin, and he is still without much government experience outside of an aid position of Sanders’ father.
- Hill is still polling decently well, and has raised far more money as of September.
- His policies are more focused on urban issues like business, which will play well in Little Rock but less well outside of the city.

Key Election Variables

- The magnitude of a potential blue wave.
- Jones’ ability to endear himself to voters outside of Little Rock.

General Election Odds: Medium

Primary Odds: High

Recent Interviews:

Chris Jones - Talk Business and Politics with Roby Brock

District 3 - Robb Ryerse

Robb Ryerse, 50, is a pastor and nonprofit leader who is no stranger to running for this district’s seat. In 2018, Ryerse challenged incumbent Steve Womack but lost in a landslide. This time around, he is eyeing a rematch and has since switched parties to the Democrats in light of

Trump's takeover of the party and affordability issues. Those affordability issues are one of the three main themes of his campaign, along with empowering a progressive vision of faith and protecting freedom in a way that includes LGBTQ+ rights, abortion, and gender affirming care. Outside of politics, he and his wife have started nonprofits that combat extremism, he's worked with Vote Common Good and co-founded with Dr. Chris Jones Vortex PAC, along with starting a church called Vintage Fellowship. His background as a pastor and his work in the nonprofit sector are likely to endear him to many in the very religious state, and his previous campaign experience will no doubt be useful in his fight to win this time around.

Platform Priorities

- Affordability: One of the key reasons he's running as a Democrat, affordability is paramount to Ryerse. He plans to build more affordable housing, invest in preventing homelessness, and treat housing as a human right on top of lowering healthcare costs and cutting taxes for low and middle income families.
- Faith and Governance: He wants to use faith to inject morality into politics through campaign finance reform, ending gerrymandering, expanding access to voting, and leading with transparency.
- Freedom on all fronts: Ryerse's vision of freedom extends past religious and gun freedom to issues like bodily autonomy and LGBTQ+ rights, and includes freedom from things like systemic racism and going broke over a medical emergency.

Voter & Donor Support

He has already raised $37,462, which is on pace to pass the $50,303 he raised over the course of his 2018 run. In terms of voter support, Arkansas' third district is the second least Republican dominated, meaning his progressive messaging may play better here.

Why He Might Win

- He has the most in depth policy website out of any on this list, which is always comforting for voters.
- He checks both demographic majority boxes as a white Christian pastor, and can still swing independents with his slightly more progressive take on most issues. As a result, he may be able to win voters from all over the political spectrum
- His focus on affordability has been shown in other states to be a genuinely salient sticking point towards incumbents, and Trump's inability to address it so far is not going unnoticed.

Why He Might Lose

- His district is still a +10 Republican district, which is a tall order even with a 2026 blue wave.
- His opponent, Steve Womack, is a very popular Republican who has lots of local connections and appearances on top of holding the longest consecutive voting streak in the House, a testament to his work ethic and reliability.

- Progressive values, even with a Christian tinge, are still generally a risk in American politics and especially in a conservative state like Arkansas.

Key Election Variables

- How much religion and affordability becomes main issues as we near November 2026.
- Ryerse's ability to fundraise and convince a generally more rural electorate of his progressive vision for the district.

General Election Odds: Medium

Primary Odds: Uncontested

District 4 - Steven O'Donnell and James Russell

Steven O'Donnell, 58, is an experienced business owner and former U.S. Navy sailor who now wants to stand up for the little guy. He's worked in feed mills, the construction industry, and manufacturing before starting his own business as a licensed general contractor in home construction and remodeling. Across these many years of work and service, he has seen how the average American is slowly losing ground to elites, and his focus is on how to make the average American's life easier. While he lacks a clear policy platform, his focus is on being a trustworthy middleman and representative of what his constituents want, not what he wants. So far, that seems to be transparency, fighting oligarchy, and protecting lower-income Americans.

Platform Priorities

- Budget Transparency: One of the few concrete promises O'Donnell makes it that he wants the U.S. House of Representatives to become the vigilant watchdog of our national interest and ensure funding decisions are scrutinized with clear receipts.
- Fighting Billionaires: Much of O'Donnell's messaging is focused on standing up for the hardworking Americans he spent much of his career around. How he plans on doing this, however, is unclear.

Voter & Donor Support

No donor support data is available yet, but it will likely be a financial uphill battle both in the primary and general elections. On the voter front, he seems to be the definition of the everyman that many voters love to root for, but it remains to be seen how much that will translate to actual votes.

Why He Might Win

- Being a political outsider comes with no baggage and some benefits like no poor track record and being able to represent himself as a true counter to the status quo.
- His military and managerial experience will both play well in Arkansas, as well as potentially making up for a lack of government experience.

Why He Might Lose

- Practically no media presence or name recognition.
- O'Donnell also has practically no concrete policy ideas other than representing hardworking Americans and fighting corruption.
- Incumbent Bruce Westerman is very popular, currently in his fifth term in office with no sign of lost support.

Key Election Variables

- Whether or not he can come up with concrete policy standpoints.
- The extent to which he can wield his everyman image to make up for his lack of experience.

General Election Odds: Low

Primary Odds: Low

James Russell, 53, is the owner of an outpatient mental health business in Little Rock since 2014 and a veteran. He describes himself as "unapologetically progressive while also being a fiscal realist," and he is no stranger to Arkansas politics. He ran for Governor in 2022, and despite losing, he still overperformed with an exceptionally high vote-per-dollar-spent ratio. He also initially was set to run for Tom Cotton's seat, but switched races in late October. He has also spent time in public service roles ranging from healthcare credentialing, to disaster preparedness, and now is setting his sights higher. His platform is

Platform Priorities

- Economic Fairness: Russell supports upping the minimum wage and supporting fair pay laws, alongside improving access to education so everyone has a higher leveled playing field. He also backs a tax on the top 0.1%, and wants to close tax loopholes and campaign finance dominance by PACs.
- Healthcare: Russell aims to expand Medicare and begin moving toward healthcare for everyone.
- Housing: He sees the housing crisis as one caused by big companies, and aims to prevent companies from buying up homes and raising rent too high. He also wants to count rent payments when people apply for a mortgage, increasing the ability of citizens to own a home.

Voter & Donor Support

No donor support data is available yet, but it will likely be a financial uphill battle both in the primary and general elections. He has lived and worked throughout the 4th District, however, which means voters know who he is and while the district is fairly Republican-leaning, incumbents are increasingly unpopular as the cost-of-living fails to fall.

Why He Might Win

- He has lived and worked throughout the 4th District, meaning he is well-connected to his constituents. He also is very involved with local organizations like Renters United, further improving his track record and relatability.
- His military background and name recognition will resonate with voters.
- His policies are concrete and generally popular, despite his progressive label.
- He has experience running campaigns and has a solid media presence.
- His experience living in both rural and urban environments may lend him the ability to communicate effectively to both worlds and understand issues at their core.

Why He Might Lose

- Incumbent Bruce Westerman is very popular, currently in his fifth term in office with no sign of lost support.
- His lack of focus on farmers could hurt his chances, but much of the farmland in Arkansas is not in this district.
- Progressive values are still generally a risk in American politics and especially in a conservative state like Arkansas.

Key Election Variables

- Westerman's ability to garner his own support while sitting on a variety of committees and subcommittees as well as being a member of multiple congressional caucuses.
- Russell's ability to gain ground after starting the race late.
- Whether or not progressive policies like taxing the top 0.1% and Medicare for all continue to be risky, given Mamdani's NYC mayoral win.

General Election Odds: Low to medium

Primary Odds: High

Recent Interviews:

Arkansas senate candidate James "Rus" Russell talks On The Record

Overall, Arkansas is likely to remain a Republican bastion. But that bastion may be poised to have its walls chipped every so slightly come 2026, with a handful of well-positioned Democratic candidates. In addition, those candidates' different messages will be interesting to watch, and seeing how far progressive candidates get versus more moderate or more explicitly religious candidates will be informative for the 2028 elections. The pendulum in Arkansas has swung decidedly in favor of Republicans over the past few cycles, but that pendulum will always have a chance of swinging back, and with 2026 having issues like affordability and transparency being extra important, this might be the time.

Engagement Resources:

Ballotpedia - serves as an initial go to for candidates and races at all levels:
United States House elections in Arkansas, 2026 (March 3 Democratic primaries) - Ballotpedia

United States Congress elections, 2026 - Ballotpedia

270ToWin has an aggregate of polls and insight into how every race is shaping up towards the 2026 Midterms:

Latest 2026 Senate Election Polls - 270toWin

Latest 2026 House Election Polls - 270toWin

California

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | **Morgan Davidson | 7/10/2026**

In California, voters approved a mid-decade redistricting plan that replaced the state's independent redistricting commission with a map expected to net Democrats as many as five additional House seats. The move by the Golden State came in response to a similar effort by Republicans in Texas, setting the stage for one of the most consequential redistricting battles in recent history. As it stands today, Democrats appear well-positioned to capitalize on the new map.

The national environment also favors Democrats. The memorandum of understanding between the U.S. & Iran has collapsed, with fighting escalating again just months before the midterm elections. Inflation remains a concern as food, gas, & housing prices continue to rise. Immigration enforcement continues to dominate headlines, including another fatal encounter involving an unarmed man in Houston this past week. The President has also faced renewed scrutiny over a series of public gaffes, most recently referring to the "Islamic Republic of Japan" while discussing foreign policy. Taken together, these factors create an environment where Democrats could perform well up & down the ballot.

That said, there are still 116 days until the midterm elections. A lot can happen between now & November. Whatever one makes of California's decision to redraw its congressional map, there is undeniable risk involved. Redistricting in the middle of a decade means shifting reliable voters out of safe districts in an effort to flip neighboring ones. If conditions remain favorable, the strategy could produce significant gains. If the political environment shifts, however, Democrats could find themselves losing seats that would otherwise have remained secure. It is a calculated gamble, but for now, one that appears to favor Democrats.

Turning to the elections themselves, California has 52 House seats up for grabs in 2026. There will be no Senate race this cycle, meaning all of the attention will be focused on the House. Of the 52 districts, 7 already know which party will control the seat, with 6 guaranteed to remain Democratic & 1 guaranteed to remain Republican. California's top-two primary system advances the two highest vote-getters to the general election regardless of party, meaning not every November race features one Democrat & one Republican.

Districts 11, 12, 14, 29, 34, & 37 are already guaranteed to remain in Democratic hands. The remaining districts will determine just how much Democrats can expand their majority. California is already one of the nation's bluest states, & with the current political climate combined with the new congressional map, Democrats appear well-positioned to make gains across the state. Below, I cover each Democratic candidate before turning to the key races that will likely determine the size of the party's congressional majority.

House

CA-01: Mike McGuire (Democrat, male, 46) will face Republican incumbent James Gallagher. Gallagher finished first in the primary with 42.1%, but McGuire was right behind him with 41.8%. This is one of Democrats' clearest pickup opportunities under the new map.

CA-02: Incumbent Jared Huffman (Democrat, male, 62) will face Republican Robin Littau. Huffman received more than half of the primary vote & should comfortably retain the district.

CA-03: Incumbent Representative Ami Bera (Democrat, male, 61) will face Republican Robb Tucker. Bera moved into the newly drawn district after previously representing CA-06 & enters the general election as the favorite.

CA-04: Incumbent Mike Thompson (Democrat, male, 75) will face fellow Democrat Eric Jones (male, 35). With two Democrats advancing, the district is guaranteed to remain in Democratic hands, though Jones is mounting a generational challenge against the longtime incumbent.

CA-05: Michael Masuda (Democrat, male) will face Republican incumbent Tom McClintock. McClintock won more than 60% of the primary vote, leaving Masuda with a difficult path in November.

CA-06: Richard Pan (Democrat, male, 60) will face incumbent Representative Kevin Kiley, who left the Republican Party & is running with no party preference. Pan is favored by the district's Democratic lean, but Kiley's incumbency & narrow first-place primary finish make this an unusual race worth following.

CA-07: Mai Vang (Democrat, female, 41) will face Democratic incumbent Doris Matsui (female, 81). Vang actually finished slightly ahead of Matsui in the primary, making this one of the state's most notable generational contests. The district will remain Democratic regardless of the winner.

CA-08: Incumbent John Garamendi (Democrat, male, 81) will face Republican Rudy Recile. Garamendi won more than half of the primary vote & remains heavily favored.

CA-09: Incumbent Josh Harder (Democrat, male, 39) will face Republican John McBride. Harder received more than 60% of the primary vote & should continue to represent the district.

CA-10: Incumbent Mark DeSaulnier (Democrat, male, 74) will face Republican Jeff Frese. DeSaulnier enters the general election with a commanding advantage.

CA-11: Scott Wiener (Democrat, male, 56) will face Connie Chan (Democrat, female, 47) in the race to replace retiring Representative Nancy Pelosi. Wiener finished first in the primary, but Chan advanced in second place, guaranteeing that San Francisco will continue to be represented by a Democrat.

CA-12: Incumbent Lateefah Simon (Democrat, female, 49) will face fellow Democrat Jamie Joyce. Simon received more than 80% of the primary vote & should have little trouble securing another term.

CA-13: Incumbent Adam Gray (Democrat, male, 48) will face Republican Kevin Lincoln. Gray enters as the favorite under the new map, though the Central Valley district is more competitive than California's urban Democratic strongholds.

CA-14: Aisha Wahab (Democrat, female, 39) will face Melissa Hernandez (Democrat, female). The open East Bay seat is guaranteed to remain Democratic, with Wahab entering November after comfortably leading the primary.

CA-15: Incumbent Kevin Mullin (Democrat, male, 56) will face Republican Charles Hoelter. Mullin won nearly two-thirds of the primary vote & should comfortably retain the seat.

CA-16: Incumbent Sam Liccardo (Democrat, male, 56) will face Republican Peter Sundin Soulé. Liccardo received more than 75% of the primary vote & is one of the safest Democrats on the ballot.

CA-17: Incumbent Ro Khanna (Democrat, male, 49) will face Republican Ritesh Tandon. Khanna remains heavily favored in the Silicon Valley district.

CA-18: Incumbent Zoe Lofgren (Democrat, female, 78) will face Republican Shane Lewis. Lofgren won a majority of the primary vote & should retain the district.

CA-19: Incumbent Jimmy Panetta (Democrat, male, 56) will face Republican Peter Coe Verbica. Panetta remains the clear favorite in the Central Coast district.

CA-20: Sandra Van Scotter (Democrat, female) will face Republican incumbent Vince Fong. Fong received more than two-thirds of the primary vote, making Van Scotter one of the Democratic Party's longest-shot candidates.

CA-21: Incumbent Jim Costa (Democrat, male, 74) will face Republican Kyle Kirkland. Costa remains favored, but the primary results & Central Valley makeup make the district worth monitoring more closely than most Democratic-held seats.

CA-22: Randy Villegas (Democrat, male, 31) will face Republican incumbent David Valadao. Valadao finished first in the primary, but Democrats collectively received a majority of the vote. Villegas represents one of the party's strongest pickup opportunities in California.

CA-23: Tessa Lynn Hodge (Democrat, female) will face Republican incumbent Jay Obernolte. The district remains strongly Republican & Obernolte enters November with a considerable advantage.

CA-24: Incumbent Salud Carbajal (Democrat, male, 61) will face Republican Bob Smith. Carbajal won a majority of the primary vote & remains favored to retain the district.

CA-25: Incumbent Raul Ruiz (Democrat, male, 53) will face Republican Joe Males. Ruiz received 60% of the primary vote & should comfortably return to Washington.

CA-26: Jacqui Irwin (Democrat, female, 64) will face Republican Sam Gallucci in the open-seat race created by Julia Brownley's retirement. Irwin led the primary by a wide margin & enters the general election as the favorite.

CA-27: Incumbent George Whitesides (Democrat, male, 52) will face Republican Jason Gibbs. Gibbs finished first by less than half a percentage point, making this one of California's most competitive Democratic defenses.

CA-28: Incumbent Judy Chu (Democrat, female, 73) will face Republican April Verlato. Chu received more than 60% of the primary vote & remains heavily favored.

CA-29: Incumbent Luz Maria Rivas (Democrat, female, 52) will face fellow Democrat Angélica María Dueñas. Rivas led the primary with 51%, & the district is guaranteed to remain Democratic.

CA-30: Incumbent Laura Friedman (Democrat, female, 59) will face Republican Scott Alan Meyers. Friedman won more than half of the primary vote despite a crowded field & should retain the seat.

CA-31: Incumbent Gil Cisneros (Democrat, male, 55) will face Republican Eric Ching. Cisneros received more than 60% of the primary vote & remains comfortably favored.

CA-32: Incumbent Brad Sherman (Democrat, male, 71) will face Republican Larry Thompson. Sherman finished first in a crowded primary & should remain favored despite Thompson's relatively strong showing.

CA-33: Incumbent Pete Aguilar (Democrat, male, 47) will face Republican Stephanie Vargas. Aguilar won a majority of the primary vote & should comfortably retain his seat.

CA-34: Incumbent Jimmy Gomez (Democrat, male, 51) will face fellow Democrat Angela Gonzales-Torres. Gomez enters as the favorite, but Gonzales-Torres' advancement gives progressive voters another opportunity to challenge the incumbent from within the party.

CA-35: Incumbent Norma Torres (Democrat, female, 61) will face Republican Mike Cargile. Torres won nearly 60% of the primary vote & remains favored.

CA-36: Incumbent Ted Lieu (Democrat, male, 57) will face Republican Houston Brignano. Lieu received more than 60% of the primary vote & should win another term.

CA-37: Incumbent Sydney Kamlager-Dove (Democrat, female, 53) will face fellow Democrat Samantha Mota. The district is guaranteed to remain in Democratic hands, with Kamlager-Dove entering as the overwhelming favorite.

CA-38: Hilda Solis (Democrat, female, 68) will face Republican Pedro Antonio Casas. The former U.S. Secretary of Labor & current Los Angeles County supervisor enters the open-seat race as the favorite.

CA-39: Incumbent Mark Takano (Democrat, male, 65) will face Republican Steve Manos. Takano received 61% of the primary vote & should retain the district.

CA-40: No Democrat advanced to the general election. Republican incumbents Ken Calvert & Young Kim will face one another in November, guaranteeing Republican control of the seat.

CA-41: Incumbent Linda Sánchez (Democrat, female, 57) will face Republican Mitch Clemmons. The two finished within 2 points of each other, but other Democratic candidates received a sizable share of the primary vote, leaving Sánchez favored in November.

CA-42: Incumbent Robert Garcia (Democrat, male, 48) will face Republican Brian Burley. Garcia received more than half of the primary vote & should comfortably retain the district.

CA-43: Incumbent Maxine Waters (Democrat, female, 87) will face Republican Cristian Morales. Waters received nearly two-thirds of the primary vote & remains heavily favored.

CA-44: Incumbent Nanette Barragán (Democrat, female, 49) will face Republican Genevieve Angel. Barragán received 77% of the primary vote & should easily win another term.

CA-45: Incumbent Derek Tran (Democrat, male, 46) will face Republican Chuong Vo. Tran received a majority of the primary vote & enters November in a much stronger position than he did when first winning the seat.

CA-46: Incumbent Lou Correa (Democrat, male, 68) will face Republican David Pan. Correa won a majority of the primary vote & remains favored.

CA-47: Incumbent Dave Min (Democrat, male, 50) will face Republican Jenny Rae Le Roux. Min led the primary comfortably & should remain favored in the Orange County district.

CA-48: Marni von Wilpert (Democrat, female) will face Republican Jim Desmond in the open race created by Darrell Issa's retirement. The new map gives Democrats a real opportunity to

flip the district, though Desmond led the primary & remains a formidable opponent. This is likely to be one of California's most closely watched House races.

CA-49: Incumbent Mike Levin (Democrat, male, 47) will face Republican Armen Kurdian. Levin received more than half of the primary vote & remains favored in the coastal district.

CA-50: Incumbent Scott Peters (Democrat, male, 68) will face Republican Steve Cohen. Peters led the primary, but Cohen approached 40%, making this a district Democrats should continue to take seriously.

CA-51: Incumbent Sara Jacobs (Democrat, female, 37) will face Republican Ricardo Cabrera. Jacobs received nearly 58% of the primary vote & remains favored.

CA-52: Incumbent Juan Vargas (Democrat, male, 65) will face Republican Jeff Belle. Vargas received a clear majority of the primary vote & should comfortably retain the district.

Democrats' Best Chance to Flip

Democrats' best opportunity to flip a California House seat appears to be CA-01, where Mike McGuire will face Republican incumbent James Gallagher. The two finished virtually tied in the primary, but the newly drawn district favors Democrats & gives McGuire a much clearer path in November. McGuire's experience in state government, political network, & strong name recognition make him the Democratic candidate most likely to turn a Republican-held seat blue.

The most important race to watch, however, may be CA-22. Democrat Randy Villegas will challenge Republican incumbent David Valadao in a Central Valley district that Democrats have targeted for years. Valadao has repeatedly survived difficult elections, including in districts that appear favorable to Democrats on paper, making him one of the strongest Republican incumbents in California. Villegas has a path through the district's Democratic lean & his focus on working-class economic issues, but he will have to reconnect with Latino & working-class voters who have recently moved toward Republicans.

CA-06 also provides one of the most unusual races in the state. Democrat Richard Pan will face incumbent Kevin Kiley, who left the Republican Party earlier in 2026 & is now running as a no-party-preference candidate. Kiley's decision allows him to distance himself from the Republican Party & the Trump administration while still benefiting from incumbency, name recognition, & support from many conservative voters. The new district favors Democrats, giving Pan a strong chance to win, but Kiley's independent label could make him harder to defeat than a traditional Republican nominee.

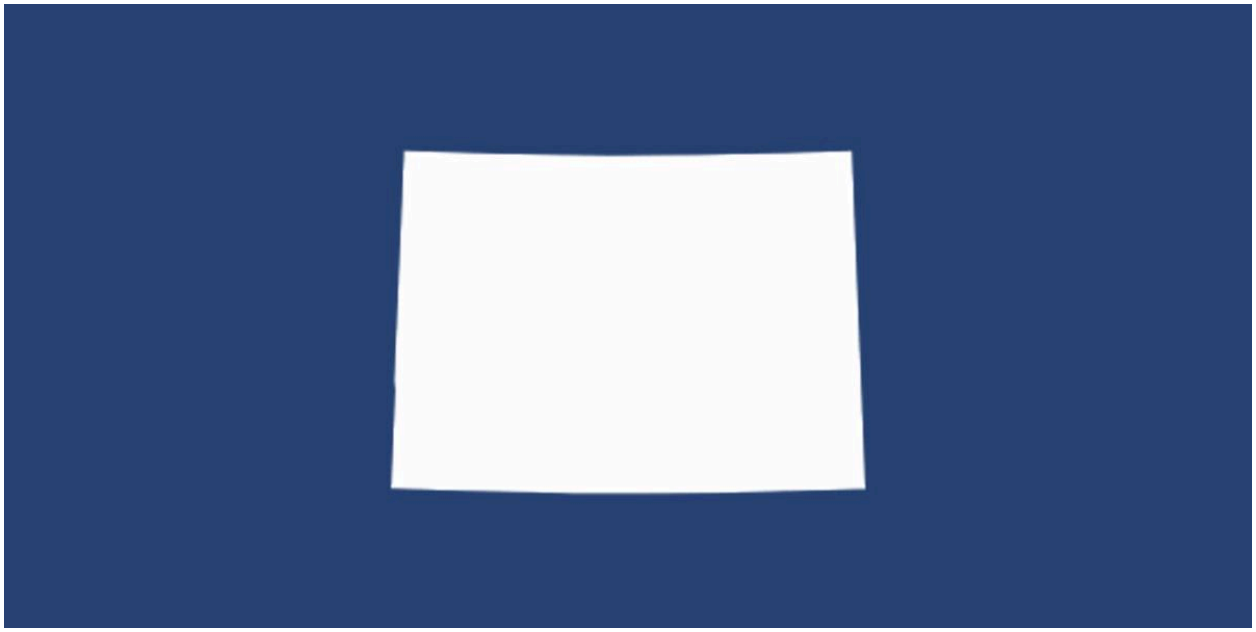
CA-48 should also receive significant attention. Democrat Marni von Wilpert is running against Republican Jim Desmond for the open seat left behind by Darrell Issa. The new district slightly favors Democrats, but Desmond's experience in San Diego County & strong primary performance make the race far from guaranteed. CA-01 may be Democrats' easiest pickup, but CA-22, CA-06, & CA-48 are more likely to provide the genuine election-night drama.

Recent Interviews

- **Mike McGuire, CA-01: North State Public Radio interview, May** 5- https://www.mynspr.org/news/2026-05-05/mike-mcguire-interview-california-1st-congressional-district-2026
- **Randy Villegas, CA-22: "Hard Work" campaign ad**- https://www.facebook.com/VillegasforCongress/videos/hard-work_digitalmp4/1276961757274578/
- **Richard Pan vs. Kevin Kiley, CA-06: ABC10 segment, June 19**- https://www.abc10.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/to-the-point/pan-kiley-trade-attacks-as-race-for-californias-6th-district-heats-up/103-00250407-e04c-4446-b7e0-2720ff28000f
- **Marni von Wilpert, CA-48: KPBS interview, May 28**- https://www.kpbs.org/podcasts/kpbs-midday-edition/californias-48th-congressional-district-race-marni-von-wilpert
- **Mai Vang vs. Doris Matsui, CA-07: candidate forum**- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa2u9duzqHM

Take Action

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/California
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- CalMatters is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Golden State. https://calmatters.org/



Colorado

Ryan Dulaney | 1/2/2026

Senate Candidates Up for Election (Democratic Primary)

- John Hickenlooper
- Julie Gonzales
- Karen Breslin
- Brashad Hasley
- Anthony Zimpfer

House Candidates Up for Election (Democratic Primary)

- Diana DeGette
- Carter Hanson
- Melat Kiros
- Santiago Palomino
- Tiffany Rodgers
- Wanda James
- Joe Neguse
- Cinque Mason
- Kyle Doster
- Alex Kelloff
- Trisha Calvarese
- Eileen Laubacher
- John Padora Jr.
- Jenna Preston

- Zurit Horowitz
- Jessica Killin
- Justice Lord
- Joe Reagan
- Jamey Smith
- Michelle Tweed
- Matt Cavanaugh
- Jason Crow
- Dylan Shelby
- Brittany Pettersen
- Shannon Bird
- Manny Rutinel
- Daniel Hassler
- Larry Johnson
- Evan Munsing
- John Szemler
- Dave Young

There are ten congressional seats up for the 2026 election in Colorado. All of the state's eight U.S. House of Representatives seats and one U.S. Senate seat. The Democratic Party currently holds four of the eight House seats and both U.S. Senate seats in a state that has trended Democratic of late.

Colorado's political balance has shifted significantly in recent years. Once a battleground, the state is increasingly blue, especially in urban and suburban centers. Democrats have increased support in recent cycles, mostly driven by demographic changes and increased turnout in population centers. Republicans continue to outperform in rural and low population density regions, but their vote share has eroded in much of the state.

The state's population of 5.8 million people is concentrated in metropolitan regions; with a substantial number of younger and college-educated voters who have increasingly backed the Democratic party. Issues such as affordability, healthcare, climate policy, and reproductive rights, are expected to shape the 2026 federal contests.

Colorado's primary election is scheduled for June 30, with the general election on November 3.

Democratic Primary Candidates (House + Senate)

U.S. Senate

Seat Up for Election: John Hickenlooper (D-incumbent)

- Basic Info: Incumbent U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper, a former governor and Denver mayor, is seeking re-election in 2026.
- Challengers:

    - Julie Gonzales – Colorado state senator launching a primary challenge to Hickenlooper's seat, positioning herself as an "insurgent progressive."
    - Karen Breslin – College professor and 2022 Senate candidate.
    - Brashad Hasley – Software engineer.
    - Anthony Zimpfer – Candidate in Democratic Senate primary.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Hickenlooper: Older and moderate Democrats, business community, established fundraising networks.
- Gonzales: Younger progressives, grassroots activists, labor and progressive coalition supporters.

Why he might win?

- Strong statewide name recognition, deep fundraising base, broad appeal across moderate Democratic voters.

Why he might lose?

- Primary challenge from progressive wing, potential voter desire for generational change.

Key election variables

- Primary turnout among progressive vs. moderate Democrats; fundraising gaps.

Chances of winning: High (Hickenlooper is a popular incumbent)

U.S. House — Democratic Primary Fields

CO-1

A safely Democratic district in Denver and surrounding communities.

- Diana DeGette – Incumbent U.S. Representative.
- Carter Hanson, Wanda James, Melat Kiros, Christopher Oldfield, Santiago Palomino, Tiffany Rodgers – Challengers seeking the Democratic nomination.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Urban progressive coalition, long-time Democratic base; incumbency strength generally carries institutional support.

Why she might win?

- Long incumbency, fundraising infrastructure, established voter support.

Why she might lose?

- Primary challengers could appeal if Democratic base seeks fresh representation.

Key election variables

- Name recognition vs. appetite for change in a crowded primary.

Chances of winning: High

CO-2

A Democratic stronghold in Boulder and northern Front Range.

- Joe Neguse – Incumbent U.S. Representative.
- Cinque Mason – Primary challenger.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Progressives, younger voters, university communities; strong donor support.

Why he might win?

- Incumbency, significant fundraising advantage.

Why he might lose?

- Low likelihood unless major shift or upset.

Key election variables

- Primary turnout; challenger viability.

Chances of winning: High

CO-3

A more competitive district but with Democratic primary candidates:

- Kyle Doster, Alex Kelloff – Democratic primary candidates.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Emerging progressive and moderate supporters as field develops.

Why they might win?

- Broad appeal to emerging voters if message resonates.

Why they might lose?

- Republican incumbent advantage in general.

Key election variables

- General election competitiveness in a swing district.

Chances of winning: Moderate to Low

CO-4

A Republican-leaning district with Democratic primary candidates:

- Trisha Calvarese, Eileen Laubacher, John Padora Jr., Jenna Preston – Declared Democratic primary candidates.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Democratic minority voters and activists; limited donor networks.

Why they might win?

- Exceptional national environment favoring Democrats.

Why they might lose?

- Strong Republican incumbent environment.

Key election variables

- District partisanship, turnout patterns.

Chances of winning: Low

CO-5

Democratic primary candidates include:

- Zurit Horowitz, Jessica Killin, Justice Lord, Joe Reagan, Jamey Smith, Michelle Tweed — Democratic candidates.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Grassroots voters, suburban progressives.

Why they might win?

- If unified around key issues like affordability.

Why they might lose?

- Republican tilt of district.

Key election variables

- Candidate quality, turnout.

Chances of winning: Low

CO-6

- Jason Crow – Incumbent U.S. Representative.
- Dylan Shelby – Challenger.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Broad suburban base, moderate donors.

Why he might win?

- Incumbency, fundraising.

Why he might lose?

- Challenger has minimal traction.

Key election variables

- General election environment; GOP strategy.

Chances of winning: High

CO-7

- Brittany Pettersen – Incumbent U.S. Representative.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Suburban Democrats, women voters.

Why she might win?

- Incumbency in a Democratic-leaning district.

Why she might lose?

- Unlikely primary challenge upset.

Key election variables

- Turnout patterns in Denver metro.

Chances of winning: High

CO-8

Competitive open seat:

- Shannon Bird, Daniel Hassler, Larry Johnson, Evan Munsing, Manny Rutinel, John Szemler, Dave Young — Democratic primary candidates running to challenge incumbent GOP Rep. Gabe Evans.

Which population groups support? Donor support?

- Diverse coalition of suburban and moderate voters; fundraising profiles vary.

Why they might win?

- Targeted DCCC interest in flipping the seat.

Why they might lose?

- GOP incumbent advantage and district structure.

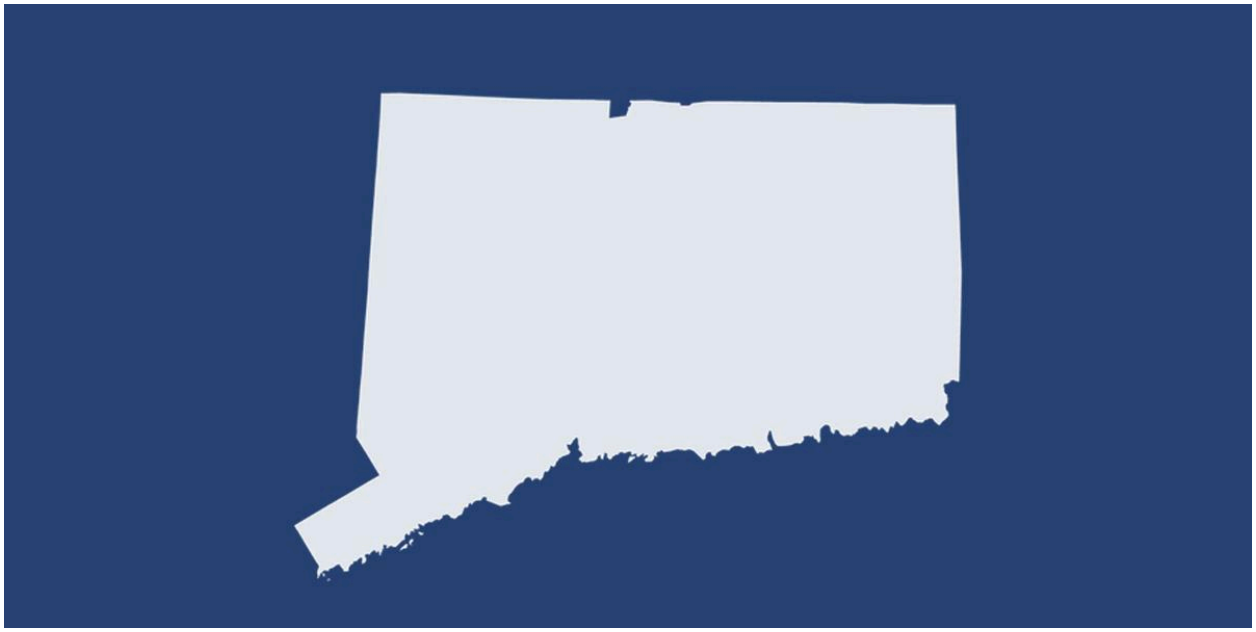
Key election variables

- Suburban turnout; candidate consolidation.

Chances of winning: Moderate

Summary

Colorado's 2026 election cycle includes eight Democratic U.S. House primaries and one Democratic U.S. Senate primary. The Senate race features a notable primary challenge to an incumbent, while House contests range from safe Democratic districts to competitive swing seats where Democrats see opportunities to expand representation. The outcomes will depend on candidate quality, turnout dynamics, and broader national political conditions.



Connecticut

Brief #5 | Morgan Davidson | 12/30/2025

Connecticut, known as the Constitution State, will feature five U.S. House races in 2026, with no U.S. Senate contests on the ballot. Both of the state's U.S. Senators, Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, are midway through their six-year terms, having last been elected in 2022 and 2024, respectively.

On the House side, Connecticut's current Democratic delegation consists of:

- District 1: John Larson
- District 2: Joe Courtney
- District 3: Rosa DeLauro
- District 4: Jim Himes
- District 5: Jahana Hayes

All five Democratic incumbents are expected to seek reelection in 2026. Connecticut remains one of the most reliably Democratic states in the country, with all seven members of its congressional delegation affiliated with the Democratic Party.

Looking district by district, each incumbent enters the cycle in a strong position. All five representatives benefit from the incumbency advantage, and none faced a truly competitive general election in 2024. The narrowest margin among them was approximately 53.4 percent, underscoring the relative safety of these seats even in less favorable electoral environments.

Heading into 2026, national conditions appear increasingly favorable for Democrats. Republicans are projected to underperform their 2024 vote share amid voter backlash to tariff-driven cost increases, broader inflationary pressures, and declining approval of the current presidential administration. Against that backdrop, Connecticut Democrats are well positioned to retain full control of the state's House delegation, with few signs of serious general-election vulnerability.

Taken together, Connecticut's five congressional districts reflect a state where Democratic strength is built through multiple, reinforcing coalitions rather than reliance on a single voter base. Urban centers such as Hartford and New Haven anchor the delegation through racially diverse, union-heavy, and progressive constituencies, while suburban and exurban districts in Fairfield County and northwestern Connecticut have shifted steadily toward Democrats amid broader trends among college-educated and professional voters. Even in the state's more rural eastern and western regions, labor influence, defense-related employment, and demographic change have eroded traditional Republican advantages. As a result, each district enters the 2026 cycle with distinct local characteristics but a shared structural tilt that continues to favor Democratic candidates statewide. The primaries will take place on August 11th of 2026, followed by the General election on November 3rd.

District 1

John Larson:

Rep. Larson is the incumbent Democrat for CT 1. The former History teacher/football coach entered politics in the 80s & has been in his current seat for the past 27 years. As a senior member of Congress, Larson serves on the Ways and Means Committee and wields significant influence in the House. Over his career, Larson has played a central role in landmark legislation on healthcare, labor rights, gun safety, voting rights, climate policy, and Social Security reform, while delivering billions in federal funding to his district. Known as a consensus builder, he remains one of Connecticut's most experienced and influential Democratic lawmakers.

Platform Priorities

- Social Security & seniors: Protecting and expanding Social Security benefits; lowering prescription drug costs through Medicare negotiation.
- Healthcare access: Defending and building on the Affordable Care Act; lowering out-of-pocket costs for working families.
- Labor & economic security: Strong support for unions, workplace protections, and middle-class wage growth.
- Gun violence prevention: Expanded background checks and federal gun safety reforms.
- Climate & clean energy: Investment in renewable energy, emissions reduction, and green manufacturing.

Voter & Donor Support

Larson's base includes union households, seniors, public-sector workers, and communities of color in Greater Hartford. He benefits from deep institutional support within the Democratic Party, strong labor backing, and a long-established donor network tied to healthcare, education, and organized labor.

Why He Might Win

- Deep incumbency advantage with decades of constituent service.
- National influence through leadership on Ways and Means and Social Security.
- Strong alignment with district demographics and policy priorities.

Why He Might Lose

- Primary fatigue or generational change pressures.
- Voter desire for new leadership, though no serious challenger has emerged.

Key Election Variables

- Whether a credible Democratic primary challenger materializes.
- Senior voter turnout.
- National Democratic enthusiasm in a midterm cycle.

Electoral Odds:

General: Very low risk
Primary: Low risk, but non-zero due to tenure length

Those challenging Larson include Luke Bronin, Ruth Fortune, & Jillian Gilchrest. At one point, there were five total challengers, with one dropping out in December, underscoring the challenge of unseating Larson.

Luke Bronin

Luke Bronin is a former two-term mayor of Hartford, serving from 2016 to 2024, where he led the city through a period of fiscal stabilization, major housing investment, and the COVID-19 pandemic. As mayor, Bronin played a central role in averting municipal bankruptcy, expanding affordable housing, launching the nationally recognized Hartford Youth Service Corps, and prioritizing public safety. A Rhodes Scholar, he previously served as a Navy intelligence officer in Afghanistan on an anti-corruption task force and held senior roles in the Obama administration's Treasury Department, including work on the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and efforts to combat terrorist financing. Earlier in his career, he served as General Counsel to former Governor Dannel Malloy, helping advance gun safety legislation, clean energy initiatives, and veteran homelessness reduction efforts.

Platform Priorities

- Cost of living relief: Lowering housing, healthcare, and energy costs for middle- and working-class families.
- Housing affordability: Federal investment in affordable housing supply and tenant protections.
- Climate action: Accelerated transition to clean energy and emissions reduction.
- Rule of law & anti-corruption: Protecting democratic institutions and accountability in government.
- Middle-class economic policy: Tax and financial reforms that limit advantages for the wealthiest households.

Voter & Donor Support

Bronin's natural base includes Hartford-area Democrats, policy-oriented voters, younger professionals, and supporters drawn to executive experience and technocratic governance. His background in federal finance and municipal management positions him well with institutional donors, national Democratic networks, and reform-oriented contributors. However, he lacks the deep labor and senior-voter ties that have long anchored the district's incumbent coalition.

Why He Might Win

- Executive leadership experience at both municipal and federal levels.
- Strong résumé on fiscal management, housing, and governance reform.
- Appeals to voters seeking generational change or a post-incumbent transition.
- Ability to frame the race around future-oriented leadership rather than seniority.

Why He Might Lose

- Challenging a deeply entrenched incumbent with decades of constituent relationships.
- Lower name recognition outside Greater Hartford.
- Potential skepticism from labor and older voters loyal to existing representation.
- Risk of the primary electorate prioritizing seniority and congressional influence.

Key Election Variables

- Whether Democratic primary voters prioritize experience and continuity versus renewal.
- Bronin's ability to consolidate progressive, reform-minded, and younger voters.
- Fundraising performance relative to the incumbent.
- Turnout levels in Hartford versus surrounding suburban towns.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Low to moderate - viable challenger, but uphill against a well-established incumbent.
- **General:** High - District 1 remains overwhelmingly Democratic regardless of the nominee.

Ruth Fortune

Ruth Fortune is an attorney, mother, and immigrant-rights advocate whose personal story anchors her candidacy for Congress. She immigrated to the United States as an undocumented child and later built a professional career in law, framing her journey as an example of upward mobility achieved through perseverance and public investment. Fortune is running on a message centered on expanding opportunity for working families, strengthening democratic institutions, and ensuring that constitutional rights are protected for all residents, regardless of background.

Platform Priorities

- Economic equity: An economy that works for working- and middle-class families, not just top earners.
- Public education: Investment in quality public schools and equitable access to educational opportunity.
- Immigration & civil rights: Protecting immigrant communities and defending constitutional freedoms.
- Democratic norms: Opposition to authoritarian governance and defense of democratic institutions.
- Social justice: Policies aimed at reducing systemic inequality and expanding opportunity.

Voter & Donor Support

Fortune's natural base includes progressive activists, immigrant communities, younger voters, and Democrats motivated by lived-experience representation. Her support network is more grassroots-oriented, with strength among small-dollar donors and advocacy-driven organizations rather than institutional or corporate donors.

Why She Might Win

- Compelling personal narrative that resonates with voters seeking descriptive representation.
- Strong alignment with progressive values in urban parts of the district.
- Ability to mobilize grassroots enthusiasm in a low-turnout primary.
- Clear contrast with long-tenured incumbents on generational and experiential grounds.

Why She Might Lose

- Limited name recognition beyond activist and progressive circles.
- Fundraising disadvantages relative to both incumbents and better-connected challengers.
- Difficulty expanding appeal to older, labor-aligned, and institutional Democratic voters.
- Structural challenge of unseating an entrenched incumbent in a safe Democratic seat.

Key Election Variables

- Progressive turnout levels in Hartford and surrounding urban communities.
- Ability to convert grassroots enthusiasm into sustained field operations.
- Whether the primary electorate is motivated by change versus continuity.
- Fundraising viability through the early and mid stages of the campaign.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Low — credible values-based challenge, but structurally disadvantaged.
- **General:** High — the district is safely Democratic regardless of nominee.

Jillian Gilchrest

Jillian Gilchrest is a four-term Connecticut State Representative, social worker, and mother who has built her political career around translating community needs into legislative outcomes. In the state legislature, she has focused on policies affecting working families, healthcare access, and reproductive rights, and currently serves as Chair of the Human Services Committee. Gilchrest's campaign emphasizes a people-first approach to governance, rooted in direct constituent engagement and a rejection of special-interest influence.

Platform Priorities

- Reproductive freedom: Protecting and expanding access to abortion and reproductive healthcare.
- Healthcare affordability: Lowering healthcare costs and expanding access to care.
- Working families: Paid family and medical leave, childcare support, and economic security.
- Human services: Strengthening safety-net programs and social services.
- Progressive governance: Centering constituent voices in policymaking over corporate interests.

Voter & Donor Support

Gilchrest's base includes progressive Democrats, women voters, healthcare and social-service professionals, and constituents familiar with her legislative work. She is well-positioned to attract support from advocacy organizations focused on reproductive rights and family policy, as well as small- to mid-level donors aligned with progressive causes. Her state-level visibility provides a stronger institutional foundation than that of first-time challengers, though it is still well short of incumbent-scale networks.

Why She Might Win

- Proven legislative record with tangible policy wins.
- Clear alignment with progressive priorities in an urban, Democratic district.
- Ability to consolidate voters seeking both experience and generational change.

- Strong credibility on healthcare and family-focused policy.

Why She Might Lose

- Competing against a long-tenured incumbent with deep district ties.
- Risk of progressive vote fragmentation among multiple challengers.
- Fundraising gap relative to the incumbent.
- Difficulty expanding name recognition beyond her state legislative base.

Key Election Variables

- Whether progressive challengers consolidate or split the anti-incumbent vote.
- Turnout among women, younger voters, and urban Democrats.
- Endorsements from major advocacy or labor organizations.
- Fundraising momentum early in the primary.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Low to moderate- stronger than a purely grassroots challenger, but still uphill.
- **General:** High- the district is safely Democratic regardless of the nominee.

District 2 – Joe Courtney

Joe Courtney has represented Connecticut's Second Congressional District since 2007 and is a senior member of the U.S. House with deep influence on defense, veterans, and workforce policy. He serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and is the Ranking Member of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces. Courtney has played a central role in securing long-term investment in submarine production and naval infrastructure, supporting thousands of defense-sector jobs in eastern Connecticut and strengthening the region's military presence. A longtime advocate for veterans, farmers, and working families, he previously served in the Connecticut General Assembly and is known for his bipartisan approach and sustained focus on constituent-driven economic and national security priorities.

Platform Priorities

- Veterans and military families, defense-sector employment.
- Labor protections and infrastructure investment.
- Healthcare access and rural economic development.

Voter & Donor Support

Courtney draws strong backing from labor unions, defense-industry workers tied to Electric Boat, veterans, and older voters across eastern Connecticut.

Why He Might Win

- Longstanding ties to working-class and defense communities.
- Consistent record on jobs and veterans' issues.

Why He Might Lose

- The district remains more politically mixed than others.
- National Republican overperformance in rural areas.

Key Election Variables

- Turnout in New London and Windham Counties.
- National security and defense spending debates.

General: High but more contested. If Republicans have a shot it may be this district but national tides should favor the Dems & the incumbent here.
Primary: High- incumbency should seal this but the challenger is of quality.

Kyle Gauck

Kyle Gauck is an Army veteran, business-minded Democrat, and father running for Congress in Connecticut's Second District. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2010 and served as a specialist with the 5th Special Forces Group, deploying to the Kuwait–Iraq border in 2013. Following his military service, Gauck built a professional background spanning aerospace defense, business, and creative industries, and is currently pursuing an MBA at the University of Connecticut. Living in eastern Connecticut with his wife and two daughters, Gauck frames his candidacy around service, integrity, and practical leadership rooted in both military experience and private-sector problem solving.

Platform Priorities

- **Healthcare access:** Protecting and expanding the ACA, Medicare, and Medicaid; lowering premiums and out-of-pocket costs; expanding telehealth and rural healthcare infrastructure.
- **Veterans' services:** Fully funding the VA, streamlining claims, expanding mental health and suicide prevention services, and increasing housing and job-training support.
- **Reproductive freedom & LGBTQ+ rights:** Federal protection for abortion access, support for gender-affirming care, and passage of the Equality Act.
- **Government accountability:** Congressional term limits and a ban on stock trading by members of Congress.
- **Rural investment:** Broadband expansion, support for rural hospitals, and economic development across eastern Connecticut.

Voter & Donor Support

Gauck's natural base includes veterans, younger voters, healthcare-focused Democrats, and reform-oriented constituents skeptical of career politicians. His campaign is positioned toward

grassroots and small-dollar donors, with limited evidence of institutional or major-donor backing at this stage. His military background may resonate across partisan lines, particularly in veteran-heavy communities within the district.

Why He Might Win

- Military service provides credibility on national security and veterans' issues.
- Clear reform message on healthcare, accountability, and term limits.
- Potential appeal to voters seeking outsider or nontraditional candidates.
- Ability to connect healthcare access to rural and working-class concerns.

Why He Might Lose

- Running against a well-established incumbent with deep district ties.
- Limited name recognition beyond early supporters.
- Fundraising and campaign infrastructure remain unproven.
- District's Democratic electorate has historically favored experience and seniority.

Key Election Variables

- Veteran and rural voter turnout in eastern Connecticut.
- Gauck's ability to translate grassroots enthusiasm into sustained fundraising.
- Whether accountability and reform messaging gains traction in a low-profile primary.
- Incumbent strength and absence of broader anti-incumbent sentiment.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Low- credible message, but significant structural disadvantages vs an incumbent.
- **General:** High the district should remain Democratic regardless of nominee.

District 3

Rosa DeLauro

Rosa DeLauro has represented Connecticut's Third Congressional District since 1991 and is one of the most senior and influential Democrats in the U.S. House. She serves as Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee and the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, giving her direct oversight of federal investments in healthcare, education, labor, and biomedical research. Throughout her career, DeLauro has built a national reputation as a leading advocate for working families, championing higher wages, paid leave, child tax credits, food safety, and affordable healthcare while consistently opposing trade agreements that undermine U.S. jobs. A longtime leader within the Democratic caucus and a former executive director of EMILY's List, a platform to elect pro-choice women to Congress, she remains a central figure in shaping progressive economic and social policy in Congress.

Platform Priorities

- Progressive economic policy and labor rights.
- Public health, food security, and education funding.
- Reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ protections.

Voter & Donor Support

Strong support from progressive voters, labor, healthcare advocates, academics, and New Haven's diverse urban electorate.

Why She Might Win

- Deeply Democratic district.
- Longstanding progressive credibility.
- Strong name recognition and fundraising base.

Why She Might Lose

- Age and tenure could invite primary challenges.

Key Election Variables

- Progressive turnout.
- Potential generational primary challenger.

Electoral Odds

General: High
Primary: High

Damjan Denoble

Damjan Denoble is a civil rights and immigration attorney, entrepreneur, and father of three running as a Democratic challenger in Connecticut's Third Congressional District. His family arrived in the United States as refugees from the former Yugoslavia, an experience he cites as foundational to his political identity and commitment to civil liberties and democratic institutions. After graduating during the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Denoble built a career spanning healthcare consulting, international policy work, and journalism, including freelance reporting for Nikkei Asia. Upon returning to the United States, he founded a law firm and the nonprofit FronteraTECH.org, where for more than a decade he has represented immigrant families and workers facing systemic abuse. Denoble frames his candidacy as a response to entrenched political power and argues that long-serving leadership has failed to meet the urgency of current economic, democratic, and environmental challenges.

Platform Priorities

- Universal healthcare: Treating healthcare as a guaranteed right, with expanded coverage and cost controls.
- Affordable housing: Large-scale public investment to address housing shortages and rising rents.
- Democratic reform: Challenging entrenched political power and promoting structural accountability.
- Civil rights & immigration: Strong protections for immigrants, workers, and due process.
- Climate & environmental protection: Aggressive action to protect regional and national environmental interests.
- Constitutional governance: Defending democratic institutions and countering authoritarian movements.

Voter & Donor Support

Denoble's natural base includes progressive activists, civil rights advocates, immigrant communities, and voters dissatisfied with long-tenured incumbency. His background in nonprofit work and legal advocacy suggests strength among small-dollar donors and issue-driven supporters, while institutional party, labor, and large-donor backing remains uncertain at this stage.

Why He Might Win

- Distinct outsider narrative in a district dominated by long-term incumbency.
- Strong ideological clarity and willingness to challenge party orthodoxy.
- Appeal to voters seeking structural reform rather than incremental change.
- Ability to frame the race around urgency, democracy, and generational transition.

Why He Might Lose

- Running in one of the safest Democratic districts in the country.
- Challenging a nationally influential incumbent with deep institutional support.
- Messaging may resonate strongly with a narrow but intense electorate rather than the broader primary base.
- Limited evidence of a scalable fundraising or field operation.

Key Election Variables

- Progressive and anti-incumbent turnout in New Haven and surrounding communities.
- Whether voters prioritize seniority and committee power over reform-oriented messaging.
- Denoble's ability to convert philosophical critique into concrete electoral organization.
- Presence or absence of additional challengers fragmenting reform-minded voters.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Low- ideologically distinct but structurally disadvantaged.
- **General:** High- District 3 is safely Democratic regardless of nominee.

Andrew Rice

Andrew Rice is a first-time Democratic candidate, molecular biologist, and member of the Democratic Socialists of America running to challenge Rep. Rosa DeLauro in Connecticut's Third Congressional District. A University of Connecticut graduate living in Milford, Rice left his job in the biotech sector to campaign full-time, arguing that his scientific work ultimately served corporate interests rather than the public good. He frames his candidacy as a generational and ideological challenge to long-serving Democratic leadership, particularly on healthcare and foreign policy.

Platform Priorities

- Medicare for All: Government-run single-payer healthcare.
- Foreign policy shift: Ending U.S. military aid to Israel amid the Gaza conflict.
- Labor reform: A 30-hour workweek.
- Housing policy: Seizing vacant homes held by private equity to expand housing supply.
- Anti-corporate politics: Reducing the influence of corporate money in Democratic policymaking.

Voter & Donor Support

Rice's support is concentrated among younger left-wing activists, DSA-aligned voters, and issue-driven progressives dissatisfied with incremental reform. He relies primarily on grassroots enthusiasm and small-dollar donations. Institutional Democratic backing and major donor support are effectively nonexistent, and even the Connecticut DSA chapter has not committed to endorsing his campaign.

Why He Might Win

- Clear ideological contrast with the incumbent on healthcare and foreign policy.
- Appeal to a small but motivated segment of progressive voters.
- Ability to force debate on issues party leadership has avoided.

Why He Might Lose

- Running against a nationally respected, deeply entrenched incumbent.
- Minimal name recognition and limited campaign infrastructure.
- Lack of endorsements from major progressive organizations.
- District electorate broadly aligned with the incumbent's record.

Key Election Variables

- Whether progressive dissatisfaction translates into measurable primary turnout.

- Rice's ability to qualify for the primary ballot.
- Media attention generated by issue-based confrontations.
- Overall Democratic primary turnout in a safe district.

Electoral Odds

- **Primary:** Very low- primarily symbolic and issue-driven.
- **General:** High- District 3 is safely Democratic.

District 4 – Jim Himes

Jim Himes has represented Connecticut's Fourth Congressional District since 2009 and is currently serving his ninth term in the U.S. House. He is the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and serves on the House Financial Services Committee, giving him a central role in national security oversight and economic policy. Raised by a single mother and shaped by years living abroad in Latin America, Himes brings an international perspective to Congress and has focused his legislative work on affordable housing, economic opportunity, and access to quality healthcare and education. Prior to Congress, he worked in finance and led nonprofit efforts to expand affordable, energy-efficient housing, experiences that continue to inform his policy approach and emphasis on pragmatic governance.

Platform Priorities

- Financial regulation and economic stability.
- Suburban cost-of-living concerns.
- National security and democratic institutions.

Voter & Donor Support

Strong backing from college-educated suburban voters, finance-sector donors, and Democratic professionals in Fairfield County.

Why He Might Win

- The district has shifted decisively Democratic.
- Strong alignment with suburban political trends.

Why He Might Lose

- No real reason. There are no primary challengers at this time & no Republican challenger.

Key Election Variables

- Suburban swing voter behavior.

General: High- only challenger is an Independent candidate at the time of writing
Primary: Uncontested

District 5

Jahana Hayes

Jahana Hayes has represented Connecticut's Fifth Congressional District since 2019 and serves on the House Committee on Education and Workforce and the House Agriculture Committee, where she is Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture. A former public school teacher, Hayes built her career around expanding equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity, and has focused her legislative work on nutrition policy, labor, veterans' issues, and gun violence prevention. First elected in 2018, she made history as the first African American woman to represent Connecticut in Congress, bringing a background in education, bipartisan lawmaking, and community advocacy to a diverse district spanning central and northwestern Connecticut.

Platform Priorities

- Education investment and teacher advocacy.
- Healthcare affordability.
- Economic opportunity in mixed urban-rural communities.

Voter & Donor Support

Hayes's base includes educators, voters of color, and urban Democratic strongholds, with growing support among younger voters.

Why She Might Win

- Strong personal narrative and educational background.
- District trends increasingly Democratic.

Why She Might Lose

- One of the more competitive district in the state.
- Requires consistent turnout in urban cores.

Key Election Variables

- Democratic turnout in Waterbury and Danbury.
- Independent voter swing.

General: High- the state should remain solidly Democratic

Primary: Likely to be unchallenged

Challengers

Hayes has two challengers in Jackson Taddeo-Waite & Winter Solomita but neither have campaign sites, interviews, or any record of donations. Unlike other incumbents in the state, Hayes is young & has not invited the quality challengers members like Larson or Rosa DeLauro who are both over 75.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go to for candidates & races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_House_of_Representatives_elections_in_Connecticut,_2026
- CT Mirror- The CT mirror is a go to resource on Connecticut Politics- https://ctmirror.org/
- Larson on re-election- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JT6oYT9sal0&themeRefresh=1
- Luke Bronin on challenging Larson- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMPq-LaemI4
- Ruth Fortune Reel- https://www.facebook.com/RuthFortuneForCongress/videos/1558069945219157/
- Jillian Gilchrest- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRxeZ2OEkOQ/
- DeLauro on the House floor speaking out against Trump- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFV-oC6pijw
- Damjan Denoble- https://www.youtube.com/shorts/F2GHTYOO_o4
- Damjan Denoble 2040 vision- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMg0yG5MSoP/

Delaware

Nate Iglehart | 1/19/2026

<u>Announced Delaware Democrat Senate Candidates:</u> Chris Coons (incumbent) and Christopher Beardsley

<u>Announced Delaware Democrat House Candidates:</u> Sarah McBride (incumbent)

The primary elections will take place on September 15, with the general election happening on November 3rd

<u>Senate</u>

Chris Coons, 63, is the incumbent Senator in this race, and he will be a tough opponent to beat. He is an experienced Congressman, serving on the Appropriations, Judiciary, Foreign Relations, Small Business & Entrepreneurship, and Ethics committees since his election to the seat in 2010. He also ranked fairly regularly among the most productive Senators in Congress, which has led him to enjoy a +20 approval rating. Before becoming a Senator, he served as New Castle County Council President and County Executive, and practiced law in Delaware. His platform is fairly progressive, highlighting gun safety, civil rights, criminal justice reform, climate change, and economic policies that are fairly popular, although Delaware has one of the oldest average ages of any U. state. Nonetheless, he is likely to win in large part due to his popularity, his massive $4,714,517 war chest, and his finger on the pulse of the most pressing issues, as shown by his leading position of the Congressional bipartisan delegation to Denmark in January. Unless there is some major scandal that hits Coons, it is highly likely that he will continue to be a Senator for Delaware.

Recent Interviews

American Conversations: Senator Chris Coons

Sen. Chris Coons: Nobody Knows Trump's Plan to Help Iran

Christopher Beardsley, 33, is a former federal worker and Fulbright scholar looking to unseat Coons with a platform focused on housing, healthcare, and accountable governance. He is looking to leverage his experience in the Peace Corps and as a Management and Program Analyst for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. With his belief that quality housing and healthcare are human rights, his support for raising the minimum wage, his defense of progressive social values, and his stance against increased military funding, his platform will likely resonate with younger voters. However, he has not raised much, if any, funding thus far, and his opponent is an experienced and popular candidate. Additionally, his lack of media interviews and general presence outside a campaign page may indicate that, so far, he hasn't mounted the extensive media campaign he would likely need to unseat Coons. The primary is still a long way out, but for the moment, Beardsley has a lot of ground to cover if he wants a shot at taking the seat.

House

Sarah McBride, 35, is the incumbent representative for Delaware's only district. She was elected in 2024 with a comfortable 16% lead and became the first openly transgender member of the U.S. Congress. She serves on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, and has focused on LGBTQIA+ rights, protecting reproductive rights, expanding access to healthcare, and addressing economic insecurity. This time around, she has no primary challengers, and unless there is a late addition to the race, she will go straight to the general election unchallenged. This means that her $2,419,367 fundraising number will be saved entirely for this election, dwarfing the currently published numbers of any declared Republican candidate so far (Donyale Hall has raised the most, with $534). As a result, it seems equally likely that she will continue to be the representative for Delaware, especially given her name recognition, her successful pushes to establish paid leave and expand Medicaid, and her progressive social values in a consistently blue stronghold.

Recent Interviews:

Congresswoman Sarah McBride in Conversation with David Axelrod

Sarah McBride on Why the Left Lost on Trans Rights | The Ezra Klein Show

Florida

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | 5/14/2026

In Florida, the primary election will take place on August 18th. The former swing state has shifted firmly into Republican control over the past decade. Republican Governor Ron DeSantis signed a mid-decade congressional map into law that could expand the GOP's advantage in the state from 20-8 to as much as 24-4. As President Donald J. Trump's home state, Florida Republicans are taking every available step to protect & expand their hold over the Sunshine State.

That said, redistricting like this can be a gamble. In a political climate where Trump & Republicans more broadly are viewed unfavorably, moving Republican voters out of safe districts & into more competitive ones could create openings for Democrats. Trump's war with Iran, aggressive ICE enforcement, rising costs, & growing tensions involving Cuba could all produce changes on the ground in Florida. Still, the Senate race is rated Solid Republican by the Cook Political Report, meaning that any Democratic progress is more likely to come in individual districts or localized areas than through a major statewide shift.

While Democrats may not see immediate success statewide, it is vital for the party to continue organizing across Florida, especially as voters adjust to the new map & the districts undergo demographic changes. Under the previous map, Democrats held more districts that were considered safely in their column. In 2026, only 4 districts are rated Solid Democratic, while one Democratic-held seat is a Toss Up & several others fall into the Lean or Likely Republican categories.

The new map may have reduced the number of seats Democrats control without question, but it has also increased the number of districts where the outcome could depend on the broader

national environment. There are now roughly 7 competitive races worth watching, though some are Democratic defenses rather than true pickup opportunities. Winning most of them would be a long shot, but the possibility highlights the gamble created by aggressive redistricting during a potential Democratic wave election. If Democrats could sweep, they would gain 4 seats compared to 2024 map.

Sunshine State voters can cast their primary ballots on August 18th, followed by the general election on November 3rd.

Senate

With Marco Rubio now serving as Secretary of State, Florida will hold a special election to fill the remainder of his Senate term. Alex Vindman (male, 51) & Angie Nixon (female, 42) are the two Democrats vying for the seat. Vindman was born in Kyiv, Ukraine, & is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who served as Director for European Affairs on the National Security Council. He rose to national prominence after testifying during Trump's first impeachment over the President's pressure on Ukraine while military aid was being withheld.

Nixon, a Jacksonville native, has served in the Florida House since 2020. She has built her political profile around affordable housing, public education, fair wages, healthcare, & support for working-class families. While Nixon brings experience in elected office, Vindman's national name recognition, fundraising advantage, & role in Trump's first impeachment have made him the favorite to win the Democratic nomination.

The winner will likely face appointed Republican Senator Ashley Moody. Most polling gives Moody an advantage, reflecting both her incumbency & the GOP's structural strength in Florida. However, the most recently fielded poll from Freedom Project USA & Change Research found that Moody & Vindman were tied at 46% among likely voters. The poll came from a Democratic-aligned group, while another June poll from a business group that endorsed Moody placed her ahead by 7 points. The difference between the polls shows why the race should be viewed cautiously, but a tie in any statewide Florida survey is still notable given how far the state has shifted toward Republicans.

Democrats remain long shots to take the seat, but the race is worth watching as November approaches. If Trump's approval continues to struggle & the national environment moves further toward Democrats, Vindman could at least force Republicans to spend time & money defending a seat that would normally be considered safe if not outright win.

House

Over in the House, Democrats face a difficult environment created largely by Florida's new congressional map. While national conditions may favor the party in 2026, Republicans redrew the state in a way that places several Democratic incumbents in districts that now lean toward the GOP. Democrats will have opportunities to compete in Republican-held districts, but their first priority will be protecting the seats they already control.

The most important Democratic defenses are FL-09, FL-14, & FL-25. Incumbent Darren Soto is running unopposed in the Democratic primary in FL-09, but the new district heavily favors Republicans. Soto has shown an ability to outperform the top of the Democratic ticket in the past, giving him at least an outside chance to survive, though he enters as an underdog.

In FL-14, incumbent Kathy Castor is also running unopposed in the Democratic primary. Castor has represented the Tampa area for nearly two decades, but the redrawn district now leans Republican. Her incumbency, fundraising network, & deep ties to the region give Democrats a real chance to hold the seat, making this one of the most important races in Florida.

FL-25 may be the closest race in the state. Incumbent Jared Moskowitz faces Oliver Larkin in the Democratic primary, though Moskowitz enters with the advantages of incumbency, fundraising, & name recognition. The newly drawn district stretches along the Atlantic Coast from portions of Palm Beach County into Miami-Dade & is expected to be highly competitive in November. A Moskowitz victory would prevent Republicans from fully realizing the gains they intended to create through redistricting.

Democrats should remain safe in districts such as FL-10, represented by Maxwell Frost, along with the heavily Democratic districts centered in South Florida. However, some of those seats feature crowded Democratic primaries that could determine the next generation of party leadership. FL-20 includes Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Luther Campbell, Elijah Manley, & several other Democrats, while FL-24 has a large field competing for the open seat after Frederica Wilson failed to qualify for the ballot.

On offense, Democrats have several Republican-held districts worth watching. FL-07 has drawn a crowded Democratic field seeking to challenge Cory Mills, including Jennifer Adams, former Congressman Alan Grayson, Marialana Kinter, & Noah Widmann. Mills remains favored, but questions surrounding the incumbent & the broader political environment make the district more interesting than a typical Republican seat.

FL-13 also features a crowded Democratic primary, with Fatima Aguerjout, Leela Gray, John Liccione, Reggie Paros, & Brandt Robinson seeking the opportunity to challenge Anna Paulina Luna. The district still favors Republicans, but its location in Pinellas County & history of political competition make it another race Democrats should continue to organize around.

In South Florida, FL-27 may offer Democrats another opportunity to improve on recent results. Mike Davey, Lev Parnas, Robin Peguero, & Eliott Rodriguez are competing for the Democratic nomination against Republican incumbent Maria Elvira Salazar. The district remains Republican-leaning, but changing political conditions in South Florida & the emergence of several candidates with established public profiles make it a race worth following.

Overall, Democrats are more likely to spend 2026 defending vulnerable incumbents than making major gains in Florida. Still, the number of competitive districts created by the new map means Republicans cannot take their expanded advantage for granted. If Democrats can protect Soto, Castor, & Moskowitz while making one or two Republican-held districts genuinely

competitive, they could limit the damage of redistricting & begin rebuilding a stronger statewide organization.

Democrats' Best Chance to Flip

Democrats' best chance to flip a seat in Florida appears to be FL-27, where Republican incumbent Maria Elvira Salazar faces a growing challenge in South Florida. The district still leans Republican, but recent local election results, concerns over rising costs, & backlash toward the Trump administration's immigration policies have created an opening for Democrats. Salazar has even warned that aggressive deportation policies could hurt Republicans with Cuban & Venezuelan voters who have helped drive the region's shift toward the GOP.

The Democratic primary remains unsettled. Former television anchor Eliott Rodriguez has led available primary polling, while former prosecutor Robin Peguero has shown an ability to raise money & build grassroots support. Regardless of who advances, the nominee will need to reconnect with Latino voters who moved toward Republicans in recent elections without assuming dissatisfaction with Trump will automatically bring them back. Salazar remains favored, but FL-27 has moved from a safe Republican seat into one that deserves serious attention.

FL-07 may be Democrats' most unpredictable opportunity. Republican incumbent Cory Mills represents a district that still favors the GOP, but allegations & controversies surrounding him have created an opening that would not exist against a stronger incumbent. Democrats have a crowded primary field, so the party's chances may depend heavily on whether voters select a candidate capable of raising money, avoiding a damaging primary, & keeping the general election focused on Mills' record.

FL-13 also provides a longer-shot opportunity against Republican Anna Paulina Luna. An internal Democratic poll found Luna in a statistical tie with Leela Gray, a retired Army brigadier general, though results from campaign-sponsored polling should be viewed cautiously. The district still favors Republicans, but Luna's negative ratings in that survey & Gray's military background make it another race worth watching if the national environment continues moving toward Democrats.

The Senate special election may receive more national attention, but Cook continues to rate that contest Solid Republican. Democrats' more realistic chances to gain ground may come in these individual House districts. FL-27 currently provides the clearest path, FL-07 offers the most volatile incumbent, & FL-13 stands out as a possible surprise if Democratic momentum turns into a genuine wave.

Recent Interviews

- **Alex Vindman** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uv_XbiFuLw
- **Angie Nixon** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3CkNQBYJRU

- **Jared Moskowitz**- https://www.nbcmiami.com/video/video/nbc6-impact-rep-jared-moskowitz-declares-he-will-run-in-new-25th-district/3820647/
- **Eliott Rodriguez** -https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_dXP6IwR08
- **Robin Peguero** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP4F1Q9DZ5E
- **Jennifer Adams** - https://www.facebook.com/JenniferAdamsFL/videos/my-name-is-jennifer-adams-im-a-mom-survivor-of-domestic-violence-policy-educator/1706332196814585/
- **Leela Gray** - https://www.linkedin.com/posts/leelajgray_service-over-self-still-guides-me-im-running-activity-7424801945581903872-ATIM

Take Action

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_elections,_2026
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- Donate to Florida through candidates' websites or to the Party here- https://floridadems.org/

Georgia

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | 1/29/2026

Georgia is set to be one of the biggest battleground states in 2026, with one senator, Democrat Jon Ossoff, up for election. Alongside the Senate race, there are 14 House races that almost all include Democrat underdogs or incumbents that could see this state further blue-shift. Given Georgia's shifting demographics and status as one of the keystone battleground states, a blue wave here could shift the balance in Democrats' favor, and the results of these races will reveal just how blue Georgia is becoming. The primary elections will take place on May 19, 2026, with races in which no candidate receives over 50% in a primary going to a runoff election on June 16. The general election will take place on November 3rd

For the Senate race, Jon Ossoff stands as a very popular congressman and a Democratic bright spot in Georgia. His bipartisan work and his success in getting funding and successful infrastructure projects to Georgia have built him a bit of a safety net from potential challengers, especially from within his party. However, the Republican primary has three main challengers who could pose a real threat, U.S. Rep. Mike Collins, former football coach Derek Dooley, and U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter. But with his strong position, Ossoff is likely to retain his seat, especially if a blue wave really does come to fruition.

For the House races, most of the seats are safe within their own party due to how the districts have been drawn in recent years and the relative popularity of many of the incumbents. But notably, Marjorie Taylor Greene's resignation from her seat in the 14th district could provide a route for a Democratic challenger to flip the seat. Additionally, some of the Democratic incumbents like David Scott are facing insurgent progressive campaigns in their districts, highlighting the generational rift within the Democratic Party and perhaps also serving as a

testing ground for these ideas in a historically red state. Out of the 14 races, these are the names to look out for:

- **District 1:** Michael McCord and Amanda Hollowell
- **District 2:** Sanford Bishop Jr. (incumbent)
- **District 3:** Adrienne Buhacoff
- **District 4:** Hank Johnson (incumbent)
- **District 5:** Nikema Williams (incumbent) and Andres Castro
- **District 6:** Lucy McBath (incumbent) and Sonya Halpern
- **District 7:** Case Norton
- **District 8:** James Cooper III
- **District 9:** Nick Alex
- **District 10:** Lexy Doherty
- **District 11:** Chris Harden and Barry Wolfert
- **District 12:** Brianna Woodson, Ceretta Smith, and Chris Stephens
- **District 13:** David Scott (incumbent)
- **District 14:** Shawn Harris

Senate

Jon Ossoff, 38, is the youngest Democrat elected to the Senate since Joe Biden in 1973 and the incumbent Senator for the seat that is up for election this year. He, along with Ralph Warnock, are the two main bulwarks of Democratic control in Georgia, and this race is set to be a close one. Before Congress, Ossoff was a national security staffer before working as a managing director of an investigative journalism production company. His policy platform in Congress has been largely successful, revolving around healthcare improvements like capping insulin prices for seniors at $35/month, protecting social security, expanding Medicaid, and expanding mental health services across the state. He has also championed infrastructure and veteran care services. His work on bipartisan issues has earned him a 51% approval rating and a 34% disapproval rating, and he is frequently cited as one of the most bipartisan politicians in Congress. This popularity, compared with a gargantuan $54,052,215 raised through September, has put him in a prime position to retain his seat, with many polls slightly leaning his way. With popularity, youth, money, and demographics all on his side, Ossoff is set to remain the youngest incumbent Senator.

Recent Interviews

Sen. Ossoff: 'We really are talking about life and death'

Jon Ossoff Bluntly Calls Out Trump For Corruption and Unpopularity

House

District 1

Michael McCord, 36, has long been involved in Democratic politics. Growing up in South Carolina, he worked multiple jobs often, eventually working on many Democratic races across the state since 2008. By 2020, he was running Southern strategy for Tim Ryan's presidential bid. On top of this, McCord is a business consultant focused on serving small businesses. He likely views this race as an incredible opportunity, given the incumbent Representative, Republican Buddy Carter, is going to be running for a Senate seat this year. McCord will be hoping that his platform of Rural Healthcare Stabilization, ending price gouging, expanding veteran care, ending congressional stock trading, and using all available energy production technologies to improve Georgia's energy supply will resonate with the fairly rural district. So far, he has raised $112,540, the most out of any Democrat in the race so far and respectable compared to his potential Republican counterparts. While the district is fairly red, with the Cook Political Report giving it a +8 Republican leaning, Buddy Carter's shift to the Senate means that his opponent won't be an incumbent who can rely on their track record as well. Additionally, this district has a healthcare and infrastructure crisis at the moment, both of which McCord is looking to address. This means that McCord still has a shot at flipping this seat blue, and depending on how much Republican donors pay attention to this race, his fundraising numbers may be enough to win.

Amanda Hollowell, 47, is an experienced political organizer and the Chief of Campaigns at Color Of Change, the country's largest online racial justice organization. Her affiliations are myriad, including When We All Vote, 9to5 Savannah, the Savannah, GA Chapter of The Links, Inc., League of Women Voters of Coastal Georgia, and Savannah Federation of Democratic Women. These connections have all indelibly given her vast local support, although her fundraising numbers are yet to be published. Hollowell's platform focuses on climate resilience, healthcare for all, public education, port and worker advocacy, and affordability. With these focuses, she is likely to win over the younger populations, as well as progressives. Climate resilience is a real issue in this district, given its coastal location. But with the district leaning red and her primary opponent having a lot of money already, Hollowell is facing an uphill battle.

District 2

Sanford Bishop Jr., 78, is the incumbent representative and has been since 1993. Practically a permanent fixture in Georgia politics ever since, Bishop Jr. has also been one of the most reliable advocates for the agricultural, infrastructural, and military health of his district. Each of these areas are huge in the 2nd district, and both its blue electorate and Bishop Jr. 's popularity (he won his 17th term in office with 55.9% of the vote will make him an extremely tough candidate to beat. His track record also speaks for itself, having secured over $10 billion in federal grants and loans for his district, including funds for rural development and disaster relief. Finally, his funding is hearty, having raised $517,573 through September. With the wind blowing hard at his back, his electorate supporting him, and his political acumen, it is hard to bet against him.

District 3

Adrienne Buhacoff, 49, is a seasoned social worker with a bachelor's and master's degree in social work. With this background, she aims to take her expertise, compassion, and dedication to Washington, D.C. and restore faith in government. Her platform is focused on healthcare expansion, term limits, campaign finance reform, affordable healthcare, and protecting individual rights. Given just how red this district has been over the past few elections, Buhacoff's approach of focusing more on government reform and less on typical Democrat policies is a solid bet. Her opponent in the general election, Republican Brian Jack, is a staunch supporter of the current administration, and disaffected voters may be willing to look past Buhacoff's Democrat tag and vote across party lines. It will still be a tough battle, however. Jack has won nearly 63% of the vote and nearly every county in the district in the last election, was endorsed by Donald Trump, and has a perfect attendance record in Congress, all lending legitimacy to his campaign. Additionally, Jack has raised $929,776 already, and Buhacoff has yet to publish any fundraising data. If she wants to win, Buhacoff is going to have to rely on a blue wave, more disillusionment from Republicans, and Democratic donors lending her aid.

District 4

Hank Johnson, 71, is the incumbent representative and a tour-de-force in Democratic politics. Sitting on the House Judiciary Committee and as the ranking member of its Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet, Johnson has been a national leader on court reform and accountability. This is largely driven by his 27-year-long career as a lawyer before spending 12 years as a magistrate judge. Since his first election in 2007, he has helped bring more than $5 billion in federal investments back to Georgia, including more than $1 billion specifically for his district, and has stayed relevant with legislation fighting the militarization of police recently. Outside of judicial reform, Johnson also is focusing his campaign on the environment, education, and worker safety, and healthcare. His seat is the safest in Georgia, sitting at +27 in favor of Democrats. With $199,516 raised so far and his popularity remaining high after his win in 2022 netted him 75% of the vote, Johnson will likely not have to worry much about this race.

Recent Interviews

Congressman Hank Johnson | Full interview

District 5

Nikema Williams, 47, is the incumbent representative since 2020 for the district that covers three quarters of Atlanta. Having previously served as the Chair of the Democratic Party of Georgia State Committee, she is well connected within the party and enjoys robust support as a result. Already she has raised $312,462, and given her margins of victory over the past few elections (upwards of a 71% margin), she is also super popular. Williams' platform focuses on universal family and healthcare, environmental protection, voting rights, social justice, and public education. While none of her policies are incredibly progressive, they are all progressive enough to attract support in Atlanta while hitting all of the main areas of concern for voters. She

also has a lot of experience running campaigns, including fundraising for Obama's presidential campaigns. With all of this in mind, Williams is more than likely to retain her seat here.

Recent Interviews

Rep. Nikema Williams talks government shutdown

Andres Castro, 33, is a newcomer to the political scene in comparison to Williams. His mother was an undocumented immigrant and he himself was a first-generation college student who studied computer science from Kennesaw State University. After spending around a decade in the tech sector, Castro is now aiming to launch a political career focused on progressive values. His platform has three main pillars: Universal public health, affordable housing, and a 25$ minimum wage. He also is pro-AI, pro-immigration, pro-government accountability, and pro-Palestine. In this race, he is looking to capitalize on policies that are increasingly popular with younger generations that make up a decent chunk of Atlanta. His funding is fairly meager so far, with only $23,280 raised, but his district is extremely blue. If Castro is able to win the primary, he will more than likely win the seat, but that condition will be hard to fulfill. This race is one that represents a larger trend across the party, that being the battle between old and the new progressive wave. It will be interesting to see just how close this race is, and if Castro is able to leverage more local support, he may just snatch the seat from Williams.

District 6

Lucy McBath, 65, is the incumbent representative for the district, having won her election in 2024. Previously, she earned her bachelor's degrees in political science and English from Virginia State University before working as a flight attendant, a professional advocate for Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action, and an author. McBath has championed gun safety reform following her son's death in 2012, and having survived breast cancer twice, McBath advocates for lowering prescription drug costs and protecting coverage for those with pre-existing conditions. She also is pushing for revitalizing Metro Atlanta's infrastructure, codifying reproductive rights, and increasing resources for teachers. Much like the previous case, while none of her policies are incredibly progressive, they are meaningful for the district that also represents a chunk of Atlanta and many of its northern and western suburbs. So far, she has raised $419,294, with no other challengers having raised anything yet. With her margins of victory growing every election to a 75%-25% victory in 2024, she is undoubtedly popular and is likely to remain representing Georgia's 6th District.

Sonya Halpern, 58, is a state senator in Georgia representing the state's 39th district. She previously worked at Cox Enterprises as an advertising executive, but she also has vast volunteer experience that includes the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Andrew J. Young Foundation, the YMCA of Metro Atlanta, and the National Black Arts Festival. At the state level, Halpern is the Vice Chair of the Urban Affairs Committee, and a member of the Appropriations, Banking and Financial Institutions, Education and Youth, and Health and Human Services committees. Her policies focus on expanding healthcare and education access, criminal justice reform, protecting voting rights and economic equality. With her volunteer and

political experience, she is no stranger to making change through politics, and her connections will likely serve her well. But her opponent is very well funded while Halpern has yet to release any funding figures. The journey to winning the seat will be steep, but if voters want an establishment Democrat out in favor of somewhat new blood, Halpern may be capable of winning the primary, and thus the district.

District 7

Case Norton, 36, is a union camera technician who's spent 19 years in the industry and wants to run a campaign focused on the working man. His campaign revolves around economic populism, affordability, and government reform. Chief amongst his concerns is accountability in government, which he aims to achieve through ending Citizens United and introducing term limits. Norton also wants to tackle corporate loopholes, institute universal healthcare, protect union rights, lower the cost of living, and protect the film & TV industry. These are all policies that will play somewhat well in the district, given its urban makeup north of Atlanta. But the seat had been held by Republicans from 1995 until 2021 before the now-incumbent Republican Rich McCormick won his election. This does not mean it's a lost cause, however. While some polls say the district leans Republican by 11 points, the 2018 midterm election for this seat was won by only 433. Additionally, demographic changes will favor Democrats, so despite Norton's lack of experience, he could still be able to win the primary and become a face for Democratic voters in this district. However, the general election will be tough to win between the district's Republican leanings and McCormick's $830,277 raised so far.

District 8

James Cooper III, 56, has run for this seat twice as a candidate for the Green Party in 2018 and 2020, but now he is trying his hand with the Democratic Party behind him. A longtime activist who worked on both the local and federal level, notably for Bernie Sanders's and Jill Stein's presidential campaigns, Cooper is a proud progressive. He supports it all: universal healthcare, a universal basic income, the Green New Deal, protecting civil rights and consumer protections, criminal justice reform, police reform, and campaign reform. His campaign thus far, however, is flagging. As of September 30, he had only raised $101, and his opponent, incumbent Republican Austin Scott, had raised $464,857. Additionally, his district has backed Scott by respectable margins since 2011, and still leans quite red. If Cooper is to mount a miraculous comeback, he will need to leverage every volunteer and progressive connection he has to even stand a chance. These connections may yield him enough to win the primary, but the general election will be degrees of magnitude harder, so his race may be more of a test for progressive ideas in rural Georgia.

District 9

Nick Alex, 61, is a retired banking technology product executive eyeing an upset against incumbent Republican Andrew Clyde. Nick graduated from Virginia Tech University majoring in business and finance before working with banks including Bank of America, Truist Bank, and U.S. Bank. Now, he wants to leverage his professional experience in politics to bring affordability

back to the district. Alex's race is a prime example of Democratic candidates leaning on affordability wherever they can, even in a heavily Republican district. His platform focuses on fair wages, affordable housing, and stronger economic security, alongside expanding access to public services and increasing government transparency. But his platform is relatively narrow and not particularly deep, and with his relatively small campaign funds barely reaching $46,840, it will be hard to galvanize and connect with voters. Still, his chances are not zero, and with all of his policies grounded in reality and modern issues, there is still a path for Alex to potentially win the general election.

Recent Interviews

William Daughtry interviews Nick Alex, LIVE!

District 10

Lexy Doherty, 31, is familiar with running in this district. Her last campaign here happened in 2024, where she garnered 37% of the vote. With a Master's degree in Economic Geology and having previously worked as a teaching assistant at the University of Georgia and as an educational consultant with Doherty Educational Consultants, she is looking to build on her modest success last cycle. Doherty's big five policy pillars are rural economic development, healthcare, protecting natural resources, protecting bodily autonomy, and restoring good representation and governance (guided by her time working as a poll worker). The focus on rural economic development will land well in a district that is 44% rural, and her connections in the Democratic stronghold of Athens will also help her here. Additionally, incumbent Republican Representative Mike Collins is running for Senate, meaning she will be fighting new blood. However, that Republican opponent, State Representative Houston Gaines, is gaining support fast in a district that leans heavily red. If a tsunami-level blue wave hits as forecasted, Doherty may just be able to ride it across the finish line.

District 11

Chris Harden, 47, just recently declared his candidacy for this race, but he seems to be one of the frontrunners in the primary. An attorney from Cherokee County, he labels himself as a moderate Democrat who is first in his family to graduate from college. Harden's platform revolves around affordability, public education, healthcare access, women's health, and addressing the constitutional crisis. His billing as a moderate Democrat will help him in the heavily red district, but the incumbent Republican Representative Barry Loudermilk is fairly popular. The district is also 96% urban, meaning that there will likely be at least some Democratic voters in those areas. But it is still an uphill climb in the general election. In the primary, he may win a lot of support given his moderate status and his local roots, having grown up poor in Georgia. Harden could very well be a dark-horse candidate if he can raise funds quickly enough.

Barry Wolfert, 60, is bringing a New York attitude and a lifetime of hard work to the race. After studying at Cornell's School of Hotel Administration, Wolfert worked in the hospitality industry before co-founding the Wolfert & Wrenn Real Estate Team at Keller Williams in 2013. He's lived

in Georgia for over 20 years, and has seen how rising housing prices affect people. This is why he is focused on three areas: bringing down housing costs, protecting healthcare and social security, and expanding the ACA. Wolfert's rhetoric leans pretty right for a Democrat, citing waste and fraud in the healthcare industry, which could help win over many voters in this district. His narrow focus on mainly affordability and social services will also allow him to present a very coherent message to voters in a district that may want new leadership. No funding data is available for any of the Democratic candidates, but Wolfert does have business acumen and connections in Atlanta. If he is able to leverage those connections and endear himself to the local population, Wolfert could possibly coast to a primary victory.

District 12

Brianna Woodson, 31, is a mental health professional and a political organizer. Boasting a large online following that stems from her Instagram page covering social issues, Black history, and policy, she is a local Georgian looking to unseat incumbent Republican Rick Allen. Her platform centers heavily on healthcare and addiction, given her own personal past struggles with the latter, but she also seeks better public education, housing assistance, justice reform, and community safety. Many of these issues, along with her identity and her connections, will garner a lot of support in this district. While it leans red, 36% of the district is African American, and her focus on Black history and social issues are extremely relevant in Georgia. Through September, Woodson had only reportedly raised $5,799, but that could have changed much since then. But she faces a tough road ahead, given the incumbent has won every election since 2014 and has raised a considerable amount of money. This race could be one with potential to surprise Allen, given he hasn't had to run a close race since his first. With this in mind, if Georgia were to experience a blue wave, this district could be one to watch.

Ceretta Smith, 57, is a veteran of the U.S. Army, a former union official, and a substitute teacher. Faith is a large part of her identity, as she studied at the Minnesota Graduate School of Theology before pursuing a graduate degree from the Calvary Bible Institute and another degree from Deeper Bible College in 2024. Smith also has affiliations with organizations like the American Federation of Government Employees, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Sistah Soldiers United Organization. In terms of policy, her platform is fairly standard for a Democrat this election. Affordability, government accountability and election reform, and healthcare access all play major parts. But Smith also wants to focus on veterans affairs, labor protections, and infrastructure. These will all land well in this district, and her connections with organizations, veterans, and the religious community will all help aid her in this election. Through September, she has only raised $3,095, so she will need to get moving on the fundraising front, but in the primary race, all of the other candidates have raised less than $6,000 through the same period, so she's not in bad shape here. She has lots of experience running campaigns, having run twice at the state level. Additionally, the demographics of this district (largely religious and black) will earn her some goodwill from the electorate. If she's able to make a name for herself, she could also be a candidate set to surprise Allen in the general election.

Chris Stephens, 47, is a former police officer and emergency dispatcher who also has experience running an LGBTQ+ community center. He's built his own small business, while juggling degrees in political science and a Master's in Public Administration. This focus on community service is now bringing Stephens into the race for this seat with a platform hyperfocused on the smaller-scale. Infrastructure improvements, boosts to education and trade schools, tax reform, veterans affairs, healthcare access, and agricultural support all make appearances on his platform. He's raised $4,457 so far, better than Smith but not quite enough to run a full campaign just yet, but time will tell if he is able to raise more given his relatively limited connections with politics and organizations across the district. Much of his appeal comes from being an "everyman" who owns a small business, worked as a police officer, and went to trade school. With this in mind, he will likely have decently moderate support from voters in the primary, but he may have better chances as the Democratic candidate in the general election, given his moderate appeal in a majority white and Republican area. If he is able to escape the primary, he could force Allen to refocus on holding his seat in a surprisingly competitive election.

District 13

David Scott, 80, has held this seat since 2002 and has no doubt that he will be able to retain it. He has won each election by increasing margins, winning almost 80% of the voteshare in the last few. He earned an MBA from Wharton before moving to Atlanta and starting his own advertising business, Dayn-Mark Advertising. Throughout the 70s and into the early 2000s, he also became a state level representative, eventually becoming a federal representative in 2002. Since then, he has become a high-level Democrat. He serves as Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, a Senior Member of the Financial Services Committee, and a Member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. For Scott, healthcare and constituent services are key policy successes of his, but he also prioritizes bringing federal community project funds back to local areas, boosting the rural agricultural sector, and backing environmental conservation efforts. His popularity speaks to his success on these fronts, and he has raised a warchest of $373,566. But this district is largely urban, meaning his agricultural policies will have less district-level pull, and in a primary field as packed as this one, with 11 Democratic candidates, he will have attacks coming from all directions. His age and decreasing engagement with politics worry some voters, but he has a long list of successes to draw on. For now, this seat seems to be safely Scott's, and unless a challenger is able to pull support from a bunch of the other challengers and present a unified opponent, Scott will likely still be the representative come November.

Jasmine Clark, 43, is a Georgia State Representative and microbiologist running on a platform built around science-driven policy, active engagement, and progressive issue leadership. Within politics, her career has long been an uphill battle. Despite facing a powerful incumbent Republican who outspent her more than 2:1 in 2018, Clark won, and then defended the seat again three more times. Her experience outside of politics is largely in medicine, having served as an Emory University professor and as an assistant clinical professor at its nursing school. This background has brought her focus to science-driven policy, namely in regards to public health and scientific fact in government, but also to taxing the rich, protecting healthcare, election reform, affordability, and education at all levels. Social issues are also relevant, having

served as a member of the Georgia Alliance for Social Justice. For this election Clark has raised $318,381, placing her third in terms of funding but well above the rest of the field. But her experience in politics, her connections in organizations and in the scientific community, and her name recognition all will likely make her a formidable opponent for Scott and any eventual Republican challengers.

Recent Interviews:
1-on-1 with State Rep. Jasmine Clark | Full interview

Everton Blair Jr., 32**,** is certainly bringing the youth to this fight, but is also equally bringing experience. Born and raised in Gwinnett County, Blair taught high school math in Atlanta Public Schools before becoming Chair of the Gwinnett County School Board. He holds a bachelor's in applied mathematics (B.A.) and a Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) from Harvard University and a Master's in Policy, Organization, and Leadership (M.A.) from Stanford University. Blair's platform is fairly progressive, with a focus on public education, government accountability, healthcare, civil rights, and affordability. What is exceptionally notable about his campaign is that despite refusing corporate PAC money, he has raised the second highest amount of money out of any Democratic candidate at $342,144. This seems to imply that donors see him as a worthy successor to Scott, and Blair's focus on bringing "generational change" could lean into that and garner a lot of momentum going into the election. He is also a native Georgian, a public educator, and despite having limited government experience, Blair has educational certifications from highly-ranked schools that could make up the district. With the winds blowing at his back like they are, Blair may just be set to take this seat from Scott and bring about a new generation of Georgian politicians.

Recent Interviews:

1-on-1 with Everton Blair, candidate for 13th District | Extended interview

District 14

Shawn Harris, 59, has a tough uphill battle ahead of him, but it is a familiar one. Harris is a 40-year veteran that served in Afghanistan, Liberia, and Israel, retiring as a Brigadier General. Harris also holds a B.S. in Agribusiness Education from Tuskegee University, a Master's in Educational Leadership, and a Master's in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. His last run at this seat in 2024 ended after only garnering 35% of the vote, which is fairly respectable given his moderate appeal and the district's +19 leaning to Republicans according to the Cook Partisan Voting Index. So putting up a decent campaign in the most Republican congressional district in Georgia is impressive, and this time he won't be facing an incumbent with a track record to lean on and the media presence that Marjorie Taylor Greene had. Harris' platform focuses on agriculture, affordability, healthcare, veterans, and national/border security. The latter three areas will play particularly well, and his rhetoric on the national security front focuses on standing up to China, modernizing the immigration system, and combating the fentanyl crisis by expanding port screening and Narcan access. All three of these are issues that Republicans have been quite vocal on, meaning that Harris may be able to draw many

disillusioned Republicans to his campaign. His experience in running campaigns and the connections he made have shown in the massive $1,292,262 he raised through September, almost 16 times the amount the most well-funded Republican challenger raised through that same period. If this seat were to flip, it would certainly be a surprise, but given Harris' moderate appeal, Greene's resignation, and Harris' huge amount of funding, he may just be able to shock analysts.

Recent Interviews:

Shawn Harris goes On The Record With Atlanta News First, Jan. 11, 2026

US Congress SHAWN HARRIS Interview

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels:
  - United States House of Representatives elections in Georgia, 2026 - Ballotpedia
  - United States Senate election in Georgia, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
  - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
  - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- Georgia Public Broadcasting is a state network of PBS member television stations and NPR member radio stations covering local news: GPB Politics | Georgia Public Broadcasting
- The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is a well-respected online newspaper based in Atlanta, Georgia: Georgia Politics from the AJC

Hawaii

Democratic Primary Series Brief #8 | Morgan Davidson | 1/21/2026

The Aloha state will feature two House races but will be absent a headlining Senate race. Senior Senator Brian Schatz will be back up for re-election in 2028 & the Junior Senator Mazie Hirono will be back up in 2030. Overall, the state is solidly Democratic, with all four members of Congress under the Democratic banner. Further, at the state level, of the 51 state house members, only 9 are Republicans. That means the remaining 42 are Democrats since no Independent has a seat in the Hawaii State House. In the Hawaiian Senate, the breakdown is 3 Republicans to 22 Dems. Hawaii is a solidly blue state, & the real campaign or battle will be in the Democratic primaries.

Turning to the U.S. House, Hawaii's current Democratic delegation consists of:

- District 1: Ed Case
- District 2: Jill Tokuda

Both incumbents had dominant elections in 2024, with Ed Case winning with 71.8% of the vote & Jill Tokuda winning with 66.5% of the vote & look to do the same. At the time of writing, Democrats have a national advantage in generic ballots, or ballots listing only the political party, not specific candidates. Per Verasight, respondents were asked, "If the 2026 general election were held today [January 2026], which party's candidate would you be more likely to vote for in your local congressional district?" 51% of respondents side with the Dems, 43% to the GOP, & 6% were undecided. Among voters who reported greater interest in voting, these percentages change to 55% Dems & 42% Republicans, with advantages to Dems of 8% & 13%, respectively.

The current Trump regime in Washington continues to hemorrhage support with crises after crises, from Venezuela & the kidnapping of Maduro, the ICE shooting of Renee Good, to concerns over US involvement with Greenland. Each of these events, individually, has the Trump administration in hot water, & collectively has led to a decrease in support for Trump & the Republican party more broadly. These are issues heading into a midterm election, which tend to favor the party out of power, causing major issues for Republicans down ballot. That said, there is still a long time from today to election day for Republicans to gain ground, but that seems bleak with Trump's actions since the start of the new year.

Back to Hawaii, where the primary will take place on August 8th, 2026, followed by the general election on November 3rd, 2026, both Democratic incumbents look poised to retain their seats. That said, Jill Tokuda in District 2 seems to have a stronger advantage over her District 1 counterpart, Ed Case.

District 2: Jill Tokuda

Jill Tokuda, as of writing, is running unopposed in her re-election bid for District 2's U.S. House seat. There is still time for other Democrats to join the race, with the filing deadline being in June of this year; however, chances are slim that Tokuda will face a Democratic challenger. In theory, District 2 should be the harder race, as it represents the suburban areas of Honolulu & the smaller islands that are much more rural than O'ahu, but without a challenger, Tokuda should continue her dominance in the district.

Tokuda is a 49-year-old female incumbent in Hawaii's second district. Tokuda has represented Hawai‘i's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House since 2023, serving the state's rural & outer-island communities. Her family has called the district home for four generations after emigrating from Okinawa, with roots on Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Kaua‘i, & O‘ahu. A product of Hawai‘i's public schools & the first in her family to attend college, Tokuda earned a degree in international relations from George Washington University before returning home to public service. She spent twelve years representing Windward O‘ahu in the Hawai‘i State Senate, where she became one of the Legislature's most trusted voices on fiscal & education policy, chairing committees including Ways & Means, Education, Labor, & Hawaiian Affairs. As budget chair, she oversaw the state's $14 billion budget, expanded early childhood education & school-based health services, & secured long-delayed constitutional protections for Hawai‘i's most productive agricultural lands. In Congress, Tokuda serves on the Armed Services Committee, the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, & the Agriculture Committee, while also holding leadership roles focused on rural health, Asian Pacific American representation, & regional Democratic organizing. She & her husband are raising their two sons in the same public schools that shaped them, reinforcing her emphasis on education, local opportunity, & stewardship of Hawai‘i's future.

Jill Tokuda is well-positioned to win re-election in 2026 largely because Hawai‘i's Second Congressional District remains safely Democratic & she faces no listed challengers according to Ballotpedia. As a first-term incumbent elected comfortably in 2022 & even more so in 2024, Tokuda benefits from the structural advantages of incumbency, strong name recognition across

the neighbor islands, & deep local ties built over decades in public service. Her committee assignments in Congress, particularly on Armed Services & Agriculture, reinforce her ability to deliver for a district with significant rural, military, & outer-island needs. With no serious primary opposition & a Republican bench that has struggled statewide for decades, Tokuda enters the 2026 cycle as a clear favorite to retain her seat.

District 1

Incumbent: Ed Case (Male, 73)
Challengers: Della Au Belatti (Female, 52); **Jarrett Keohikalole** (Male, 41)

Incumbent Democrat Ed Case is favored to retain Hawai‘i’s First Congressional District in 2026, though he faces a potentially competitive Democratic primary from two challengers running to his left. According to Data for Progress polling, Case leads the field but does not currently command a majority, raising the possibility that the primary could go to a runoff. The central tension in the race is ideological: Case’s centrist, pragmatic style continues to appeal to establishment Democrats & moderate voters, while progressive activists are increasingly coalescing around alternative candidates who promise a more assertive liberal agenda.

Ed Case (Incumbent)

Ed Case has represented Hawai‘i’s First District since 2019 & is one of the state’s most experienced federal lawmakers, having previously served in Congress in the early 2000s & as Hawai‘i’s lieutenant governor. At 73, Case is viewed as a steady but ideologically moderate figure, emphasizing fiscal responsibility, national security, & bipartisan governance. Further, younger voters see Case as old & out of touch. While his approach has helped him survive competitive primaries in the past, it has also drawn criticism from progressive voters who view him as insufficiently aligned with the Democratic Party’s leftward shift on issues like climate policy, healthcare, & foreign affairs.

Della Au Belatti

Della Au Belatti, a 52-year-old former Hawai‘i State Representative, enters the race with strong progressive credentials & deep ties to Democratic Party organizing. As a former chair of the Hawai‘i Democratic Party, Belatti is well known among party activists & grassroots networks. Her campaign emphasizes reproductive rights, climate action, housing affordability, & a more confrontational posture toward corporate influence in politics. Belatti’s challenge is converting institutional goodwill & activist enthusiasm into broad-based voter support beyond the party’s progressive base.

Jarrett Keohikalole

Jarrett Keohikalole, 41, is a sitting Hawai‘i State Senator representing Kāne‘ohe & Kailua, & positions himself as a generational & ideological alternative to Case. Keohikalole has built a reputation as a policy-focused progressive, with emphasis on healthcare access, cost-of-living

relief, & environmental protection. His youth & legislative experience give him credibility among voters seeking change without inexperience, though he faces the same structural hurdle as Belatti in expanding appeal beyond Honolulu's progressive core.

Who Is Most Likely to Win

Despite dissatisfaction among liberal voters, Ed Case remains the most likely winner due to incumbency, name recognition, & a fragmented opposition. While Belatti & Keohikalole together may represent a majority of the district's Democratic electorate ideologically, their split support significantly benefits Case under Hawai'i's primary rules. Unless one challenger consolidates progressive voters or Case's support collapses late in the cycle, the incumbent's path to renomination & eventual re-election in this safely Democratic district remains the clearest. If Case suffers a health scare or scandal of sorts, look for Belatti to take advantage with the grassroots background & current lead over Keohikalole in the Data for Progress poll.

Primary outlook: Competitive, but Case favored
General election outlook: Safe Democratic hold

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_House_of_Representatives_elections_in_Hawaii,_2026
- Verasight Poll & information- https://www.gelliottmorris.com/p/new-poll-trump-slips-on-immigration?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=6273&post_id=185257395&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=2ncajb&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email
- Politico Coverage of Hawaii's 1st district- https://www.politico.com/newsletters/weekly-score/2025/11/17/the-next-democrat-indivisible-wants-to-boot-from-congress-00653934
- Jill Tokuda interview- https://www.facebook.com/TheYoungTurks/videos/watch-jill-tokuda-delivers-a-powerful-speech/1235181668562817/
- Ed Case Interview- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwI90ATzz5s
- Della Au Belatti- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dlYyUykJvY
- Jarrett Keohikalole https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZpOlCRUzD4

Idaho

Ryan Dulaney | 1/26/2026

Primary Date: May 19, 2026

General Election: November 3, 2026

Democratic Party Overview

The Democratic Party in Idaho is implementing an expanded strategy aimed at competitive races in 2026. The Idaho Democratic Party recently launched its “All In for Idaho” campaign to recruit local candidates and grow voter registration, especially in rural and traditionally conservative communities that have often been overlooked.

U.S. Senate — Democratic Field

The sole Democratic candidate in the U.S. Senate primary is David Roth, a realtor and 2022 Democratic Senate nominee, who has filed to run in 2026.

David Roth, 43, brings name recognition from his previous statewide run and is running to provide Democratic voters with a strong option in a state dominated by Republicans. While Democratic votes are unlikely to overcome the GOP’s advantage, Roth’s experience on the ballot and support base could help maintain party momentum into 2026.

Age: 43 Gender: Male

Current Position: Consultant

Why he might win: While this seat is expected to remain Republican, Roth's recognition among Idaho Democrats and his ability to unify the base makes him the leading candidate for nomination.

U.S. House — Democratic Fields

Idaho has two U.S. House districts, and Democrats have no current Democratic members of the Idaho House delegation.

ID-01

Kaylee Peterson – 33, Female, is an Artisan jeweler and former nominee in both 2022 and 2024.

Ken Brungardt – Age unknown, is a Retired painting contractor and passionate anti-MAGA Democrat.

Peterson has raised more funds and name recognition than Brungardt, giving her an edge in organizing and outreach.

Why she might win: Peterson's repeat candidacies provide continuity and name familiarity across Democratic voters in Idaho's most competitive congressional district, strengthening turnout and volunteer networks despite the overall Republican lean.

ID-02

Julie Wiley, age unknown, retired counselor.

Wiley's strength in the Democratic primary is name recognition among local Democratic activists. Her service background and narrative about helping families and schools could resonate with primary voters who value lived experience.

Indiana

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series: Indiana | Nate Iglehart | 2/5/2026

Indiana can be considered a relatively safe Republican stronghold. Both the senators from the state are Republicans, and only 2 of the 9 representatives are Democrats. This year, neither Senator Todd Young nor Senator Jim Banks are up for election, but the house is a different story. All nine seats are up for grabs in theory, although most seats are drawn in a way that all but ensures the current party makeup from changing. That didn't stop President Donald Trump from trying, however, as late last year he urged the state of Indiana to redraw its congressional districts to unseat incumbent Democrats Frank Mrvan of the 1st district and André Carson of the 7th district. Despite a Republican-supermajority in the Senate, a Trump vow to primary Republican holdouts, and anonymous bomb threats, the measure failed and the maps remained unchanged.

The state has fared pretty well over the past few years. It boasts a relatively low cost of living and a low cost of doing business, as well as having a low state-level amount of debt. However, it has ranked increasingly poorly in areas such as net migration, public health, and environmental safety. Those latter two issues have generally played slightly better for Democrats, but even then, most districts outside of the 1st and 7th lean red by hefty margins. That being said, if the special election in Texas was indeed a canary in the coal mine, there are a couple of districts that could be up for grabs. The primary elections will take place on May 5, 2026, with the general elections on November 3.

For starters, those 1st and 7th will more than likely remain safe Democrat seats, with Mrvan and Carson both popular, well funded, and in blue districts. While the Cook Political; Report places all seven Republican districts as safely Red, I think that the race in the 5th district, represented

by Republican Victoria Spartz since 2021, is a flippable seat. The district is only +8 for Republicans, and while the funding gap is sizable, funding alone may not save a candidate with only one term under her belt and a blue wave looking increasingly likely. Out of the 9 races, these are the names to look out for:

- **District 1:** Frank Mrvan
- **District 2:** Jamie Decio
- **District 3:** Phil Goss and Kelly Thompson
- **District 4:** Drew Cox
- **District 5:** Jackson Franklin and Deborah Pickett
- **District 6:** Cinde Wirth and Raymond Alt
- **District 7:** André Carson and George Hornedo
- **District 8:** Mary Allen
- **District 9:** Jim Graham and Tim Peck

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

The most competitive districts for Democrats in Indiana include Indiana's 1st Congressional District (IN-1) and its 5th Congressional District (IN-5). The 1st was widely considered a battleground district in 2024, and while Mrvan has gained ground each election, it is still seen as only a blue district by 1 percentage point. Perhaps time and Mrvan's popularity will keep it blue, given its urban makeup and location close to Chicago. Democrats know this is an important seat to hold, given the million dollars they've helped Mrvan raise, and local pundits don't think the seat will change red. A good defense here will be a reassuring win for Democrats across the state.

The other competitive district, Indiana's 5th Congressional District (IN-5), is one where Democrats can go on the offensive instead. Incumbent Republican Victoria Spartz is popular but not wildly so, the district only leans red by 8 points, and some of her challengers have good experience running here. This district encompasses much of the northern suburbs of Indianapolis, including the cities of Carmel, Noblesville, and Fishers, while other population centers include Muncie, Kokomo, Anderson, and Marion. The district is predominantly white and is the wealthiest congressional district in Indiana, as measured by median income. For the Democrats, leaning on Trump's endorsement of Spartz is a good move, alongside hitting her on her high staff turnover and allegations of a difficult working environment. Spartz also has pushed for fiscal responsibility, and her inability to reign in government spending is a notable weak point on her resume. While it is unlikely, if the Democrats were to flip a seat in the state, it would almost certainly have to be this one.

Most Competitive Indiana Democrats in 2026

Frank Mrvan: IN-1

Frank Mrvan, 56, is the incumbent representative for this district since 2021. Previously, he served as a mortgage broker and pharmaceutical sales representative, before entering politics

in 2005 as the township trustee for North Township, Indiana. During his time in Congress, he has sought to protect reproductive healthcare, grow the regional economy, and protect the steel industry. Mrvan also serves as the Vice-Chairman of the Congressional Steel Caucus and is a member of the House Appropriations Committee. This election cycle, his platform has not changed much. Mrvan wants to protect reproductive healthcare, grow the local economy, protect public education, protect laborers, and lower healthcare costs. His focus on the labor and manufacturing industries in this district, which encompasses Gary, Indiana, as well as almost all of the Indiana side of the Chicago metropolitan area, is a good move. As a result of this makeup, the district leans heavily blue, and has not elected a Republican representative in almost a century. Mrvan's $1,419,470 war chest will certainly also help him overcome whatever Republican candidate wins the primary. Additionally, his strong party-line voting record and high participation in Congress mean he will not lack support from Democrats in a Democrat-heavy district. It is almost certain that Mrvan will win the primary and the general election, barring some major news.

Recent Interviews:

Regionally Speaking | US Congressman Frank Mrvan | From the Region to Capitol Hill

1. D. Ford: IN-5

J.D. Ford entered the Indiana Statehouse in 2018, flipping a long-held red district in the process. So far, his focuses have been on affordability, healthcare, and equality. The last point is particularly important to Ford, as he is Indiana's first and currently only openly LGBTQ+ state legislator. He sits on many committees: Education and Career Development, Elections, Ethics, Family and Children Services, Health and Provider Services, Local Government, and Rules and Legislative Procedures. All of this legislative experience is his only professional experience, following his bachelor's in criminal justice and political science and his master's degree in education from Purdue University Northwest. His focus will play well in this district, where its wealthier suburban voters are more tuned into national trends. Ford's funding numbers aren't available yet, but if he is able to gain ground quickly, he can become the favorite in this district and look to upset Spartz.

Deborah Pickett: IN-5

A former Army reservist and policy researcher, Deborah Pickett is also looking to unseat Spartz in this district. Pickett earned a bachelor's degree from Skidmore College in 1981, and her career experience includes working as a community advocate and researcher with the Center for Integrative Development and the Hudson Institute. Much of the research experience revolved around education projects before shifting to trade policy and international economic studies. All of this experience has crafted a Democrat with a very moderate and well-researched platform. Alongside defending democracy, government welfare, and the environment, Pickett is heavily focused on investing in a well-trained and well-equipped military that works to protect the strong trade and humanitarian alliances Pickett wants the U.S. to engage in. This may end up being a bit of a gamble. With affordability a big issue, she seems to sideline it a bit, and while

that is less of an issue with a richer district, it signals a focus more on policies that benefit the nation and not primarily the district. If voters think she will forget about them, they may not back her. This, combined with a paltry $6,645 raised so far means she has an uphill battle. But her military focus will likely play well with some disillusioned Republicans and independents, and Democrats will likely vote for her nonetheless in a general election. If she manages to win the primary, Pickett would be in a solid spot to make this a tight race.

Jackson Franklin: IN-5

Jackson Franklin is a Staff Sergeant in the Indiana Army National Guard, having served as a combat medic since 2019 and deployed to Kosovo in 2023. After the military, Franklin worked as an EMT and as a policy advisor for many local campaigns. But now he wants to emulate his idol, Bernie Sanders, and is pushing for a progressive vision of the country. His platform hits many of the hallmarks of a progressive: universal right to housing, universal healthcare, universal basic income, nationalizing the pharmaceutical and fossil fuel industries, protecting democracy, legalizing cannabis, and taxing the rich. This will be a fascinating race to watch if Franklin wins the primary, because it will be a true test of progressivism in a red district. But for the primary, he will have a bit of work to do. He already has raised $16,778, more than Pickett, but his youth at 25-years-old and his lack of true government experience will make many older voters hesitate. Plus, progressivism in a red district is a big risk. However, the fact that he raised that much money without corporate donors is a testament to some level of local support. Additionally, while many voters will be turned away by his talk of nationalizing industries, his focus on universal services could still be appealing in a district that is wealthier than average but not rich. With Ford taking the standard establishment route and Pickett taking the moderate route, Franklin's progressive path will provide a great lab for Democratic planners to look at how popular these policies are.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels:
    - United States House of Representatives elections in Indiana, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
    - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
    - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- The *Indiana Capital Chronicle* is an independent, nonprofit news organization focused specifically on state government, policy, and elections: Indiana Capital Chronicle

Iowa

Iowa | Morgan Davidson | 1/28/2026

In 2026, Iowa will see one Senate race & four House races in its congressional elections. The Hawkeye state has been a Republican stronghold since Trump came on the scene in 2016, but the Cook Political Report currently has two of Iowa's House seats as toss-ups. In a year where Democrats should be expected to overperform, we could see Hawkeye voters change the distribution of the state's legislative power in Washington. Currently, all 6 of Iowa's congressional seats are held by Republicans, but 2026 could see one, if not more, of these change. Voters will be able to cast their ballots in the primary on June 2, 2026 & in the general election on November 3, 2026.

At the Senate level, Joni Ernst announced she would be stepping down, clearing the way for an open-seat race in Iowa for the US Senate. Ernst's departure is a bit shocking, given Trump's dominance in the state in 2024, when he achieved his highest vote share in his three times running at 55.7%, up from 51.7% & 53.1% in 2016 & 2020, respectively. That said, she has been criticized from the Right for being too moderate & attacked on the left for her stance on abortion. Ernst has been a leading figure in the fight to restrict a woman's right to choose, making her out of step with national voters, but this position would have seemed to put her in safe graces with Republicans, particularly Republican primary voters. Ultimately, her pushback on nominations like Hegseth & refusal to endorse Trump in the Iowa caucus led MAGA elite to view her as an enemy. Ernst cited wanting to spend time with her family as to why she would not run in 2026, but threats by Trump allies to primary her tell a different story.

4 Republicans & 4 Democrats have filed to run for the open Senate seat. On the Republican side, Ashley Hinson appears to be in the lead with 3 million more cash on hand than any of her

Republican colleagues. While Democrats should be more competitive here than they were in 2024, but the Republican advantage will be hard to beat even in a midterm year where Dems are likely to rise in a backlash election. 3 Democrats appear to be viable candidates for the seat: Nathan Sage, Josh Turek, & Zach Wahls, all of whom have raised over 1 million dollars for their campaign, appear to be in a close fight to win the party's nomination.

At this point, Zach Wahls is the most likely winner of the Democratic primary for Iowa's open U.S. Senate seat. Wahls benefits from a combination of statewide name recognition, an existing base as a state senator, early endorsements, & an ability to bridge the party's progressive & establishment wings in a crowded field. His campaign has shown the strongest signs of organization & momentum, which matters in a primary where no candidate currently dominates outright. If Wahls were to falter, Josh Turek would likely have the next-best chance, largely because of his appeal to party insiders & labor-aligned Democrats, as well as his compelling personal narrative as a Paralympian & public servant. However, in the absence of clear polling data or a significant fundraising gap, the Democratic primary remains competitive & unpredictable, though Wahls appears marginally better positioned than the rest of the field.

Turning to the U.S. House, Iowa will hold four congressional races in 2026:

- **District 1: Mariannette Miller-Meeks** (R), incumbent
- **District 2: Open seat** (Rep. **Ashley Hinson** (R) running for U.S. Senate)
- **District 3: Zach Nunn** (R), incumbent
- **District 4: Randy Feenstra** (R), incumbent

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

The most competitive districts for Democrats in Iowa include Iowa's 1st Congressional District (IA-01) & 3rd Congressional District (IA-03). IA-01, which covers eastern Iowa including Davenport & Iowa City, is widely viewed as one of the best Democratic pickup opportunities in 2026. The district has a long history of swing voting & narrowly favored Republicans in 2024, when Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R) was re-elected by just 799 votes. With a mix of college-educated voters, organized labor, & urban & suburban communities, IA-01 remains highly sensitive to turnout & national political conditions. As a result, national Democrats have again targeted the district as a top flip opportunity, with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee & allied groups signaling early investment.

IA-03, centered on Des Moines & its surrounding suburbs, has similarly shifted into the competitive category. Once a reliably Republican seat, demographic change & suburban realignment have narrowed GOP margins, leading nonpartisan forecasters to rate the district anywhere from "lean Republican" to toss-up. Republican Rep. Zach Nunn narrowly held the seat in 2024 after flipping it two years earlier, & recent polling suggests Democratic challengers remain competitive. Compared to Iowa's more rural districts, IA-03's electorate is more college-educated & suburban, making it especially responsive to national political trends & candidate quality. By contrast, Iowa's 2nd & 4th Districts remain more structurally Republican

due to their rural composition & recent voting patterns, leaving IA-01 & IA-03 as Democrats' clearest paths to House gains.

Most Competitive Iowa Democrats in 2026

Christina Bohannan: IA-01

A law professor & former state legislator, Bohannan ran a razor-thin race in 2024, losing to Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks by just 799 votes. She has announced she is running again in 2026, giving her a significant advantage in name recognition, campaign infrastructure, & donor familiarity in a district Democrats view as highly competitive. Among potential Democratic challengers, Bohannan stands out as the most proven vote-getter in IA-01, though she will again need a strong turnout & national support to overcome the incumbent advantage.

Sarah Trone Garriott: IA-03

Trone Garriott, a state senator representing part of the Des Moines metro, has emerged as the leading Democratic contender in IA-03. Recent campaign developments, including former House Minority Leader Jennifer Konfrst suspending her campaign & endorsing Trone Garriott, have helped consolidate Democratic support behind her, reducing the risk of a divided primary. In a district trending more competitive due to suburban realignment, Trone Garriott's legislative experience & growing party support position her as Democrats' clearest path to reclaiming the seat, though she still faces an uphill general election against an incumbent Republican. Together, Bohannan & Trone Garriott represent Democrats' strongest opportunities to flip Iowa House seats in 2026, combining district fit, electoral credibility, & early signs of party consolidation.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_House_of_Representatives_elections_in_Hawaii,_2026
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- Iowa Capital Dispatch: Iowa Political News: https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/
- Zach Whals Interview- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w-q46u-K3g
- Josh Turek Interview- https://www.youtube.com/shorts/s1_b0nFqlsc

Kansas

Ryan Dulaney | 1/26/2026

Primary Election: August 4, 2026
General Election: November 3, 2026

Democrat House Members up for Re-election
Kansas has one Democratic member of the house up for re-election Sharice Davids of the 3rd Congressional District.

Senators Up for Election

One U.S. Senate seat is up in 2026, currently held by Republican Senator Roger Marshall.

Senate Democratic Candidate

Christy Davis, Age: unknown, is a Former Kansas Director of USDA Rural Development. Davis could win because of her history of work with rural communities and experience in economic development, allowing her to connect with moderate and independent voters across the state.

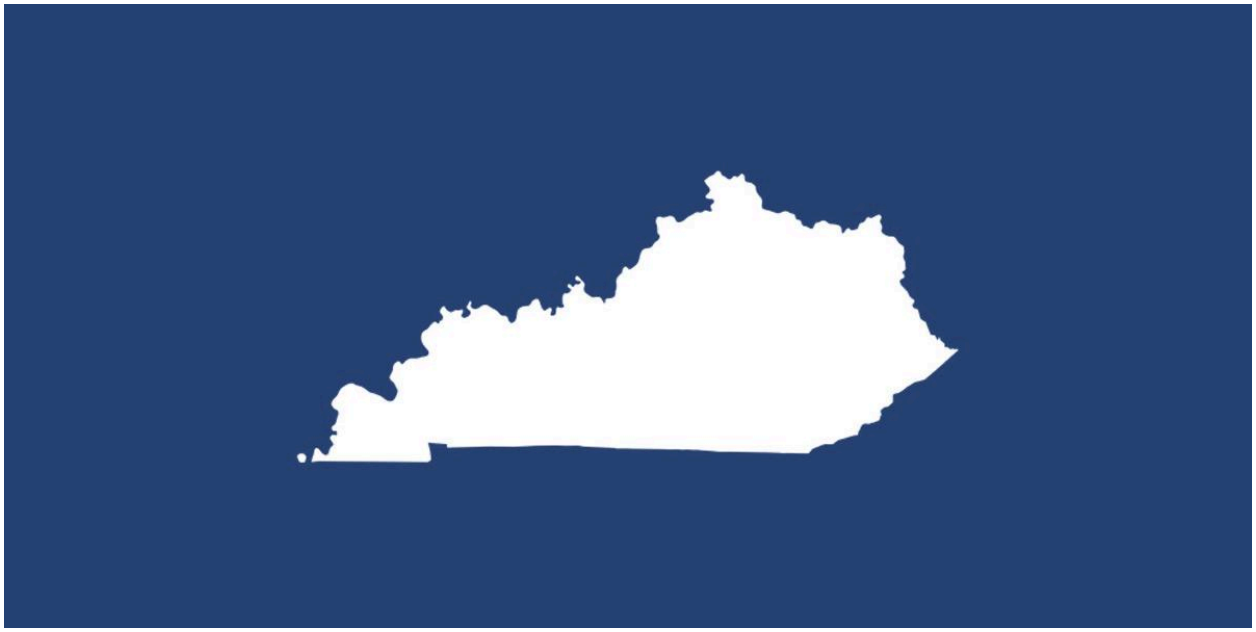
House Democratic Candidates

KS-01 Colin McRoberts, Age: unknown, currently a Community advocate.
McRoberts could win by interacting with local Democratic voters using a grassroots approach and presenting a strong alternative to the Republican incumbent.

KS-02 Don Coover, Age: unknown, a Veterinarian and small business owner.
Coover could win because his roots in rural areas and his focus on practical and community-centered solutions make him relatable to independents and moderate Republicans.

KS-03 Sharice Davids, Age: 44, is the district's sitting U.S. Representative.
Davids could win just from being an effective incumbent, furthermore her strong connection to Democrat voters and proven fundraising and campaign organization will play a major role in the coming elections.

KS-04 Chris Carmichael, Age: unknown. He is currently an Attorney.
Carmichael could win by emphasizing his local knowledge and professional experience, making him appeal to Democratic primary voters looking for a credible challenger in a Republican-leaning district.



Kentucky

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | February 21, 2026

In Kentucky, the Bluegrass State, voters will decide one U.S. Senate race and all six U.S. House seats in 2026. The marquee contest follows the retirement of Mitch McConnell, ending decades of Republican leadership in Washington. McConnell's tenure included serving as Senate Majority Leader and playing a central role in shaping the modern federal judiciary. His relationship with former President Donald Trump deteriorated following the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, limiting his standing within the party's populist wing, but his institutional influence remained significant through the end of his career.

For Democrats, McConnell's departure removes a deeply entrenched incumbent with statewide name recognition and an established fundraising apparatus. That alone reshapes the strategic landscape. However, Kentucky remains structurally Republican at the federal level. No Democrat has won a U.S. Senate race in Kentucky since 1992, and Republican presidential candidates routinely carry the state by wide margins.

Democrats do retain a foothold in statewide politics. Governor Andy Beshear has won two terms, demonstrating that a coalition rooted in urban centers like Louisville and Lexington, combined with targeted outreach to rural voters, can succeed under the right conditions. Still, at the federal level, Kentucky's partisan baseline favors Republicans, meaning Democrats face an uphill battle in their attempt to compete for McConnell's open seat.

Of Kentucky's six U.S. House seats, only **one is currently held by a Democrat: Morgan McGarvey**, who represents the Louisville-anchored 3rd Congressional District. McGarvey, first elected in 2022, is seeking just his second term and is widely expected to retain the seat. The

district is heavily urban and Democratic-leaning, making it the party's most secure federal foothold in the state.

The remaining five seats are held by Republicans, including figures such as James **Comer** in the 1st District and **Thomas Massie** in the 4th District, both of whom represent strongly conservative constituencies. Democratic challengers have filed across all five Republican-held districts, though only two races are expected to feature contested Democratic primaries.

The recruitment bench, however, remains relatively thin. Unlike in top-tier battleground states, Kentucky Democrats are not fielding a wave of high-profile or heavily financed challengers in most districts. That reality underscores the structural challenge the party faces at the federal level.

Still, broader political dynamics could shape margins. If national conditions deteriorate for Republicans, particularly if former President Donald Trump experiences sustained approval declines, Democratic candidates could outperform historical baselines. Governor Andy Beshear's statewide success demonstrates that coalition-building beyond the urban core is possible. However, Kentucky's federal voting patterns remain reliably Republican, meaning true House flips would require both a favorable national environment and unusually strong local candidates.

Kentucky's primary election is scheduled for May 19, with the general election set for November 3.

Senate Race

The Senate race is headlined by Charles Booker & Amy McGrath. With Senator Mitch McConnell retiring, Kentucky Democrats are facing a rare open-seat opportunity. While the state's federal partisan baseline remains Republican, the Democratic primary will determine whether the party nominates a progressive mobilizer or a more establishment-profile candidate with broader statewide exposure.

Charles Booker

Among Democrats, **Charles Booker** currently appears to have early momentum. Recent polling places him around 30 percent in the Democratic primary, giving him a measurable advantage in a field where a significant portion of voters remain undecided. In a fragmented contest, that early positioning matters.

Booker is a former state representative from Louisville and a repeat statewide candidate, having previously run for the U.S. Senate in 2022. His prior campaigns have built name recognition, particularly among progressive voters and in urban centers such as Louisville and Lexington. That existing base gives him organizational durability and the potential to consolidate support as undecided primary voters begin to break.

If Booker maintains his early lead, his path to the nomination will depend on expanding beyond his progressive core while preserving the grassroots energy that has defined his past campaigns.

Amy McGrath

Amy McGrath represents the other major Democratic profile in the race. A retired Marine fighter pilot, McGrath previously ran against McConnell in 2020 in what became the most expensive Senate race in Kentucky history. Though unsuccessful, that campaign provided her with statewide infrastructure, fundraising networks, and significant name recognition.

McGrath's military credentials and national fundraising connections position her as a candidate capable of appealing to moderate voters and independents. Her messaging has centered on protecting democratic institutions, economic fairness, and restoring political norms, themes that could resonate beyond the Democratic base if the general election environment tightens.

In early polling, McGrath trails Booker but remains within the top tier of Democratic contenders. Her viability will hinge on whether Democratic primary voters prioritize grassroots momentum or perceived general election competitiveness.

At this stage in the race, Charles Booker appears to be the most likely Democratic nominee, and, in my estimation, the candidate who gives Democrats their clearest path to overperforming in November.

Recent polling places Booker ahead in the Democratic primary by approximately 11 points as of late January, an increase from a narrower 3-point advantage in October. While early surveys showed a more competitive contest, particularly when Amy McGrath retained stronger initial support, her numbers have declined as the undecided share of the electorate has grown from roughly 31 percent to 43 percent. Importantly, no other Democratic candidate has broken into double digits, reinforcing Booker's position as the field's early leader.

Democratic voters have not fully consolidated behind Booker, but the structure of a primary electorate may favor him. More engaged, ideologically motivated voters tend to turn out in midterm primaries, and Booker's progressive profile gives him an advantage among that bloc. If undecided voters begin to align as the race becomes more defined, Booker is well-positioned to expand his lead.

Booker also enters the race without having directly faced Mitch McConnell in a general election, avoiding the political baggage associated with running against one of the most entrenched Republican figures in modern Senate history. Instead, Booker previously challenged Rand Paul, allowing him to build statewide name recognition without being defined solely through a McConnell-centric contest. That distinction could matter at the margins. With McConnell stepping aside, some traditional Republicans and right-leaning independents may be recalibrating their loyalties. Booker is not tethered to a high-profile, polarizing clash with McConnell, which may reduce entrenched opposition among voters who were personally

aligned with McConnell's leadership style but are uneasy with the direction of the party's MAGA wing.

That said, Kentucky remains structurally Republican at the federal level. Regardless of the Democratic nominee, flipping the seat will require both a favorable national environment and an ability to expand beyond the party's urban base. Still, among the current field, Booker combines early polling strength, grassroots enthusiasm, and statewide familiarity in a way that gives Democrats their strongest opportunity to compete for this open Senate seat.

House Races

Again, Morgan McGarvey, who represents the Louisville-anchored 3rd Congressional District, should continue to do so in 2026. That said, I want to focus on the democrats 2 other best chances at gaining power in the bluegrass state.

KY-06: The Most Plausible Democratic Target

Beyond Louisville's safely Democratic 3rd District, Kentucky Democrats face steep terrain at the federal level. Still, one district stands out as the most realistic opportunity if national conditions tighten: the Lexington-anchored 6th Congressional District.

Currently represented by **Andy Barr,** KY-06 is the most competitive district in the state outside of Louisville. Although Barr has consistently secured reelection, the district's demographic composition gives Democrats their clearest opening to narrow Republican margins.

The 6th District includes Fayette County, home to the University of Kentucky and a growing suburban electorate. Compared to much of the state, it contains a higher concentration of college-educated voters and suburban households, demographics that have shown increased volatility in recent federal elections.

Democratic statewide candidates, including Governor Andy Beshear, have performed competitively in the district, demonstrating that crossover appeal is possible under the right political environment. While that success has not yet translated to a congressional flip, it signals that KY-06 is not as structurally rigid as other Kentucky districts.

For Democrats to seriously contest the seat, three conditions would likely need to align:

- Persuasion-focused messaging aimed at suburban voters, particularly around economic stability, healthcare access, and cost-of-living concerns.
- Strong turnout in Lexington paired with improved margins in surrounding counties.
- A favorable national environment that compresses Republican advantages across suburban districts.

If Democrats are going to flip a seat in Kentucky in 2026, KY-06 remains the most plausible path. Within the Democratic field **Cherlynn Stevenson, appears to have the stronger structural profile over Zach Dembo**.

Stevenson, 49, brings legislative experience and has cultivated strong connections with voters throughout the district, positioning herself as a seasoned Democratic contender. She has navigated competitive races before and understands the electoral terrain, a key advantage in a district where persuasion margins and turnout operations will determine viability. Her fundraising network reflects a broad base of contributors, suggesting meaningful grassroots engagement.

Dembo may report higher cash on hand and backing from larger donors, which can provide early campaign infrastructure. However, in a district like KY-06, sustained voter contact and local credibility may prove more valuable than headline fundraising totals.

If Democrats intend to mount a serious challenge to Barr, Stevenson's combination of experience, district-level familiarity, and grassroots fundraising could position her as the more durable general election nominee.

KY-04: The next best shot

Kentucky's 4th Congressional District, represented by Thomas Massie, stretches across Northern Kentucky along the Cincinnati metropolitan corridor. The district is reliably Republican, and Massie has cultivated a strong ideological brand with a loyal conservative following. Compared to KY-06, this race is a significantly longer shot for Democrats. Still, there are structural dynamics worth monitoring.

The district includes suburban communities economically and culturally tied to Cincinnati. In recent cycles, suburban shifts nationally have narrowed Republican margins in some comparable districts. If national political conditions tighten, particularly among college-educated or moderate suburban voters, performance gaps could shrink.

There is also the broader question of Republican coalition dynamics. If anti-establishment sentiment intensifies within the GOP base or fractures emerge between libertarian-leaning and populist factions, a disciplined Democratic campaign could theoretically benefit at the margins. However, defeating Massie outright would likely require a pronounced political wave. His entrenched brand and consistent support make KY-04 one of the more difficult targets on the Democratic map.

Within the Democratic primary, **Melissa Strange appears to hold the stronger early position relative to Jesse Brewer**. Strange has articulated a message tailored to suburban concerns and has outraised Brewer in early fundraising reports. While neither candidate currently appears positioned to unseat Massie absent a significant national shift, Strange's financial edge and clearer messaging framework may give her the better structural footing if Democrats aim to maximize competitiveness.

Ultimately, KY-04 remains a high-bar contest. But if Democrats are seeking to expand the map beyond Lexington and Louisville, this is the district where modest overperformance could signal broader suburban movement.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_election_in_Kentucky,_2026
- NY Times coverage of polling in Kentucky- https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/polls/kentucky-us-senate-election-polls-2026.html
- The Bottom Line News covers the political happenings in the Bluegrass State- https://kychamberbottomline.com/
- Charles Booker clip- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l20cxrPX_iw
- Cherlynn Stevenson clip- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fuYeRRwcPA

Louisiana

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | February 23, 2026

For a state that is often considered a Republican stronghold, Louisiana has more political complexity than a surface-level glance. It certainly leans red; that much is sure given the state has voted for the Republican candidate in every presidential election since 2000 and Republicans hold nearly every statewide elected office and a majority in the statehouse. With Republican Governor Jeff Landry elected in 2023, the state has pushed further and further right on issues regarding abortion, education, and immigration. However, there is an interesting political divide between Republican rural areas and urban Democratic strongholds like New Orleans. Notably, there is a 37%-35% split when it comes to registered Democrats and Republicans respectively, meaning that in most recent elections, some registered Democrats are voting for Republican candidates.

Demographically, Louisiana is facing population decline and stagnation since 2021. Most residents are white and Protestant, although 32.6% are African American and Catholics also make up a non-trivial cohort. Economically, the state is focused heavily on seafood, farming, and energy sectors, although there is also a small tech and film industry mainly in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Louisiana ranked as the third-least educated state as of 2023 despite having over 40 universities including Tulane University.

In the world of elections, Louisiana has had a busy few years. A 2022 version of the state's congressional maps was found unconstitutional, due to the state having six seats in the U.S. House of Representatives but only one favoring a Black candidate in a state where nearly a third of the population is Black. In 2024, Republican state lawmakers drew a second majority-Black U.S. House district, but this map has faced legal challenges. This case was

supposed to have been ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court, but the court instead asked for a second round of legal arguments and will likely release a ruling later this spring. This has given time for the current six-district map to be cemented for the 2026 midterms. The primary elections will be held on May 16, with the general election taking place on November 3.

Currently, **the two Senators are Republican Bill Cassidy,** who is up for election and is facing primary challenges over his decision to vote to convict Trump in his 2021 impeachment trial, and **Republican John Kennedy**, who is not up for election. Despite his push against the MAGA movement, Cassidy has still racked up endorsements ranging from Drew Brees to Tim Scott and John Thune, on top of the monstrous $11,729,417 raised so far. While his main challenges will come from within his party, namely Julia Letlow and John Flemming, there are still **two Democrats** who might be able to snatch this seat.

First is **Nick Albares,** a nonprofit executive and former aide to Governor John Bel Edwards. With an undergraduate degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Public Policy degree from Georgetown University, he comes into this race bearing the most political training out of any other Democratic candidate. His platform focuses heavily on healthcare and social services, both areas he has worked in via his nonprofit work and his political work. His youth, at age 34, could be a positive factor in this race, alongside his political experience. But his name recognition is not strong, and his fundraising data is nonexistent so far. Additionally, his platform is extremely narrow and his media presence is somewhat lacking.

The other potential Democratic nominee for Senator is **Jamie Davis**, a farmer and candidate for Louisiana's 21st House of Representatives district in 2023. A Louisiana native, he has worked in multiple fields including electrical engineering, farming, and serving on the Democratic State Central Committee. All of this work experience has endeared him with the rural and working class of Louisiana, as well as helping him to understand the larger issues at hand. Davis' platform focuses on tax reform, affordable housing, healthcare as a basic human need, respecting the rule of law, higher teacher pay, and minimum wage increases. Notably, he also backs controlling immigration, a stance that will play well in a Republican state Davis' chances are somewhat better than Albares', in large part because his platform is broader, his connections to the local communities run deeper. However his fundraising efforts have yielded $16,865 so far. While far more money will be needed to win this race, it is better than any other Democratic candidate, and if the winds blow the right way, a split Republican primary could give him just enough room to win the seat.

In the House of Representatives, the current delegation (in ascending order from the 1st District) is Republican Steve Scalise, Democrat Troy Carter, Republican Clay Higgens, Republican Mike Johnson, Republican Julia Letlow, and Democrat Cleo Fields. The only district with a chance of flipping will likely be the 5th, as Letlow is resigning to challenge Bill Cassidy in the Senate race. This seat is being fought for by a wide range of candidates on both sides, and the district is the least red district in the state that is represented by a Republican (at a still formidable R+18). Out of the six races, these are the Democratic names to keep an eye out for:

- **District 1:** Lauren Jewett and Jim Long

- **District 2:** Troy Carter
- **District 3:** Tia LeBrun and Caleb Walker
- **District 4:** Conrad Cable and Matt Gromlich
- **District 5:** Jessee Fleenor and Larry Foy
- **District 6:** Cleo Fields

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

There are only two real competitive seats in the state. The first is the 5th district, currently represented by **Republican Julia Letlow**, that currently sits at a R+18 rating. While that isn't particularly confidence-boosting for Democrats, the fact that Letlow is running for the Senate seat means that this race has opened up even wider. This district faces a few major problems, mainly its 23.4% poverty rate and the fact that its biggest industries are healthcare, retail, and educational services. The seat has been represented by a Republican since 2014, but there are two main names aiming to change that in this district. The first is Jessee Fleenor, a farmer and a candidate for this district in 2018. His platform is a mix of economic populism, community solidarity, and traditional Democratic policy priorities tailored to a heavily rural district in northeast Louisiana. The other is **Larry Foy**, a faith-based community leader and social justice advocate who also has some progressive-tinged stances that pair well with his focus less on partisan politics and more on systemic issues. In a largely rural district, both of these candidates will be fighting an uphill battle, but if they can position themselves both as pragmatic candidates who will address the pressing healthcare crisis and economic stability, they both have a shot.

The other main district that Democrats will target is the 6th district, currently represented by **Democrat Cleo Fields**. While a Democrat-held seat might not seem like a competitive one, especially given the district's D+8 rating, it has faced a lot of change recently. This has been one of the districts most affected by the congressional map legal debate mentioned earlier, and benefitted from most of Baton Rouge's whiter and wealthier portions, along with Louisiana State University (LSU), being shifted to the 5th district. Any future debate will affect the competitiveness of this district, so it is important for Democrats to lock this seat down and gain momentum while they can. The district still contains a swath of Baton Rouge and is predominantly urban and Black. Much of its economy is heavily driven by services, healthcare, and industrial manufacturing, meaning any candidate will have to play to these industries in order to have a chance. Cleo Fields is still a very popular politician, and he will likely retain this seat, but his next term in office will likely be a busy one, balancing local issues with national-level crises.

Most Competitive Indiana Democrats in 2026

Jessee Fleenor: LA-5

Jesse Fleenor is a millennial candidate who bills himself as a "new generation of Blue-Dog Democrat." A local dairy farmer, he tried to win this district in 2018 but fell short. Despite his rhetoric as a Blue-Dog moderate, many of his policies fall on the more progressive end. Fleenor frames his campaign around community values, unity, and everyday economic fairness rather

than elite political talking points. His focuses are on eliminating billionaires, reigning in AI, universal healthcare, criminal justice reform, net neutrality, campaign finance reform, and environmental issues. These issues will be a bit of a gamble in a district that haasn't seen a Democratic representative since 2014, but an open election in which there is no strong incumbent and a potentially split Republican vote could give him just enough wiggle room to connect with a population facing some of the worst of the most pressing modern issues. Republican leadership has helped foment the declining population and number of opportunities in the state and district, and Fleenor's focus on something different, even if it is a host of progressive policies, could resonate with voters wanting a change. If he is able to win, it would be a statement win and could showcase the strength of progressivism in even the most red and rural districts.

Recent Interviews:

Louisiana Anthology Podcast: 283b. Jessee Fleenor

Larry Foy: LA-5

Larry Foy, 70, has an accomplished professional and public career in college and seminary instruction, pastoral ministry, social justice activism, public policy advocacy, non-profit management, and community organizing. From Chicago to LA, he has worked to implement policies and projects focusing on ending mass incarceration, racial inequality, and restorative justice. He also has a long history of serving as the Regional Director for the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, while also serving as a spiritual and denominational leader in the United Church of Christ. All of this nonprofit and religious work will play well in this district, which is one of the most religious districts in one of the most religious states. While his focus on criminal justice reform won't necessarily resonate with his constituency, his heavy focus on expanding social services like healthcare, reforming government elections and campaign finance, protecting consumers, and funding public education certainly will help his chances. All of these issues are pressing for Louisiana voters, and could provide many avenues to alleviate the high poverty rate in this district. Alongside the electoral factors such as an open seat and a split Republican primary, Foy may also provide a new, progressive vision for a district in desperate need of a change.

Cleo Fields: LA-6

Rep. Cleo Fields has long been in politics. He previously represented Louisiana's 4th congressional district from 1993 to 1997 and ran unsuccessfully for governor of Louisiana in 1995. After a long stint in the Louisiana State Senate, he finally returned to Congress in 2024 after winning just over 50% of the vote. Fields sits on the Committee on Financial Services, and has championed education, economic development, and community empowerment. His work writing the Delta Initiatives Act and founding the Congressional Classroom has been lauded by local leaders, and now he is set to retain his seat in this race. Fields's platform is focused on economic justice and wages, quality education, expanding healthcare, and investing in community development and infrastructure. All four of these pillars will play well in this district,

especially given his already good track record. With this district leaning blue already, and with Fields already having raised $384,055 with no real Republican contenders, this seat should be a safe blue seat.

Recent Interviews:

Congressmen Jonathan L. Jackson and Cleo Fields discuss SCOTUS w. Barbra Arnwine of TJC

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels:
    - United States House of Representatives elections in Louisiana, 2026 - Ballotpedia
    - United States Senate election in Louisiana, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
    - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
    - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- The *Louisiana Illuminator* is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan news organization focused specifically on state government, policy, and elections: Louisiana Illuminator

Maine

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | 2/21/2026

Shifting to the Pine Tree State, Maine features one of the most consequential Senate races for Democrats in 2026, alongside two U.S. House contests. The primary will be June 9th followed by the general on November 3rd.

The Senate Race

Senator Susan Collins remains one of the last Republican moderates in the U.S. Senate. Her brand in Maine has long depended on an image of independence from national party leadership. Notably, Collins voted to acquit former President Donald Trump in his first impeachment trial but voted to convict in the second following the January 6th attack, a distinction that has reinforced her centrist positioning within Maine politics.

That moderate record has helped Collins survive in a state that routinely votes Democratic at the presidential level. However, the national Republican electorate has become more ideologically rigid, and primary voters often skew more conservative than general election voters. Collins' distance from the party's MAGA wing could theoretically expose her to intra-party pressure, though her incumbency and longstanding statewide rapport make a serious primary threat uncertain.

Maine's broader political landscape favors Democrats at the federal level. The state's other senator, **Angus King**, is an independent who caucuses with Democrats. Both U.S. House seats are currently held by Democrats. In that context, Collins' seat represents one of the most realistic Democratic pickup opportunities on the 2026 Senate map.

That said, Collins has repeatedly demonstrated resilience. Her long tenure, constituent relationships, and cultivated moderate image may once again allow her to outperform national Republican trends. For Democrats, defeating Collins would require both strong candidate recruitment and a national environment that reinforces partisan realignment in blue-leaning states.

On the Democratic side of Maine's marquee Senate race, both Graham Platner and Governor Janet Mills have mounted serious campaigns. Mills brings statewide name recognition and executive experience, but at this stage, Platner appears to hold the stronger momentum.

Platner, 41, offers an outsider profile that could resonate in a state that has historically rewarded candidates with pragmatic, independent identities. Though he aligns with progressive policy positions, his background in Maine's oyster industry gives him a locally rooted, small-business narrative that may broaden his appeal beyond traditional partisan lines. That blend of economic authenticity and generational contrast distinguishes him within the field.

He has also generated significant earned media, coverage driven by story and profile rather than paid advertising, suggesting that his candidacy is attracting organic interest. In a crowded political environment, narrative viability matters.

Fundraising further reinforces his position. Platner has reportedly outraised Mills by several million dollars, signaling both national donor engagement and grassroots enthusiasm. While Mills' executive résumé carries weight, Platner's ability to mobilize financial support without prior statewide office indicates real organizational strength.

In early head-to-head polling, Platner has shown competitive numbers not only within the Democratic primary but also against incumbent Senator Susan Collins. While polling this far out should be treated cautiously, those results suggest that Collins is not invulnerable and that Democrats may have a viable pathway if they nominate a candidate capable of consolidating both the progressive base and moderate swing voters.

Maine remains a politically nuanced state, and Collins' longstanding reputation for independence should not be underestimated. However, if Democrats are looking for a candidate who combines fundraising strength, narrative appeal, and generational contrast, Platner currently appears to offer the most dynamic challenge.

The House Landscape

ME-01: A Safe Democratic Hold

In the 1st Congressional District, **Chellie Pingree** is expected to seek reelection and remains heavily favored. The Portland-based district is solidly Democratic and unlikely to shift in 2026.

ME-02: An Open and Competitive Seat

The more dynamic contest lies in the 2nd District. Representative **Jared Golden**, a 43-year-old Marine Corps veteran first elected in 2018, has built a reputation as one of the more moderate Democrats in the House. Golden notably flipped a district that had supported Trump and has navigated its swing-state tendencies through careful positioning.

With Golden stepping away, ME-02 becomes an open seat, and therefore more competitive. The district has a history of ticket-splitting and includes large rural areas that have leaned Republican in federal races. While Democrats maintain statewide control at the state level, margins remain tight, and the 2nd District cannot be assumed safe.

My pick to replace Golden is **Jordan Wood**.

Wood, 36, has significantly outraised other candidates in the field, bringing in millions more than his competitors. In an open-seat race, particularly one expected to draw national attention, that financial advantage matters. It signals both institutional confidence and access to national donor networks. His background as a congressional staffer also provides a different profile from traditional state-level politicians, offering both federal policy experience and connections in Washington that could translate into campaign infrastructure and outside support.

Fundraising does not guarantee victory, but in a toss-up district, the ability to define oneself early and fund sustained voter outreach can be decisive.

Looking toward the general election, ME-02 remains highly competitive. The district has supported both Trump and Golden in recent cycles, underscoring its independent streak. However, midterm elections often hinge on national political climate. If Republican approval numbers remain underwater and voter dissatisfaction with Washington persists, Democrats could benefit from a favorable environment.

It is also worth noting that presidential-level turnout coalitions do not always replicate in midterms. If Republican base enthusiasm softens without a presidential race at the top of the ticket, Democrats may find a narrow but viable path to retaining the seat.

That said, this race should be viewed as a true toss-up. The district is not structurally Democratic, and any nominee will need to compete aggressively in rural counties while maximizing turnout in population centers.

Still, given fundraising strength, federal experience, and potential national tailwinds, Wood appears well positioned to secure the Democratic nomination and mount a competitive general election campaign. If Democrats are to hold ME-02 in 2026, he currently looks like their strongest bet.

Overall

Still, Maine's overall political climate gives Democrats structural advantages. If national conditions in 2026 favor the party, particularly amid continued volatility surrounding a second Trump presidency, Democrats could overperform relative to 2024 levels. In a Senate

environment where control often hinges on one or two seats, Maine represents one of the clearest Democratic pickup opportunities on the map.

Given the Senate filibuster and the 60-vote threshold required to advance major legislation, even a single seat like Maine could carry outsized national consequences.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates & races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_elections,_2026
- Maine Morningstar provides coverage of news in the Pine Tree State- https://mainemorningstar.com/
- Real Clear Politics polling for Maine Senate Race- https://www.realclearpolling.com/polls/senate/general/2026/maine/collins-vs-platner
- Platner Launch Video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53bZ_95nDjk
- Jordan Wood Launch Video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jY6oanS7eM4

Massachusetts

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson

3/29/2026

Massachusetts, or the Bay State, is a safe state for Democrats in 2026. While the state has a wonky history of electing a Republican Governor, all three major seats are held by Democrats- this includes the Governorship & the two Senate seats held by Elizabeth Warren & Ed Markey, who are both in their 13th year in their respective seats. Moving down the ballot, the remaining congressional breakdown is 9-0 in Democrats' favor, with 8 of the 9 incumbents running for re-election. The primary elections are set for September 9th, followed by the general election on November 3.

Massachusetts remains one of the most reliably Democratic states in the country, both in federal elections and across much of its political infrastructure. Rooted in a long tradition of liberal governance, strong public institutions, and highly engaged voters, the state has consistently favored Democratic candidates at the national level for decades.

At the federal level, Massachusetts has not supported a Republican presidential candidate since Ronald Reagan. The state’s electorate is heavily concentrated in urban and suburban regions such as Boston, Cambridge, and Worcester, where Democratic support is both deep and reliable. Several structural factors reinforce this advantage. Massachusetts has one of the highest levels of educational attainment in the country, a strong union presence in key sectors, and an economy anchored by healthcare, education, and technology; all of which tend to correlate with Democratic voting patterns. In addition, the state’s political culture places a premium on government competence, public investment, and social services, aligning closely with mainstream Democratic policy priorities.

That said, Massachusetts politics are not without internal competition. While Republicans are largely noncompetitive at the federal level, the Democratic Party itself encompasses a wide ideological range; from establishment incumbents to progressive challengers, as reflected in the state's Senate race. As a result, the most meaningful electoral contests in Massachusetts often occur in Democratic primaries rather than general elections.

In short, Massachusetts is not a battleground state; it is a Democratic stronghold. The question in 2026 is not whether Democrats will win, but which Democrats will.

Senate

Ed Markey is up for re-election but is facing a challenge from Seth Moulton, the lone House incumbent not running for re-election. Markey, who is 80, has faced calls to retire & turn over the reins to a young upstart, Moulton, 47. Aside from age, Markey has done little to upset voters in the Bay State. The anxieties from prominent liberal figures staying in office for too long, including Biden & Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, resonate with democratic voters broadly, yet the polling shows Markey with a solid lead over Moulton.

While elder moments could lead voters to question Markey's ability before September, the incumbent Senator has a firm grip on his seat heading into 2026. Senator Ed Markey has built a decades-long career rooted in progressive policy, consumer protection, and technological innovation. After serving 37 years in the U.S. House before his election to the Senate in 2013, Markey has established himself as a leading voice on climate change, clean energy, and telecommunications policy. He has authored or co-authored major legislation on fuel efficiency standards, net neutrality, and online privacy protections, while also playing a key role in landmark efforts such as the Waxman-Markey climate bill. His work consistently emphasizes both economic growth and consumer safeguards, particularly in emerging industries and energy markets.

Markey's longevity in Massachusetts politics stems from his ability to align with the state's priorities: strong environmental protections, investment in innovation, and a commitment to government oversight in the public interest. His reputation as a policy-driven legislator, combined with a deep connection to Massachusetts' political identity, has made him a durable and trusted figure among voters. In a state that values both progressive leadership and institutional experience, Markey continues to represent a blend of forward-looking policy and established credibility that resonates with the electorate.

Representative Seth Moulton could emerge as a viable alternative if concerns about Senator Markey's longevity begin to surface before the primary. A Marine Corps veteran and established member of Congress, Moulton brings a younger profile and a record that blends national security credentials with pragmatic Democratic policy positions. While Markey remains firmly ahead in polling and retains strong support across the state, Moulton's appeal would likely rest on generational contrast and his ability to position himself as a next-generation leader for Massachusetts Democrats. That said, absent a significant shift in the race, his path remains narrow given Markey's entrenched advantages.

House

Turning to the House, none of Massachusetts' nine districts are expected to be competitive in the general election. However, the 6th Congressional District stands out as an open-seat contest, with Representative Seth Moulton pursuing a Senate bid.

In a crowded Democratic primary field, Dan Koh (41) has emerged as the early frontrunner, followed by John Beccia. With limited polling available, fundraising serves as one of the few measurable indicators of candidate strength. Koh and Beccia are the only candidates to surpass the seven-figure mark, giving them a clear advantage in terms of campaign infrastructure and visibility.

Koh's profile is built on a combination of federal, local, and private-sector experience. During the Biden administration, he served in senior roles at the White House and as Chief of Staff at the Department of Labor, where he helped implement major initiatives related to infrastructure, clean energy, and worker protections. Earlier, as Chief of Staff to former Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Koh was part of a period marked by economic growth, expanded housing access, and improved educational outcomes.

That breadth of experience, spanning Washington, Boston, and the private sector, gives Koh a well-rounded résumé that appeals to both establishment Democrats and voters focused on governance and delivery. Combined with strong fundraising networks and institutional backing, he enters the race with clear structural advantages. In a district where Democratic voters tend to prioritize competence, policy experience, and coalition-building, Koh is well positioned to consolidate support and secure the nomination.

His main primary opponent, Beccia, presents a contrasting profile centered on private-sector experience and a reform-oriented message. With a background in finance and entrepreneurship, Beccia has emphasized issues such as housing affordability, economic inequality, and government accountability. While that outsider framing may resonate with voters seeking a different approach, Massachusetts Democratic primaries have historically favored candidates with established public-sector experience and institutional ties. In that context, Beccia's candidacy highlights a clear ideological and experiential contrast, but one that may ultimately reinforce Koh's advantage as the more traditionally positioned contender.

While Koh is the early favorite, there remains significant time before the primary. Given the field's size, the race could become more competitive as candidates consolidate support, making it a contest worth watching as it develops.

The remaining districts are held by incumbents who are expected to secure reelection barring any major political shift:

- District 1: Richard Neal
- District 2: Jim McGovern
- District 3: Lori Trahan
- District 4: Jake Auchincloss

- District 5: Katherine Clark
- District 7: Ayanna Pressley
- District 8: Stephen Lynch
- District 9: Bill Keating

Taken together, Massachusetts is unlikely to see any meaningful partisan competition in 2026, with Democrats positioned to retain full control of both the Senate and the House. National political conditions may further reinforce that advantage. Recent polling shows Donald Trump's approval rating falling into the low 30s amid concerns over the Iran conflict, rising costs linked to tariffs, immigration enforcement controversies, and ongoing backlash surrounding the Epstein files. In a midterm environment where the president's party often faces electoral headwinds, those dynamics could contribute to a broader Democratic overperformance. In a state as reliably blue as Massachusetts, that would likely translate into not competitive races but comfortable victories for Democratic candidates across the board.

Recent Interviews:

- Ed Markey at a No Kings! Rally- https://www.youtube.com/shorts/k49sITKLruA
- Seth Moulton on the Iran War- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0wCDAcerc0
- Dan Koh announcment video- https://www.facebook.com/danarriggkoh/videos/launching-our-campaign/1505134484025680/
- John Beccia announcement video- https://www.instagram.com/becciaforcongress/reel/DUUYWwVjtCH/?__d=1

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels:
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
- The CommonWealth Beacon is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Bay State.

Michigan

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series Brief #16 | Ryan Dulaney | 2/24/2026

Primary Election Date: August 4, 2026
General Election Date: November 3, 2026

Overview

Michigan will be one of the most competitive Democratic Senate primaries of the 2026 cycle following Senator Gary Peters' decision to retire and not run for re-election. As a battleground state that has flip-flopped in recent federal elections, Michigan's Senate seat is a top priority for the Democrats. In order to win, Democratic nominee will need to garner support from the party's urban voter base, perform well in suburban areas, and furthermore perform well with working-class voters all across the state.

Democratic Senate Race Candidates

Haley Stevens

Current Position: U.S. Representative, Michigan's 11th Congressional District
Background: Elected to Congress in 2018, Stevens has focused on manufacturing policy, automotive industry investments, and economic policy in general.
Campaign Message: Emphasizing job growth, supply chain resiliency, and middle-class affordability, Stevens is positioning herself as a pragmatic Democrat with appeal to suburban and business-oriented voters.
Why she might win: Strong fundraising network, experience in congress, appeal to metropolitan and suburban population.

Mallory McMorrow
Current Position: Michigan State Senator 8th District
Background: Elected to the Michigan Senate in 2018, McMorrow gained widespread attention for her speeches defending LGBTQ rights.
Campaign Message: Her campaign is focusing on reproductive rights, and the state of democratic institutions. McMorrow appeals to younger and more progressive primary voters.
Why she might win: Strong grassroots support, national media renown, activist base, youthful appeal.

Abdul El-Sayed
Background: Currently a physician, is a former Wayne County Health Director. Ran for governor in 2018.
Campaign Message: Platform includes healthcare reform, corporate regulation, and economic justice. El-Sayed is positioning himself as the most progressive (leftmost) candidate in the field.
Why he Might Win: Established progressive voter base, previous experience running statewide, strong appeal to progressives.

Democratic House Race Candidates

Primary Election Date: August 4, 2026
General Election Date: November 3, 2026

Hillary Scholten
Race: Michigan's 3rd Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative, Michigan's 3rd Congressional District
Background: Elected in 2022 after flipping a Republican seat, Scholten previously worked as an immigration attorney and was a Department of Justice official.
Campaign Message: Emphasizes reproductive rights, economic stability, and pragmatic governance. Scholten has positioned herself as a center-left Democrat focused on protecting democratic institutions and expanding opportunity.
Why she might win: Incumbency advantage, demonstrated ability to win in a competitive district, and strong support among suburban voters in the Grand Rapids area.

Debbie Dingell
Race: Michigan's 6th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative Michigan's 6th Congressional District
Background: Has been in Congress since 2015, Dingell has deep roots in Michigan politics and strong ties to organized labor and the automotive industry. She is a longtime advocate of both healthcare and manufacturing issues.
Campaign Message: Running on protecting Social Security and Medicare, union support, and strengthening Michigan's manufacturing, Dingell presents herself as an experienced and reliable advocate for working families.
Why she might win: Incumbency, strong union backing, name recognition, and institutional support within the Democratic Party.

Dan Kildee
Race: Michigan's 8th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative Michigan's 8th Congressional District
Background: Elected in 2012, Kildee has focused on economic revival in Flint, infrastructure investment, and public health issues (e.g post Flint water crisis).
Campaign Message: Centered on economic revitalization, infrastructure funding, and opening access to healthcare, Kildee campaigns as a pragmatic candidate focused on visible community improvement.
Why he might win: Record of delivering federal resources to his district, local ties, and limited organized opposition.

Haley Stevens
Race: Michigan's 11th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative Michigan's 11th Congressional District
Background: Elected in 2018, Stevens has built a platform around manufacturing, automotive industry investment, and economic competitiveness. She previously served in roles connected to federal economic recovery efforts.
Campaign Message: Framing her work around innovation, job growth, and strengthening domestic manufacturing, Stevens appeals to suburban professionals and labor-oriented Democrats alike.
Why she might win: Strong fundraising network, policy focus aligned with Michigan's industrial economy, and solid suburban and urban base.

Rashida Tlaib
Race: Michigan's 12th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative Michigan's 12th Congressional District
Background: First elected to Congress in 2018, Tlaib is a member of the progressive "Squad" and previously served in the Michigan Legislature. She has been a prominent voice on economic justice, civil rights, and foreign policy.
Campaign Message: Centered on economic equity, environmental justice, housing access, and human rights advocacy, Tlaib maintains a strong progressive platform.
Why she might win: Deep grassroots network in Detroit, strong small-dollar fundraising, and a loyal progressive voter base.

Shri Thanedar
Race: Michigan's 13th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: U.S. Representative Michigan's 13th Congressional District
Background: Elected in 2022, Thanedar is a businessman and former state legislator who built his campaign on outsider credentials and personal immigrant success story.
Campaign Message: Focused on economic opportunity, public safety, and expanding access to jobs and education, Thanedar emphasizes pragmatic problem-solving.
Why he might win: Incumbency, personal financial resources, and name recognition across Wayne County.

Donavan McKinney
Race: Michigan's 13th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Current Position: Michigan State Representative
Background: A state legislator with strong ties to local Democratic networks in Wayne County, McKinney has positioned himself as a next-generation leader within Detroit-area politics.
Campaign Message: Emphasizing economic equity, community investment, and responsive district-level representation, McKinney is presenting himself as a more locally rooted alternative.
Why he might win: Appeal to voters seeking generational change, local credibility, and consolidation of progressive support in a multi-candidate field.

Shelby Campbell
Race: Michigan's 13th Congressional District Democratic Primary
Background: Former assembly line worker and community advocate
Campaign Message: Centered on working-class representation, labor rights, and economic fairness, Campbell is running as a grassroots-oriented candidate.
Why she might win: Potential to mobilize labor-aligned and anti-establishment voters if dissatisfaction with the incumbent consolidates.

Minnesota

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | April 18, 2026

Minnesota has emerged as a central battleground in the broader political and cultural conflicts shaping the country in recent years. From the police killing of George Floyd in 2020 to renewed clashes over federal immigration enforcement and ICE activity, the state, particularly the Twin Cities, has become a focal point for activism, protest, and national political attention. These developments have helped shape both voter engagement and partisan dynamics heading into the 2026 election cycle.

In 2026, Minnesota will host a full slate of major elections, including an open U.S. Senate race and all eight of its U.S. House seats. Primary elections are scheduled for August 11th, followed by the general election on November 3rd.

At the statewide level, Minnesota remains reliably Democratic. Democrats currently hold both Senate seats and the governorship, and the state has not supported a Republican presidential candidate since 1972. However, the political landscape is more competitive down ballot. The state House is effectively split, reflecting a persistent urban–rural divide: the Twin Cities metro anchors Democratic strength, while greater Minnesota continues to provide a durable Republican base.

Despite this competitiveness in certain areas, early indicators suggest Democrats enter 2026 with structural advantages. Recent polling shows Democratic candidates leading in key statewide matchups, with voters citing concerns about threats to democracy and federal policy actions as major factors shaping their preferences. Additionally, ongoing tensions between state leaders and the Trump administration over immigration enforcement have further mobilized Democratic-aligned constituencies.

Taken together, Minnesota's recent political climate, marked by high levels of civic engagement, national attention, and sustained partisan polarization, positions Democrats favorably heading into 2026. While Republicans retain strength in rural regions and could remain competitive in select districts, the broader environment suggests Democratic candidates are well-positioned to maintain, and potentially expand, their influence across the state.

Senate

Minnesota Senator Tina Smith (68) announced she will not seek re-election in 2026, citing personal reasons and a desire to spend more time with her family. Her retirement creates an open seat, an uncommon development in a state where Democratic incumbents typically hold a structural advantage.

Despite the absence of an incumbent, the seat is still expected to remain in Democratic hands. While an open seat can, under the right conditions, create a pickup opportunity for Republicans, Minnesota's underlying partisan lean and recent electoral trends suggest Democrats remain favored in both the primary and general election.

On the Democratic side, the primary has largely consolidated around two major candidates: Peggy Flanagan and Angie Craig. Flanagan, the state's current Lieutenant Governor, has consistently held an advantage in available polling. Early surveys in 2025 showed her with a substantial lead, at times exceeding 30 points, though more recent data suggests the race has tightened.

Recent polling presents a mixed but directionally consistent picture. Some surveys show Flanagan leading by double digits, including margins in the low teens, while others, particularly internal polls from the Craig campaign, indicate a narrower gap in the low single digits. Flanagan-aligned polling similarly reinforces her advantage, though with margins comparable to independent estimates. Taken together, the data suggests a race that has become more competitive over time but still leans clearly in Flanagan's favor.

At this stage, the primary appears to be Flanagan's to lose. While Craig has demonstrated viability and the ability to narrow the gap, she has not yet established consistent parity across polling. In the general election context, both candidates appear well-positioned. Available data indicates either Democrat would enter the race with a measurable advantage over a Republican challenger, reinforcing the broader expectation that the seat is likely to remain under Democratic control.

Peggy Flanagan enters the race as one of the most prominent Democratic figures in Minnesota, currently serving as the state's Lieutenant Governor alongside Governor Tim Walz. First elected to the role in 2018, Flanagan has built a profile rooted in both executive governance and long-standing ties to progressive grassroots movements.

Flanagan's background is central to her political identity. Raised by a single mother and relying on public assistance programs such as food stamps and Medicaid, she frequently frames her career as a product of government investment in working families. Before entering statewide

office, she served in the Minnesota House of Representatives and worked as a community organizer, giving her both legislative and on-the-ground political experience.

Ideologically, Flanagan aligns with the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. Her campaign messaging emphasizes economic equity, expanding access to healthcare, and confronting systemic barriers facing working-class communities. She has also positioned herself as a strong critic of former President Donald Trump, framing the 2026 election as part of a broader fight over democratic institutions and federal policy direction.

In terms of political positioning, Flanagan benefits from a combination of statewide name recognition, executive experience, and support from key Democratic constituencies, particularly within the Democratic–Farmer–Labor (DFL) coalition. Her profile as a historic figure, she is the first Native American woman elected statewide in Minnesota, also contributes to her appeal among progressive and identity-based voting blocs.

Taken together, Flanagan's candidacy is defined by a blend of personal narrative, progressive policy priorities, and institutional backing, making her a formidable contender in both the Democratic primary and the general election.

House

Turning to the House, Minnesota's Democratic-held districts appear largely stable heading into 2026. Incumbents Kelly Morrison (MN-03), Betty McCollum (MN-04), and Ilhan Omar (MN-05) are all expected to retain their seats, with each representing safely Democratic districts anchored in the Twin Cities metro area.

Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District (MN-02), currently held by Angie Craig, presents a more nuanced situation. Craig's decision to run for Senate creates an open seat in a district that has trended competitive in recent cycles. While Craig built her profile by flipping and holding a historically Republican-leaning district, her departure introduces some risk for Democrats. That said, given recent performance and the broader political environment, Democrats are still positioned as slight favorites to hold the seat, though it is likely to attract significant attention from both parties.

The most competitive and politically consequential districts remain in greater Minnesota. Minnesota's 1st (MN-01), 6th (MN-06), 7th (MN-07), and 8th (MN-08) Congressional Districts,currently held by Republicans, represent the clearest opportunities for partisan competition. However, each presents structural challenges for Democrats, as these districts are anchored in more rural and conservative regions of the state.

Among Republican-held districts, Minnesota's 1st Congressional District (MN-01) stands out as the most viable pickup opportunity for Democrats. While still leaning Republican, the district's mix of rural and mid-sized population centers creates a more competitive environment than other GOP-held seats in the state. If national conditions break strongly in Democrats' favor, MN-01 could emerge as a secondary battleground worth watching.

Jake Johnson (D) has emerged as the party's only declared candidate, effectively clearing the primary field and allowing him to focus early on building name recognition and consolidating Democratic support. While Johnson does not yet enter the race with the same level of institutional backing or visibility as more established candidates, his uncontested path to the nomination provides a structural advantage in organizing and fundraising ahead of the general election.

Jake Johnson (Democrat) is a first-time candidate running to represent Minnesota's 1st Congressional District. A high school math teacher in Rochester for nearly two decades, Johnson has built his career in public education, teaching a wide range of students from remedial math to advanced coursework.

Raised in southern Minnesota in a working-class family, Johnson frequently emphasizes his upbringing as the son of a garbage worker and a meter reader, as well as his reliance on public programs growing up. His background, combined with his experience as a teacher and union member, forms the foundation of a campaign focused on affordability, rural investment, and opposition to corporate influence in politics.

Johnson has also gained early institutional support within the Democratic–Farmer–Labor (DFL) Party, including a provisional endorsement that has helped consolidate the Democratic field behind his candidacy. As the only declared Democrat in the race, he enters the general election phase without a contested primary, allowing him to focus on organizing and fundraising earlier than a typical challenger.

For Johnson to mount a credible challenge, Democrats will need a favorable national environment, strong turnout in population centers within the district, and the ability to cut into Republican margins in more rural areas. While MN-01 remains Republican-leaning, it stands apart from other GOP-held districts in Minnesota as the most realistic pathway for a Democratic flip under the right conditions.

Taken together, Minnesota enters the 2026 cycle as a state where Democrats hold clear structural advantages but still face meaningful contests that will test the depth of that strength. From a Senate primary that appears to be consolidating around a frontrunner, to a House map defined more by defense than expansion, the overall landscape favors Democrats maintaining control across the ballot. That said, open seats and competitive districts, particularly in southern Minnesota, ensure that outcomes are not predetermined. In a midterm environment shaped by national dynamics and heightened political engagement within the state, Minnesota will serve less as a battleground for partisan control and more as a proving ground for how effectively Democrats can translate favorable conditions into sustained electoral success.

Recent Interviews:

- Peggy Flanagan at DNC- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b67b6KreswE
- Peggy Flanagan No Kings! Speech- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gZOVkpn1e0
- Angie Craig On The Record Interview- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaJ2bgVKefo

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/Minnesota
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- Minnesota Public Radio covers the political happenings within the state- https://www.mprnews.org/politics

Mississippi

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | 3/20/2026

Mississippi, the Magnolia State, is a Bible Belt state that has grown to become a Republican stronghold. In the presidential elections, it has gone red in every election since Reagan. But while there is only one Democratic Representative and no Democratic Senators from the state, it is a hotspot for voting rights battles in large part due to a large African-American population that makes up almost 38% of the population. Democrats have been spending a decent amount of money in the state with hopes of upsetting the Republican supermajority, yet it is fairly unlikely for any seats to flip. If they are to flip, it would require hitting on what matters to voters here. The primary elections were on March 10, with a primary runoff on April 7, 2026, and the general election will take place on November 3.

Mississippi is also one of, and perhaps the most religious state in the country according to polls. But its ranking in other categories swings the other way. The state is ranked last among all states for health care, 47th in infrastructure, 49th in economy, and 50th in median income. GDP growth has been quite good recently, being one of the fastest-growing states thanks to agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and manufacturing, but this growth is not expected to last. What this means for candidates is that the economy is paramount, and promising to retain and perhaps even hypercharge as much economic momentum as possible is vital for a successful campaign.

This might be hard, seeing as the state's historical dependence on cotton agriculture, late development, frequent flooding, and poor general infrastructure all stand tall in the way of an economic miracle. Each of these will require concerted efforts to overcome, but doing so in a way that is cheap and convincing for voters will be key. This would not be the first miracle the

state has experienced, however. Educational results have increased substantially as a result of policy, curriculum, and pedagogical changes since 2013. At the time, students were performing a full grade below the U.S. average, but by 2024, the students had reversed course and now sat half a grade above the average.

Currently, the two Senators are Republicans Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, with only the latter up for election this cycle. Hyde-Smith just handily beat her primary challenger, Sarah Adlakha, winning 80% of the vote. Hyde-Smith's journey is an interesting one; she was originally a Democrat in the Mississippi State Senate, but switched parties in 2010 before being elected Mississippi agriculture commissioner in 2011 as the first woman to be elected to that office. In 2018, Governor Phil Bryant announced his intention to appoint Hyde-Smith to the United States Senate seat being vacated due to the resignation of Thad Cochran, and thus she also became the first woman to represent Mississippi in Congress.

During her time in Congress, Hyde-Smith has served on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the Committee on Rules and Administration. Much of Hyde-Smith's policies are in line with Donald Trump's agenda and she calls herself a fiscal conservative. She opposes the ACA, she opposes abortion, she voted against the legislation that codifies same-sex marriage rights into federal law, and she has made some posts praising Confederate leaders and soldiers. All of this has played well in the state, as shown by her easy primary victory, and her personal close ties to Trump and many Mississippi farmers will likely help her retain her seat. She also has an extremely long list of endorsements, and has raised $4,391,524 in her race, meaning she is in a prime position to defeat her challenger, Democrat Scott Colom.

Colom, a 43-year-old Mississippi district attorney, edged out two primary opponents in Marine Corps veteran Albert Littell and Priscilla Williams-Till, a distant cousin of lynching victim Emmett Till. He won 73% of the vote, showing that Democratic voters have confidence that Colom is the right choice, and it is hard to argue. His platform has been framed as one that puts Mississippi first, not one party or another. His main policies include a populist-leaning economic message focused on lowering costs, raising wages, and tax relief for certain workers like teachers and law enforcement, while healthcare also sits as a main pillar for Colom. He wants to expand ACA subsidies and expand access to hospitals, both urban and rural, and he has leveraged his law background to emphasize public safety and law enforcement credibility, helping him run as a "tough but fair" Democrat in a conservative state. Finally, he wants to avoid shutdowns and work on bipartisan deals at the federal level. All of this would play very well in most states, and his healthcare message will help him. Additionally, his background as an African American may help drive up turnout numbers for voters from that demographic in a state where that really matters. But his economic message is a bit vague, and no Democrat has won a Senate seat since 1989. While his primary race was easy, his general election will be an extremely uphill battle, especially given the fact that he has only raised $1,021,962 so far, a fourth of what his opponent has. This race is essentially a referendum on Trump's agenda and his movement, and regardless of the policies, Trump is still massively popular here, and Hyde-Smith is his envoy. If he is going to win this seat, Colom will need a massive blue wave, massive voter turnout, and perhaps even a mistake from Hyde-Smith, all to happen at the same time.

In the House, the four Representatives are Republican Trent Kelly, Democrat Bennie Thompson, Republican Michael Guest, and Republican Mike Ezell for district one through four respectively. Out of the four races, these are the Democratic names to keep an eye out for:

District 1: Cliff Johnson

District 2: Bennie Thompson

District 3: Michael Chiaradio

District 4: Jeffrey Hulum III

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

While no district is truly competitive for Democrats this cycle, there are two that could be ones where Democrats either solidify their hold on the seat or close the gap. The first is Mississippi's 2nd Congressional District, currently represented by Democrat Bennie Thompson. The district covers much of Western Mississippi and includes most of Canton and the capital of Jackson. It is a majority-Black district, making up 63% of the population, and leans blue by about 11 points. Here, Thompson won 86% of the vote, and with a margin that large in a blue district, he is all but assured to win his race. Republicans haven't spent much money here (only about $56,000), so it seems they are somewhat sure they won't upset Thompson. What Democrats will hope to see is a widening of the gap in the district, allowing them to truly consider this a safe seat and perhaps allow them to prepare for a successor to Thompson, who is 78.

The other competitive district will be Mississippi's 3rd Congressional District, currently represented by republican Michael Guest. Guest is a pretty popular candidate, having run unopposed in this year's primary and in both the 2024 primary and general elections. Before that, he won 70% of the vote in 2022. This district has a Republican lean of 14 points, which thus far has translated to races that Republicans have not had to worry about since 1997. However, this is the least red district in the state, meaning that if Democrats want to flip a seat in Mississippi, it will likely have to be here. The district covers central portions of the state and stretches from the Louisiana border in the west to the Alabama border in the east. There are some large cities, such as Brookhaven and Starkville, and it also includes most of the wealthier portions of Jackson. For a Democratic win here, their candidate, Michael Chiaradio, will need to leverage these urban connections alongside rural farmers and minority groups, essentially creating as broad a coalition as possible.

Most Competitive Mississippi Democrats in 2026

Bennie Thompson: MS-02

Bennie Thompson, 78, has represented this district since 1993, and in that time has become a very prominent Democrat on a national level. He served as the chair of the Committee on Homeland Security from 2007 to 2011 and from 2019 to 2023. Since 2011, he has been the only Democrat in Mississippi's congressional delegation. Before politics, Thompson was a

schoolteacher and the mayor of Bolton. But in Congress, he has become an icon of civil and voting rights, a strong supporter of expanding healthcare and reducing rural health disparities, a Democratic champion of homeland security with a focus on first responders and disaster response systems, and a proponent for agriculture and rural development. Thompson has enjoyed high popularity ratings and easy elections since 2004, and raised $497,949 this election, almost 10 times his opponent's numbers. As an incumbent, an effective and popular Congressman, and a stalwart Democrat in a blue district that he has spent much time focusing on over national politics, Thompson will almost certainly remain the representative in this district. The only question is just how wide a margin he wins by, and if his progressive primary opponent, Evan Turnage, will use this election loss as a way to get his name out there in case he decides to run again next cycle.

Michael Chiaradio: MS-03

Michael Chiaradio, 35, is a regenerative farmer and entrepreneur who seeks to unseat Michael Guest. Chiaradio owns and operates a regenerative farm in Shubuta, Mississippi, and previously worked as a member of the corporate leadership team at Maximus Inc., a government contractor supporting Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. Chiaradio's platform focuses on agricultural Investment and modernizing Mississippi's energy grid, small business support, expanding programs for universal childcare, food assistance, and homelessness, and security goals such as increased border security and reforming the immigration system to be more efficient. For a Democrat in Mississippi, there is enough distance from mainstream blue policies that Chiaradio might be able to navigate the inherent disadvantage of running in a red district. Additionally, the agricultural, healthcare, and infrastructure investment pledges will all play well here. But his opponent is well-liked, well-funded, and the incumbent representative. If there were to be a surprise upset, it would have to be this race, but the prospect remains unlikely.

Recent Interviews:

ASBL 43 Michael Chiaradio, Candidate for Congress, Mississippi District 3

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels:
    - United States House of Representatives elections in Mississippi, 2026 - Ballotpedia
    - United States Senate election in Mississippi, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
    - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
    - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- Magnolia Tribune is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political maneuvering and behind-the-scenes state government news. Mississippi Today is a similarly trusted outlet known for covering politics, policy, and education in Mississippi.

Missouri

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | April 29, 2026

Missouri, the “Show Me State,” enters the 2026 election cycle as a firmly Republican-controlled state, with all eight U.S. House seats on the ballot and no Senate race this cycle. Democrats currently hold just two congressional districts, MO-01 and MO-05, represented by Wesley Bell and Emanuel Cleaver, respectively. Both districts are anchored in the state’s urban cores of St. Louis and Kansas City and are considered safely Democratic.

Missouri’s congressional delegation reflects a broader partisan shift that has taken place over the past decade. The last time Democrats held more than two House seats in the state was in 2012, when the party maintained a more competitive statewide presence. Since then, Republican gains, particularly in rural and suburban areas, have solidified the GOP’s dominance across much of the state.

Looking ahead to 2026, there is little indication that this trend will reverse. According to ratings from Cook Political Report, the remaining six districts are considered safely Republican, leaving Democrats with limited offensive opportunities. Absent a significant shift in the national political environment or unexpected candidate dynamics, Republicans are well-positioned to maintain their advantage, while Democrats are likely to remain concentrated in their established urban strongholds.

While Missouri remains firmly Republican at the statewide level, several issue areas present potential openings for Democrats, particularly when paired with the right candidates and targeted geographic strategies.

One of the most salient issues in Missouri politics continues to be healthcare access, especially in rural communities. Hospital closures and limited provider availability have created persistent gaps in care, even as Medicaid expansion has helped broaden coverage. Democrats have an opportunity to frame healthcare as a quality-of-life and economic issue, particularly in regions where access remains inconsistent.

Economic concerns and cost of living also remain central for Missouri voters. Rising costs for housing, groceries, and energy have affected both urban and rural populations, creating space for candidates who can effectively connect economic messaging to everyday experiences. Democrats who emphasize wage growth, infrastructure investment, and support for working families may find traction, particularly in suburban districts.

Another key area is reproductive rights, which has emerged as a mobilizing issue following recent policy changes at the state level. Ballot initiatives and public opinion trends suggest that Missouri voters are not uniformly aligned with Republican leadership on this issue, offering Democrats a potential wedge, especially among suburban voters and younger demographics.

From a geographic standpoint, Democratic opportunities are limited but not nonexistent. The most viable path remains in suburban regions, particularly in districts like Missouri's 2nd Congressional District, where shifting demographics and education levels have created a more competitive environment. While rural Missouri has trended decisively Republican, Democrats may still find marginal gains by focusing on economic messaging and local issues that cut across partisan lines.

Ultimately, Democratic success in Missouri will depend less on broad statewide appeal and more on targeted strategies that align issue priorities with specific voter blocs. While the overall map favors Republicans, these issue areas represent the clearest avenues for Democrats to remain competitive in an otherwise challenging political landscape. At the same time, the party's long-term strategy should focus on expanding engagement beyond its urban base, reaching disaffected voters, increasing visibility in traditionally Republican areas, and investing in the organizational infrastructure needed to rebuild competitiveness over time. Voters can cast their ballots in the primary on August 4th followed by the general on November 3rd.

House

Wesley Bell is a Democratic freshman representing Missouri's 1st Congressional District, which covers much of the St. Louis metropolitan area. A male in his 50s, Bell built his political career as a prosecutor and local official, most notably serving as St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney prior to his election to Congress. His background in criminal justice reform and public safety has been central to his political identity, particularly during his tenure handling high-profile cases tied to police accountability and community relations in the region.

Bell's seat is considered safely Democratic in the general election due to the district's strong partisan lean and urban composition, anchored by a reliable Democratic base in St. Louis. However, his primary outlook is more complex. Bell unseated incumbent Cori Bush in 2024 in a

race shaped in part by significant outside spending, including support from pro-Israel groups. That dynamic could carry into a potential 2026 rematch, though the political environment has shifted. Public opinion toward Israel has declined sharply, particularly among Democrats and younger voters, introducing new uncertainty into how salient the issue will be in a primary context. At the same time, available evidence suggests that foreign policy issues may not rank among the top priorities for voters in MO-01, a majority-Black district where local economic and community concerns have historically been more decisive.

As a result, while Israel-related spending and positioning may again play a role in shaping the race, the outcome is more likely to be determined by turnout, coalition composition, and intra-party dynamics. Bell remains well-positioned overall, though his most meaningful challenge is likely to come from within his own party rather than from Republicans in the general election.

Emanuel Cleaver is a veteran Democratic congressman representing Missouri's 5th Congressional District, which is centered in Kansas City. Cleaver, a male (81), has had a long career in public service, including serving as Mayor of Kansas City before being elected to Congress in 2004. Ordained as a United Methodist pastor, he has built a reputation as a pragmatic and community-oriented leader, with a legislative focus on economic development, housing, and urban investment.

Cleaver's seat is considered safely Democratic due to the district's strong partisan alignment and urban base. Missouri's 5th District consistently delivers large Democratic margins, driven by Kansas City's population and voting patterns. While Cleaver's tenure and incumbency provide additional stability, the underlying partisan structure of the district makes a Republican challenge highly unlikely to succeed, positioning him as a secure incumbent heading into 2026.

Democrat's Best Chance to Flip

If any district in Missouri were to come into play in 2026, it would be Missouri's 2nd Congressional District (MO-02), currently represented by Ann Wagner. Anchored in the St. Louis suburbs, MO-02 is structurally different from the rest of the state's Republican-held districts, with higher levels of educational attainment, suburban growth, and a history of closer electoral margins. While it still leans Republican, these characteristics make it the most electorally elastic district in the state.

For Democrats, MO-02 represents the clearest, though still challenging, path to competitiveness. Success in the district would likely depend on strong performance among suburban voters, particularly college-educated constituencies, as well as the ability to nationalize the race around issues that resonate beyond Missouri's broader partisan divide. While the district does not currently rate as a top-tier battleground, it remains the most important to watch as the cycle develops and the best opportunity for Democrats to make inroads in Missouri at the congressional level in 2026.

On the Democratic side, Frederick Wellman has emerged as the apparent frontrunner in the primary. Wellman has led the field in fundraising, maintains the strongest cash-on-hand position,

and has secured key endorsements, giving him a clear organizational advantage. In contrast, Joan Vondrass has relied heavily on self-funding, contributing over $200,000 of her own resources to her campaign. While self-financing can provide early viability, it may present limitations in a political environment where Democratic voters have shown increasing skepticism toward wealth-driven campaigns. Taken together, the available indicators suggest Wellman is well-positioned to secure the nomination, though the race is not entirely settled.

Frederick Wellman is a political newcomer and former U.S. Army officer running in Missouri's 2nd Congressional District. A male in his 50s, Wellman is a combat veteran who later transitioned into political communications and advocacy, becoming known for his commentary on national security and Democratic politics. He has built a public profile through media appearances and digital platforms, and has been associated with political advocacy networks including MeidasTouch and The Lincoln Project, which have helped amplify his messaging and visibility within Democratic and anti-Trump circles.

In the 2026 cycle, Wellman has emerged as the leading Democratic contender in MO-02, backed by strong fundraising, early endorsements, and a consolidated position within the party field. His campaign blends a traditional candidate profile, veteran, Midwestern background, with a more modern, media-driven approach to political engagement, positioning him to compete in a district where visibility and messaging to suburban voters will be critical.

In the general election, Democrats face a more difficult path. Incumbent Ann Wagner has shown some vulnerability, including trailing a generic Democrat in early public polling. However, structural factors continue to favor Republicans in the district. Historically, partisan reversion, where voters ultimately return to their party alignment, has played a significant role in districts like MO-02 as elections approach. While external indicators such as betting markets suggest this race is among the most competitive in the state, they still consistently reflect a clear Republican advantage. As a result, while Democrats may be able to narrow the margin, flipping the seat would likely require a favorable national environment and sustained crossover appeal among suburban voters.

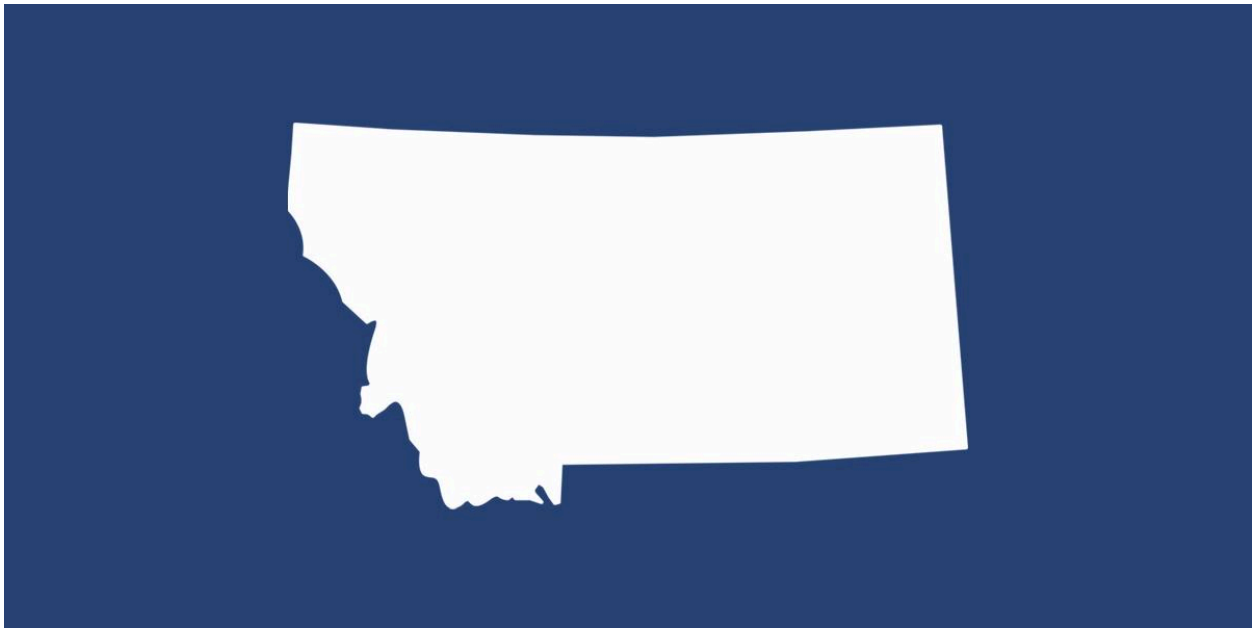
Recent Interviews

- Wesley Bell C-SPAN profile interview- https://www.c-span.org/program/interview/representative-wesley-bell-profile-interview/655626
- Wesley Bell Interrogation of Pete Hegseth- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4pH2gpx06Q
- Cori Bush Announcement Video- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRfv9gSEoA5/
- Cori Bush Breakfast Club Interview/Running Against Wesley Bell- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVYlfb6gd5n/
- Emanuel Cleaver on Ceasefire Podcast- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVTozXh4yeI
- Fred Wellman- https://www.instagram.com/p/DXfOGVbvirk/?__d=1%E5%BE%AE%E5%8D%9A%E7%

A7%81%E4%BA%BA%E5%8F%B7%E4%BA%A4%E6%98%93%E4%B8%AD%E5%BF%83%2B-%2B%E5%92%8C%E5%B9%B3%E7%B2%BE%E8%8B%B1%E5%B0%8F%E5%8F%B7%E7%BD%91%2B%E2%9C%94%EF%B8%8Fhaoba.cyou-%E5%BE%AE%E5%8D%9A%E5%B0%8F%E5%8F%B7%E5%B7%B2%E5%AE%9E%E5%90%8D%E8%B4%A6%E5%8F%B7%E5%87%BA%E5%94%AE

Engagement Resources

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/Missouri_elections,_2026
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- The Missouri Independent is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Show Me State. https://missouriindependent.com/



Montana

Primary Election Date: June 2, 2026
General Election Date: November 3, 2026

Montana's 2026 election cycle remains an uphill battle for Democrats in a state that has consistently favored Republicans in federal races. Still, Democrats are fielding candidates in both U.S. House districts and the U.S. Senate contest, aiming to compete through grassroots organizing, rural outreach, and working-class economic messaging in hopes of improving margins and testing the state's political trajectory in a midterm year.

Montana's Democratic House Primary

Ryan Busse
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 1st Congressional District
Current Position: Former firearms industry executive; 2024 Democratic candidate for governor of Montana
Background: Busse previously served as vice president of sales at Kimber Manufacturing and ran statewide for governor in 2024, giving him name recognition across Montana.
Campaign Message: Emphasizing working-class economics, rural community support, and pragmatic outreach to both urban and rural voters in western Montana.
Why he might win: Strong statewide profile from the 2024 governor's race and broad appeal to Democrats seeking a competitive challenger.

Russell Cleveland
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 1st Congressional District

Current Position: Education consultant and U.S. Navy veteran
Background: Cleveland is a veteran and Montana resident campaigning on military service and community engagement.
Campaign Message: Highlights rural roots and veteran experience, aiming to appeal to independent voters and the Democratic base.
Why he might win: Military background and rural identity may resonate with Democratic primary voters prioritizing electability.

Matt Rains
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 1st Congressional District
Current Position: Rancher and retired U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter pilot
Background: A West Point graduate and Montana rancher with military leadership experience.
Campaign Message: Focused on economic development, veterans' issues, and rural community investment.
Why he might win: Military leadership credentials and ranching background could broaden support among primary voters.

Sam Forstag
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 1st Congressional District
Current Position: Former smokejumper and union leader
Background: Serves as vice president of the Forest Service Council Local 60 and is active in labor organizing.
Campaign Message: Emphasizes workers' rights, affordable housing, healthcare reform, and childcare access.
Why he might win: Strong grassroots ties and union support may energize progressive primary voters.

Sam Lux
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 2nd Congressional District
Current Position: Horse farrier
Background: Rural professional running in central and eastern Montana.
Campaign Message: Focused on representing rural communities and bringing local perspectives to federal policy.
Why he might win: Appeal to rural Democratic voters seeking a locally rooted candidate.

Brian Miller
Race: Democratic Primary — Montana's 2nd Congressional District
Current Position: Attorney
Background: Practicing attorney campaigning across central and eastern Montana.
Campaign Message: Emphasizes legal experience, community advocacy, and access to services.
Why he might win: Professional background and traditional policy framing may appeal to moderate Democratic voters.

Alani Bankhead
Race: Democratic Primary — U.S. Senate
Current Position: Air Force veteran and leadership consultant
Background: Served 21 years in the U.S. Air Force, including special operations assignments and senior-level protection roles.
Campaign Message: Focused on leadership, national security experience, and disciplined governance.
Why she might win: Military service and executive experience could appeal to moderate and independent-leaning Democrats.

Reilly Neill
Race: Democratic Primary — U.S. Senate
Current Position: Former Montana state representative
Background: Previously served in the Montana Legislature and has experience in state-level policymaking.
Campaign Message: Emphasizes economic justice, environmental protection, and healthcare access.
Why she might win: Legislative experience and appeal to progressive Democratic voters.

Michael Black Wolf
Race: Democratic Primary — U.S. Senate
Current Position: Tribal historic preservation officer for the Fort Belknap Indian Community
Background: Works in tribal governance and cultural preservation.
Campaign Message: Champions tribal sovereignty, rural economic development, and inclusive representation.
Why he might win: Potential to mobilize Native American voters and rural Democrats seeking broader representation.

Michael Hummert
Race: Democratic Primary — U.S. Senate
Current Position: Helena-based activist and prior candidate
Background: Previously ran in Democratic contests and focuses on Montana-centered policy concerns.
Campaign Message: Prioritizes economic development and pragmatic statewide policy solutions.
Why he might win: Familiarity with Democratic voters and appeal to moderates in a challenging statewide race.

New Jersey

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | 3/29/2026

After the 2024 election there was talk of New Jersey having become a swing state. For the first time since George H.W. Bush, a Republican president, had been within 5 points of taking the state (Trump still lost, however). Before then, almost every presidential election had gone blue by around 14 points. But looking deeper, there are some Republican strongholds within the state that had been, and continue to, gain ground in house and gubernatorial elections. That being said, since 2020 and especially since 2024, New Jersey may start swinging back towards the Democrats. There are a few districts which have recently had both Democratic and Republican representatives, and with a potential blue wave looming, there may be a couple seats that could help swing control of the house. The primary elections will be held June 2, 2026, with the general election taking place on November 3, 2026.

The issues facing New Jersey favor what many Democratic candidates have been focusing on across the country. Primarily, voters are concerned about affordability (in the form of property traces and the cost of living), healthcare, infrastructure, and a large state-level budget deficit. But New Jersey has some of the highest tax burdens, including a high top marginal personal income tax rate of just under 12%, meaning Republicans have the upper hand here. Democrats have controlled both houses of the New Jersey Congress since 2004, meaning the blame can fairly squarely fall on them in the eyes of many voters. A key dynamic will be just how important of an issue this becomes in the light of a host of other more pressing issues, and as other neighboring states like New York have persisted through high income taxes and even slightly raised the top marginal tax rates.

Currently, the two Senators are Democrats Andy Kim and Cory Booker, with only the latter up for election this cycle. Booker, first elected in a 2013 special election and then re-elected in 2014 and 2020, is running third full term in office and is likely to win. He is one of the most notable Democrats of late, having made many media appearances critical of the Trump administration and also still riding some name recognition from his 2020 presidential campaign. Booker currently serves on four committees: the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and the Committee on the Judiciary. His platform has always centered on social justice, criminal reform, and healthcare & social policy, but this cycle he is leaning heavily on an economic platform focused on eliminating federal income taxes on the first $75,000 of income for many Americans, expanding tax credits, and raising taxes on the rich. WHen it comes to fundraising, there is no better than Booker. $30,106,071 has been donated to his campaign through the end of 2025, and when combined with his high popularity and his importance, Booker is all but assured to retain his seat.

In the House, there are eight Democrats, three Republicans, and one vacancy in the 11th district. In ascending order, the representatives are Democrat Donald Norcross, Republican Jeff Van Drew, Democrat Herb Conaway, Republican Chris Smith, Democrat Josh Gottheimer, Democrat Frank Pallone, Republican Thomas Kean Jr., Democrat Rob Menendez, Democrat Nellie Pou, Democrat LaMonica McIver, and Democrat Bonnie Watson Coleman. Out of the twelve races, these are the Democratic names to keep an eye out for:

- **District 1:** Donald Norcross
- **District 2**: Bayly Winder
- **District 3:** Herb Conaway
- **District 4:** John Blake and Rachel Peace
- **District 5:** Josh Gottheimer
- **District 6:** Frank Pallone
- **District 7:** Rebecca Bennett, Tina Shah, Miachel Roth and Brian Varela
- **District 8:** Rob Menendez
- **District 9:** Nellie Pou
- **District 10:** LaMonica McIver
- **District 11:** Analilia Mejia
- **District 12:** Brad Cohen and Jay Vanigankar

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

Most districts are safe in the hands of the incumbent parties largely because of both how the districts are drawn and how popular those incumbents are. However, there are four districts that will likely be “battlegrounds” in 2026.

The first is NJ-02, where Republican Jeff Van Drew is the incumbent. He was first elected as a Democrat in 2018, but announced the following year that he would be switching parties. The district is New Jersey's largest geographically and encompasses Atlantic City. What makes this district unique is that it has shifted to the right ever since the 90s, and despite going Obama’s

way in both elections, has voted for Republican candidates almost every statewide and federal election since. Van Drew, who was re-elected with 58.1% of the vote in 2024, is facing three main Democratic challengers. Additionally, Van Drew's popularity in some polls has dropped down to 42%, with a plurality indicating that they would be open to a new representative. A candidate who embodies that "new blood" archetype might just be able to reverse the district's rightward swing.

The next district to keep an eye on his NJ-07. The incumbent is Republican Thomas Kean Jr., who was re-elected with 51.7% of the vote in 2024, but he is facing a swatch of potential Democrat opponents who are well funded. In the Democratic primary are figures such as healthcare executive and former navy aviator Rebecca Bennett, former chief of staff for the Small Business Administration Michael Roth, former senior advisor to the U.S. Surgeon General Tina Shah, and former chair of the New Jersey Forward Party Brian Varela. This district has flip-flopped between Democrats and Republicans over the past several election cycles, and with a plurality of voters disapproving of Kean's work thus far combined with such a narrow win in 2024, it is likely to flip again. With the northwestern district, which has become more ethnically diverse over time, being one of the most affluent congressional districts in the United States, Democrats may have to tweak their standard messaging to improve their odds here. But Kean has faced a lot of pressure due to his political closeness to Trump as well as a lot of virtual town halls instead of talking to voters in person. This will be the seat Democrats likely focus on the most.

The final district that Democrats will focus on differs from the previous two. NJ-09 will be a defensive battle, with incumbent Democrat Nellie Pou fighting to remain after being elected with only 50.8% of the vote in 2024. The district is entirely urban, stretching from Pompton lakes to northern Newark and the Hudson River-adjacent town of Cliffside Park. In the 2024 election, the district shifted dramatically to the right, voting by 1.1 points for Trump after having previously voted for Biden by 19 points. Pou still managed to win her election, but the winds were clearly shifting. That being said, much of the vote was driven by the district's large Hispanic population, which truly helped in Trump's 2024 election. Since then, it is highly likely that Trump has burned through any goodwill he may have had with this constituency due to his immigration policy and failure to address affordability. This seat will no doubt be close as Republican strategists see this as a district they can win back by labeling Pou as out of touch. Time will tell if a blue wave and good donor relations thus far will manage to keep Pou in office.

Most Competitive New Jersey Democrats in 2026

Bayly Winder: NJ-02

Bayly Winder, 33, is a former foreign affairs officer and Biden appointee who has branded himself as a bipartisan and pragmatic candidate. Those two facets are key to his plan for winning a district that leans slightly red. His policy focuses are centered around lowering the cost of living, protecting Medicaid and social services, anti-corruption and government reform, and a foreign policy that is in favor of foreign aid and free trade. His campaign has tried to be an antithesis to Van Drew's by promising in-person town halls and more direct constituent

engagement. Winder has also tried to pursue that “outsider” stance by criticizing both parties' failures to address issues and corruption on both sides. He doesn’t quite have the laundry list of endorsements other candidates might, but in this race he has the most money, having raised $451,845 through 2025. On paper, this campaign seems pretty solid, but his connections to Biden’s administration will likely hurt him more than it will help him. His credentials and his bipartisan focus will definitely gain him ground, and he likely will win the primary, but in a general election Winder will have to work hard to earn the trust of the constituency.

Michael Roth: NJ-07

The first of a few candidates covered in this brief that will be running in this district, Michael Roth is a strong contender. Roth, who is in his mid-thirties, is a community investment expert who served briefly atop the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) under Joe Biden. His campaign is also focused on pragmatic center-left policies. Issues like making NJ more affordable, cutting middle-class taxes and increasing corporation taxes, increasing the housing supply and reforming zoning, and lowering energy costs through modernization all feature prominently in his platform. What makes Roth stand out is his experience at high levels of both the public and private world. It also doesn’t hurt that he has raised a respectable $610,278 so far and is a New Jersey native. But neither of those facts alone will win him the crowded primary, which is the main hurdle. It is important to note that in early March, members of the Summit Democratic municipal committee held a straw poll in the race in which Roth emerged as the winner. Yet it is early in the race, and there is still plenty of time for Roth to gain daylight between himself and the rest of the candidate pool or to flame out and be buried under the weight of many competing personalities.

Recent Interviews:

Michael Roth CD7 Screening

Brian Varela: NJ-07

Brian Varela, 36, is seeking to pull on the heartstrings of voters in this district. A first-generation American, Varela grew up in the working class and he emphasizes this “lived experience” narrative. After graduating from Kean University and UNC, he built a successful marketing company and later expanded into early education businesses. Varela has long been a Democratic organizer and tried to win the 2022 congressional primary here as a third-party candidate but now he is firmly a democrat. His policy focuses are on the cost of living, universal healthcare, childcare and family policies, pushing back against ICE, and acting as an outsider against political elites. Between his compelling personal narrative, business success, and outsider positioning combined with some increasingly popular progressive policies, Varela is looking to take advantage of Kean’s weaknesses and flip this seat. But without elected office experience and in a crowded field with candidates with similar positions, his personal narrative will have to do a lot of heavy lifting. So far, he has racked up endorsements from everyone including county Democratic chairs to organizations like Peace Action and the mayors of Sparta and Newark. He also has raised the second most by a Democrat in the race, riding high on

$1,759,731. While he may not be the favorite yet, his story and background pair well with his policies and the issues facing New Jersey today. As we approach the primary election, keep an eye out for Varela to make a challenge to the more establishment Democrats in this race.

Recent Interviews:

Brian Varela OneNJ7 Meeting July 2025

Rebecca Bennett: NJ-07

The favorite at the moment is probably Rebecca Bennett. Bennett, a Navy helicopter pilot and aircraft commander who served for over 15 years, is running a tight campaign that has raised an inordinate amount of money. Her $1,943,974 is the most in this race, and is surprising given her lack of government or political experience. Bennett also worked in healthcare startups and larger healthcare companies, and this is a major policy area of hers. She wants to expand access to care, lower costs, and improve patient outcomes, but the rest of her platform is more generic. She values national security, and wants to combat the rising cost of living, but her website is more vague about exactly how she wants to accomplish these. While this gives Bennett more flexibility down the line, she will need to eventually sort out these questions. She does have some policies regarding environmental protections and resilient infrastructure, as well as combating the influence of special interests, but her campaign is more profile than policy-based. What makes her the favorite is her ability to fundraise without connections and run as a pragmatic, electability-focused Democrat with military precision and a healthcare worker's focus on outcomes. With Roth and Varela breathing down her neck, she is still a long way from being a shoe-in, but if she gains momentum she may be hard to stop from winning the primary.

Recent Interviews

Rebecca Bennett CD7 Screening

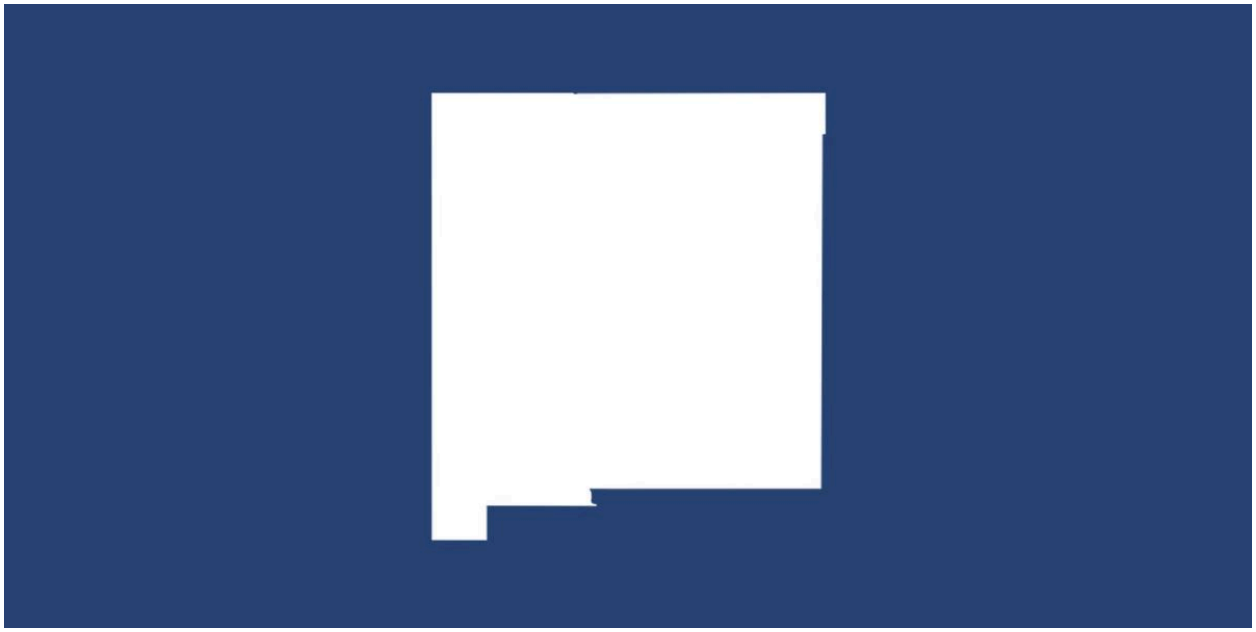
Nellie Pou: NJ-09

Nellie Pou, 69, is a well-known and long-serving New Jersey Democrat. Pou has one of the longest political resumes in NJ, starting as the Deputy Speaker of the NJ Assembly in 1997 before serving in the State Senate after 2012 and now in the U.S. House. Before those elections, she worked in the Paterson city government as a business administrator, youth program coordinator, and human services director. She was also the first Latina from New Jersey elected to Congress, a title that has and will win her some goodwill in her district. Pou has also positioned herself as a broad coalition-builder with appeal amongst moderates, something that can only help her in tight races like this. Her policies are grounded, focusing on healthcare and social services, expanding access to education and workforce development, social justice and immigrant protections, government funding for local programs, and infrastructure. That last area is important to Pou, as she serves on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, as well as the Homeland Security Committee. By running a low-drama campaign, she forces voters to look at her resume and political success thus far, which is a solid move. She also has vast local fundraising networks and has raised $1,773,275, dwarfing her

Republican counterparts. But with her slight win in 2024, this seat is still not safe. The district is trending more competitive, and her establishment stances don't win her support amongst both Republicans and progressives. If Pou wants to hang on to her seat, she will need to make sure that her constituents are able to trust her to continue representing them well and by ensuring that her Republican counterparts are not just extensions of Trump but their own people. Unlike other districts, connections to Trump may not be as big of a hindrance for Republicans given voters here liked Trump. But regardless, a blue wave may just give Pou the space to breathe she needs to retain her seat.

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels:
    - United States House of Representatives elections in New Jersey, 2026 - Ballotpedia
    - United States Senate election in New Jersey, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
    - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
    - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- The New Jersey Globe and the New Jersey Monitor are both great local resources for coverage of elections and issues facing New Jersey.



New Mexico

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | 6/3/2026

New Mexico, or the Land of Enchantment, has a Senate seat up for grabs, along with 3 House races. All 5 of New Mexico's current congressional seats are held by Democrats & all 4 offices on the ballot are being defended by Democratic incumbents. Incumbent Ben Ray Luján will face the Republican candidate, Larry Marker, who ran as a write-in candidate & need to surpass a vote total to be on the ballot in November.

Voters made their voices heard in the primary on June 2nd & will return to the polls for the general election on November 3rd.

Senate

Ben Ray Luján first entered the Senate in 2020 & looks poised to continue his tenure in 2026. Luján will face Republican write-in candidate Larry E. Marker, who qualified for the ballot after receiving 4,770 votes, well above the 2,531 required. Despite securing a challenger, Republicans enter the race at a significant disadvantage given Luján's incumbency, name recognition, & New Mexico's recent voting trends.

Before joining the Senate, Luján represented New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District in the House of Representatives & served as House Assistant Speaker. A native of Nambé, a small community north of Santa Fe, Luján has built his political career around healthcare access, economic development, environmental conservation, & support for New Mexico's rural communities. During his time in Congress, he has championed efforts to protect patients with pre-existing conditions, expand clean energy investment, strengthen New Mexico's economy, support victims of natural disasters, & advocate for Native American communities. With nearly

two decades in federal office & a well-established statewide profile, Luján enters 2026 as a heavy favorite to retain his seat.

House

Over in the House, Democrats won handily in 2024, with their narrowest margin of victory coming in at just over 4 points, in a year when the party underperformed nationally. Given the current political environment, where Republicans face headwinds nationally, Trump remains unpopular, the war with Iran continues, & prices continue to rise across the board, Democrats appear well-positioned for another sweep in New Mexico. That outlook is strengthened by Republicans' struggles to field a top-of-the-ticket candidate.

NM-01

New Mexico's 1st Congressional District is a Democratic safe haven that includes most of the Albuquerque metro area, the state's largest population center. Incumbent Melanie Stansbury (female, 47) ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & should have little trouble continuing to represent NM-01 in Washington.

Before joining Congress, Stansbury served in the New Mexico House of Representatives & built a reputation around water policy, environmental issues, economic development, & public lands management. Since winning a special election in 2021, she has consistently carried the district by comfortable margins. Given the district's strong Democratic lean, her incumbency advantage, name recognition, campaign infrastructure, & the lack of a serious Republican challenge, NM-01 is expected to remain securely in Democratic hands in 2026.

NM-02

New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District is likely to be the most competitive district in the state, though that is not saying much in 2026. The district stretches from Texas to Arizona & includes much of southern New Mexico. Areas in the southeast are heavily tied to the oil & gas industry and politically resemble neighboring West Texas, while population centers such as Las Cruces help offset those conservative votes. The result is a district that is more competitive than the rest of the state, but one that still leans Democratic in the current political environment.

Incumbent Gabriel Vasquez (male, 41) ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & should continue to represent NM-02. Vasquez was born & raised in Las Cruces and has built much of his political profile around issues important to southern New Mexico, including economic development, public lands, water policy, and border communities. While Republicans would likely target this district first if they hoped to make gains in New Mexico, the combination of incumbency, demographic trends, & the current political climate leaves Vasquez in a strong position heading into November.

NM-03

Finally, New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District is currently represented by incumbent Teresa Leger Fernandez (female, 66). She ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & will face Republican Martin Reuben Zamora in the general election. The district includes northern New Mexico, the state capital of Santa Fe, & large portions of the state's eastern region. Born in Las Vegas, New Mexico, Leger Fernandez earned her undergraduate degree from Yale before building a career as an attorney, advocate, & public servant focused on issues affecting New Mexico communities.

Leger Fernandez enters the race with several advantages. She is a well-established incumbent with deep roots in the district, strong name recognition, & a proven record of winning elections. Combined with the district's Democratic lean & her longstanding ties to northern New Mexico, those factors should place her in a strong position heading into November. Barring a major shift in the political environment, NM-03 is expected to remain comfortably in Democratic hands.

Recent Interviews

Senator Ben Luján Question RFK (PBS)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPtM2DTfTj0

Inside the Epstein Files with Melanie Stansbury- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLzED3JOmMA

Gabriel Vasquez- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yt8FVkmL62M

Teresa Leger Fernandez on Iran- https://www.pbs.org/video/leger-fernandez-on-iran-cesar-chavez-reckoning-7wast6/

Take Action

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/New_Mexico_elections,_2026
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- Source New Mexico is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Land of Enchantment.- https://sourcenm.com/

New York

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Nate Iglehart | 4/14/2026

New York often sits in the average voter's mind as a solid blue state, almost as a homogenous Democrat stronghold. With the recent election of Zohran Mamdani as the mayor of NYC, one wouldn't be faulted for assuming that the rest of the state is skewed towards the left to some degree. Representatives like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer lend credence to this impression.

Much of this is also no doubt due to the cultural significance and liberal disposition of New York City, but outside of the Big Apple, the story is a little more complicated. It is true that both senators from the state have been Democrats since 1998 and that the state has voted for a Democrat in the presidential election since 1988. But in the past few election cycles, there have been multiple house seats that have changed hands, and now the house delegation makeup is 19 Democrats and 7 Republicans.

Some of the more interesting races will likely actually be within the Democratic party as opposed to between the two parties. The issues facing the state extend beyond just NYC, and include extremely high rents and housing prices, crime and safety, education and budgetary woes, and general affordability. The solutions to these issues have split democrats regarding how to solve these issues. For example, Democrats are split between its pro-development wing, which wants to build more housing, and wings more focused on tenant-protection. Centrist elements of the party are also calling for more strict immigration and anti-crime initiatives, further splitting the party.

But there are still races that will be important for Democrats to defend from Republicans. Democrats' biggest challenge isn't just flipping seats, it is defending multiple very narrow wins

from 2024 and handling a few races that face redistricting. At the end of the day, control of the U.S. House of Representatives may come down to one or two seats, and New York has a couple of races that may decide that control. The primaries will take place on June 23, with the general election occurring on November 3rd.

Currently, the two Senators are Democrats Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand. Schumer is arguably one of the highest profile Democrats in the nation and he serves as the current Senate Minority Leader and previously the Senate Majority Leader. Gillibrand is slightly less well known, but serves on the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Armed Services. Neither of these two senators are up for election this cycle, and both remain relatively popular.

In the House, there are 19 Democrats and 7 Republicans. In ascending district order, the representatives are as follows: Republican Nicholas J. LaLota (NY-01), Republican Andrew Garbarino (NY-02), Democrat Tom Suozzi (NY-03), Democrat Laura Gillen (NY-04), Democrat Gregory Meeks (NY-05), Democrat Grace Meng (NY-06), Democrat Nydia Velazquez (NY-07), Democrat Hakeem Jeffries (NY-08), Democrat Yvette Clarke (NY-09), Democrat Daniel Goldman (NY-10), Republican Nicole Malliotakis (NY-11), Democrat Jerry Nadler (NY-12), Democrat Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14), Democrat Ritchie Torres (NY-15), Democrat George Latimer (NY-16), Republican Michael Lawler (NY-17), Democrat Pat Ryan, (NY-18), Democrat Josh Riley (NY-19), Democrat Paul Tonko (NY-20), Republican Elise Stefanik (NY-21), Democrat John Mannion (NY-22), Republican Nick Langworthy (NY-23), Republican Claudia Tenney (NY-24), Democrat Joseph Morelle (NY-25), and Democrat Timothy Kennedy (NY-26).

However, there are two incumbent Democrats who are not running for reelection this cycle in Velázquez in the 7th district and Nadler in the 12th. This means that Democrats will have to work a little harder in these races to counter the established Republican candidates who will see this as a rare opportunity. Republican Elise Stefanik in the 21st is also not running for reelection. Out of the 26 races, these are the Democratic names to keep an eye out for:

- **District 1:** Chris Gallant
- **District 2**: Patrick Halpin
- **District 3:** Tom Suozzi
- **District 4:** Laura Gillen
- **District 5:** Gregory Meeks
- **District 6:** Grace Meng
- **District 7:** Antonio Reynoso and Claire Valdez
- **District 8:** Hakeem Jeffries
- **District 9:** Yvette Clarke
- **District 10:** Dan Goldman and Brad Lander
- **District 11:**Troy McGhie
- **District 12:** Alex Bores, Jack Schlossberg, and Micah Lasher
- **District 13:** Adriano Espaillat
- **District 14:** Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
- **District 15:** Ritchie Torres

- **District 16:** George Latimer
- **District 17:** Cait Conley and Beth Davidson
- **District 18:** Pat Ryan
- **District 19:** Josh Riley
- **District 20:** Paul Tonko
- **District 21:** Blake Gendebien and Dylan Hewitt
- **District 22:** John Mannion
- **District 23:** Aaron Gies
- **District 24:** Alissa Ellman
- **District 25:** Joseph Morelle
- **District 26:** Tim Kennedy

Most Competitive Districts for Democrats

There are roughly seven races that will be competitive for Democrats. The first, and the most competitive, will be in the 17th district located in the Hudson Valley. Incumbent Republican Mike Lawler has raised a massive amount of money so far, sitting on $5,209,722 of donations. But even with this war chest, polls and analysts consider this race a true tossup. The biggest question is who in a crowded field of Democratic primary candidates will come out on top. These candidates' backgrounds range from nonprofit executives to political reporters and cybersecurity and infrastructure experts. Cait Conley and Beth Davidson so far look like the frontrunners, with both having raised over $1 million and the former racking up endorsements from incumbents. The district has voted for Democrats in practically every statewide and federal election save for the 2022 governor race, and before Mike Lawler it was represented by a Democrat in the house since 1983. One key element in this district's race will be the significant Jewish population, including conservative Hasidic communities in Rockland County. The war in Iran and Gaza will be potent political talking points and can swing this district slightly more towards the right, given many Democrats' disillusionment with the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Another competitive race will be the 4th district, located in suburban Long Island. Currently represented by Democrat Laura Gillen, this district is the second wealthiest in New York and one of the wealthiest in the country. Similarly to the 17th district, this one leans slightly blue but by a smaller margin. Democrats only won it by 2.3 points in 2024, and before Gillen, the district was briefly held by a Republican. That candidate has yet to declare his campaign, but this race will still be somewhat tight. This race will be a must-hold for Democrats, but with Gillen's centrist platform and solid focus on local issues, it is certainly possible.

The next competitive district will be the 19th district, a historically competitive seat that flips back and forth between parties. Incorporating the Catskills, Hudson Valley, and greater Capital District, it is largely a white and rural district represented currently by Democrat Josh Riley. Riley, a mix of progressive and centrist policies, won this district by 2.2 points in 2024, and while he is not wildly popular, he is popular enough and both well-funded and well-connected enough to be a key part of Democratic efforts to win the House. He shouldn't lose this race with all of these factors, but the fact that Democratic planners are still focusing on this district means that

they likely also have a little trepidation given how uncertain polls can be. Republicans will likely be looking to flip this seat back regardless of how the rest of New York's races shake out.

One of those important targets will certainly be the chaotic 3rd district, representing parts of western Long Island. This is the wealthiest district in New York and the fourth wealthiest nationally, meaning that most progressive policies here will struggle. Nonetheless, the district leans towards Democrats, with Tom Suozzi having taken the seat after George Santos' infamous tenure here. This mess of a political stint by Santos may have played a part in Democrats taking this seat, but it is far from certainty that this will remain blue. The 3rd district has had a litany of both Republican and Democrat representatives, but has been shifting blue lately. Importantly, in the 2024 election, this district voted for Trump while also electing a Democratic representative, making it one of the thirteen across the country that voted this way. Between its wealth and its hyper-urban nature, Suozzi has had to focus on cultivating an image of him being a common-sense Democrat focused on bipartisan solutions. It also didn't hurt that he pushed for tax breaks and removing double taxation on homeowners. Thankfully for Democrats, this approach seems to have worked and Suozzi is fairly popular. But given how competitive this district has historically been, don't be surprised if this one comes down to the wire.

From here, the races get slightly less competitive, but still are the biggest targets for upsets on both sides. In the 11th district, drama regarding the constitutionality of a redistricting effort and lawsuits have made a traditionally red district (currently the only one in metropolitan NYC) more open for a Democrat to win. Nicole Malliotakis, the incumbent Republican representative, is a very popular third-term representative and won the last election 64-36. Before her, however, the Staten Island district was represented by a Democrat, a pair of Republicans before that, and then only Democrats from 2013 all the way back to 1945. The district still leans red in both its registered voter numbers and recent voting results, but a lawsuit alleging voter discrimination against minority groups made its way all the way to the Supreme Court before being halted for this cycle, meaning that next cycle, this map may look vastly different. For now, it is still likely a slightly red seat, but with a blue wave big enough, Republicans may not be able to hold onto this district.

In the 1st district, Republican incumbent Nick LaLota, who was re-elected with 55.5% of the vote in 2024, may be at risk of an upset. On paper, this seat looks safe. Located on the eastern end and North Shore of Long Island, including the Hamptons, this district used to be a swing district in the 1990s before leaning more and more Republican since the 2010s. But a December 2025 poll found that 41% of voters supported LaLota while 38% supported the current leading Democratic candidate Chris Gallant. With 20% undecided, this seems to indicate this could be a closer race than previously anticipated, especially as polling aggregators have continually downgraded this seat over the past year from a solid Republican win to a likely Republican win. That being said, the fight is certainly uphill. LaLota has raised $2,404,492, around eight times as much as Gallant has. LaLota is also a two term representative, and represents a collection of fairly wealthy and middle-class towns that have historically voted red. If the winds continue to blow in Gallant's direction, this could be an interesting race to watch.

Another potential upset race will be in the 21st district. Similarly to the 1st, this race sees incumbent Republican Elise Stefanik facing a surprisingly strong campaign from Democrat Blake Gendebien. A historically blue district, Stefanik has changed the game since she won this seat in 2015. But she's set to shift the paradigm once more, now in the other direction. After having nearly been nominated by Trump to be the United States Ambassador to the United Nations in 2024, she decided in December 2025 that she would not run for reelection this cycle, leaving the race more open than expected. Republicans have rallied around businessman Anthony Constantino and he has raised over $5 million in a short time. But Democratic challenger and dairy farmer Blake Gendebien has also managed to raise an enormously surprising $4 million over the same time, making this a last minute addition to the watchlist. Don't be fooled, the district still leans slightly red, but without an incumbent Republican, Gendebien may just be able to shock observers here.

Finally, there is one race that will not be important in the fight for control of the House, but will be very interesting to watch in order to see where internal Democratic politics is heading. In the 12th district, the district represented Midtown Manhattan and both the Upper East and West Sides. It is the most Democratic district in New York and the 9th most in the country, while also sitting high on the rankings when it comes to average wealth. As a result, the extremely crowded field has a lot of money poured into it, with four candidates raising at least $1 million already. There is a candidate focusing on big-tech regulation paired with progressive social issues, there is an establishment Democrat, there is a younger generation-focused candidate who also happens to be a grandson of John F. Kennedy, and then there is a center-left, anti-Trump coalition candidate. Each has backing and momentum, but seeing as incumbent Jerry Nadler is not running for reelection, this will be an interesting test lab for the near future of Democratic politics in elite, urban districts.

Most Competitive New Jersey Democrats in 2026

Cait Conley: NY-17

Cait Conley, 39, is a former U.S. Army combat veteran and former director of counterterrorism for the National Security Council. A West Point graduate and Hudson Valley native, Conley is leveraging her military and public service career to push into politics. After deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq across her 16-year-long career, she is focusing her campaign on issues such as lowering costs, cleaning up corruption, affordable healthcare, infrastructure, and treating climate change as a national security issue. In a crowded race, Conley has managed to raise the most money and gather the most endorsements out of any remaining candidate. $1,914,138 raised is nothing to scoff at, and when paired with a host of endorsements from current representatives and organizations, Conley has a lot of momentum going forwards. In particular, this district's large Jewish population may actually play in Conley's favor, despite this voting bloc often voting for conservatives. Conley's experience in the Middle East and with counterterrorism may yield her some goodwill here, and in a district that has historically swung blue, she has a good chance of flipping this seat back.

<u>Recent Interviews</u>

Cait Conley on her NY District 17 House Campaign, Trump, Hegseth and the Illegal Iran War

Beth Davidson: NY-17

The other main contender in the 17th district is Beth Davidson, a 52-year-old Rockland County legislator. Davidson has deep roots in the district, having been a staunch activist when it comes to housing advocacy and administrative work. Between her time at the YMCA, her synagogue's board, and the Environment Committee and Task Force on Water Resources Management, Davidson truly has experience in a lot of different facets of public service. Her platform is mainly focused on housing affordability, the cost of living, infrastructure, and access to things like healthcare and abortion rights. On the campaign front, she is a seasoned politician. She has ran and won multiple local level campaigns, and this time around she has raised an impressive $1,490,848 through the end of 2025. While she has less endorsements, the people of the district may resonate with her long career of local leadership more than Conley's, and her Jewish background will help pull that conservative Hasidic community towards her campaign. While money still matters a lot in elections, and she is second on this front, local trust often is a great counter. In the end, the real question will be how much voters want their representative to play a part at the national level versus at the local level. And if they lean towards the local level, Davidson will have a lot more support and a better chance at winning the seat.

Recent Interviews:

Rockland County Legislator Beth Davidson on Bid for Congress | PIX on Politics Daily

Laura Gillen: NY-04

Out in a quiet and suburban Long Island district, incumbent Laura Gillen, 56, looks out on an empty field of Republican candidates. And yet, poll aggregators only give this district a slight blue lean. Having won in 2024 by a 2.3 point margin, the former lawyer and law professor has been a staunch centrist. She declined to congratulate Zohran Mamdani's mayoral win, she broke ranks with Democrats to pass the Laken Riley Act, she voted to censure Democratic congressman Al Green for speaking during Donald Trump's State of the Union Address, and she recently voted to pass extra funding to ICE. Her platform aims to focus on current Democratic priorities like the cost of living crisis and local investment towards healthcare and infrastructure, while also courting conservatives with more law enforcement-oriented policies and an explicit rejection of the Democratic Party's left wing. While this might turn off younger voters, it will certainly work in a very wealthy district that swings between parties. Gillen certainly has money of her own; she's raised $2,858,864 already and has likely not had to spend very much so far. She will certainly win the primary, but if Republicans run Anthony D'Esposito, the previous representative, she will have to work quite hard to hold the seat. Nonetheless, polls suggest she has a slight edge, and depending on whether a blue wave is explicitly anti-ICE or not, she could either ride it to victory or die by it due to her voting record.

Recent Interviews

Rep. Laura Gillen on government shutdown and more | The Point Full Interview 10.5.25

Josh Riley: NY-19

Josh Riley, 45, is the incumbent representative in this historically competitive district. He was able to flip the district with 51.1% of the vote in 2024, and now he is looking to build on this success. Coming from a working-class background in upstate New York, Riley attended Harvard Law School before taking roles in the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, and as a counsel to former Senator Al Franken. This is his first time now in office, and he has pushed a slew of policies that straddle the line between progressive economic populism and more moderate social and immigration policies. Riley's main focus, like many Democrats, has been on the cost of living, campaign finance reform, healthcare, and protecting democracy. With endorsements from many organizations and a whopping $3,129,176 raised through the end of 2025, Riley is in a solid position as the campaign ramps into high gear. But Republicans will try to target this seat, and while the main challenger hasn't raised a ton of money yet, he is a state senator with endorsements from Trump, Speaker Johnson, and Representative Mike Lawler. This will be a close race based on how previous election cycles have gone, and if Republicans see an opportunity, Riley may need to work hard to fend off his opponent.

Tom Suozzi: NY-03

Tom Suozzi, 63, is a lifelong public servant. A native to this Long Island district, his father was the mayor of Glen Cove, as was Suozzi himself for a time. He was then elected to the House in 2016 and reelected in 2018 and 2020. In 2022, he attempted to run for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2022 but lost to incumbent governor Kathy Hochul. But in 2024, he managed to re-win this district 52-44, flipping this seat back for Democrats. In terms of policy, Suozzi has some commonalities with Riley and Gillen. He is focused primarily on affordability through reducing taxes, he strikes a moderate tone on immigration, he backs police funding and extending ACA tax credits, and bipartisanship and pushing back against the left wing of the party are both core to his political identity. All of this has thus far played well in this wealthy district, and there is no reason to believe that this won't continue. Suozzi has immaculate name recognition and local connections in this district, he has raised almost 10 times the amount as his main Republican opponent (Suozzi is sitting on $3,246,484 through 2025), and after Santos' tenure, the sense of stability that Suozzi has brought will likely earn him some goodwill from independent voters. Unless the expected blue wave in November doesn't materialize, Suozzi should be expected to win this race.

Chris Gallant: NY-01

In contrast to Tom Suozzi's career, the 36-year-old Chris Gallant has served the public in almost every way besides politics. A former New York Army National Guard who served in the Middle East, a Black Hawk helicopter pilot, a FAA air traffic controller and leader of his union, and a volunteer firefighter, Gallant aims to bring competence and accountability to this race and win a surprise victory against incumbent Republican Nick LaLota. In order to do this, Gallant has adopted a more moderate platform than many other Democrats in a bid to win voters in a district that went Trump's way by 10 points. He hits the affordability and healthcare points like many

other candidates, but he also aims to invest in coastal protection, something important for Long Island, and explicitly is running against what he calls “political infighting" and a lack of results from elites in DC. His efforts have yielded a lot of hope for Democrats, with a recent poll finding that 41% of voters supported LaLota while 38% supported Gallant. This is far closer than anticipated, but it will absolutely still be a tough fight for Gallant. LaLota has an incumbent and fundraising advantage in a red district. Additionally, Gallant’s identity as openly gay may or may not rub more conservative voters the wrong way. If LaLota’s popularity continues to slip, Gallant may just be able to upset him and win the seat, but both polling and betting odds are not particularly in his favor at the moment. Nonetheless, keep an eye on this race as we get closer to November.

Blake Gendebien

Blake Gendebien, 49, has made quite a stir in the race in the 21st district. A dairy farmer and lifelong resident of Lisbon, NY, he has thus far ran a campaign that may just become a model for how Democrats can win rural red districts. Besides being a dairy farmer, he is a school board member, the Vice Chair of a major regional dairy co-op, and founded a pediatric cancer nonprofit. This background of service and working-class upbringing has influenced his policy platform. Gendebien’s priorities are supporting farmers, protecting small businesses, and general rural economic development, but he also wants to push for anti-corruption measures, expanding healthcare access in rural areas, and working across the aisle to get things done without getting too much into the weeds ideologically. While none of this by itself would make much of a stir in one of the reddest NY seats, his massive fundraising efforts have turned heads. His campaign has raised $4,051,856, and is closing in on the $5,005,073 Republican candidate Anthony Constantino has raised. Constantino does not have the incumbent advantage, as the representative here, Elise Stefanik, is stepping down. This race may be Democrats’ best chance at retaking this seat since 2012, when they last controlled it. That being said, Gendebien will have a tough fight on his hands, as Republicans will almost certainly see this seat as a must-win in New York. While polling aggregators have increasingly pushed their predictions closer to a tight race, polls still lean slightly towards Constantino, so keep an eye out for data as the summer comes and goes.

Recent Interviews:

CBS6 speaks with NY-21 candidate Blake Gendebien

Alex Bores: NY-12

The first of three leading Democratic candidates in the Midtown Manhattan district, Alex Bores, 35, is an indicator for a potential future for the Democrats. Bores himself is a fifth-generation New Yorker who was a software engineer at Palantir before working in various fintech startup roles. He also was elected to the New York State Assembly in 2022, where he helped pass the AI regulation legislation (RAISE Act). With a master’s degree in computer science, he is focusing heavily on ai regulation and is best understood as a technocratic progressive. Bores is pushing for strong regulation and safety standards for AI companies, as well as countering

deepfakes and job displacement. Outside of AI, Bores wants to make NYC more affordable through expanding the housing supply, he wants to strengthen democratic institutions and (interestingly) limit the influence of wealthy interests, and he strikes a pro-worker tone based on concerns about tech-driven inequality. The reason he is a frontrunner is because he has both racked up endorsements from state and federal legislators and he has raised the most in the race by a wide margin at $2,236,328. In fact, he raised $1,200,000 in the first 24 hours, but the vast majority of it was from outside of the district. With strong fundraising and a local base, Bores seems to be a favorite. But time will tell how his less locally-rooted donor base and his competition will hinder his ascent to the seat. Both of his rivals have strong campaigns, and if he manages to beat them, he could be a preview of what mainstream urban Democratic politics could be.

Recent Interviews:

Why Is The AI Industry Afraid Of Alex Bores? | Lever Time

Jack Schlossberg: NY-12

Next up in this race is Jack Schlossberg, the 33-year-old political commentator and author. The only grandson of President John F. Kennedy, Schlossberg represents the generational change Democrat in this race. He studied at Yale, Harvard Law School, and Harvard Business School before becoming a Vogue political correspondent and author. Without any traditional governing experience, Schlossberg's campaign is focused on the aforementioned generational change, the cost of living, democracy and anti-corruption, and climate and civic engagement efforts. This platform is one that hinges on a sense of idealism and renewed faith in politics, and Schlossberg has leaned into this by vowing not to take corporate PAC or super PAC money. Despite this, he still has managed to raise $1,117,588 with a lot of grassroots donations. All of this has led to Schlossberg actually leading in the race according to multiple polls. While they all highlight large undecided blocs, the polls show a 7 to 10 point lead for Schlossberg as of February. With massive name recognition and a strong social media presence appealing to local voters, he certainly has the "vibes" part of running a campaign down. What remains to be seen is whether his lack of a detailed policy platform and governing experience irks voters as the primary nears.

Recent Interviews:

Extended interview: Jack Schlossberg

Micah Lasher: NY-12

Micah Lasher, 44, is bringing political experience and establishment support to this race. He is a freshman New York State Assemblymember, but is also a former Director of Policy for Governor Kathy Hochul, Director of State Legislative Affairs for Michael Bloomberg, aide to incumbent Representative Jerrold Nadler, and former chief of staff in the NY Attorney General's office. Throughout all of these positions, he has focused on housing reform, minimum wage increases, gun control, and abortion protections. All of these, plus additional focuses on the cost of living,

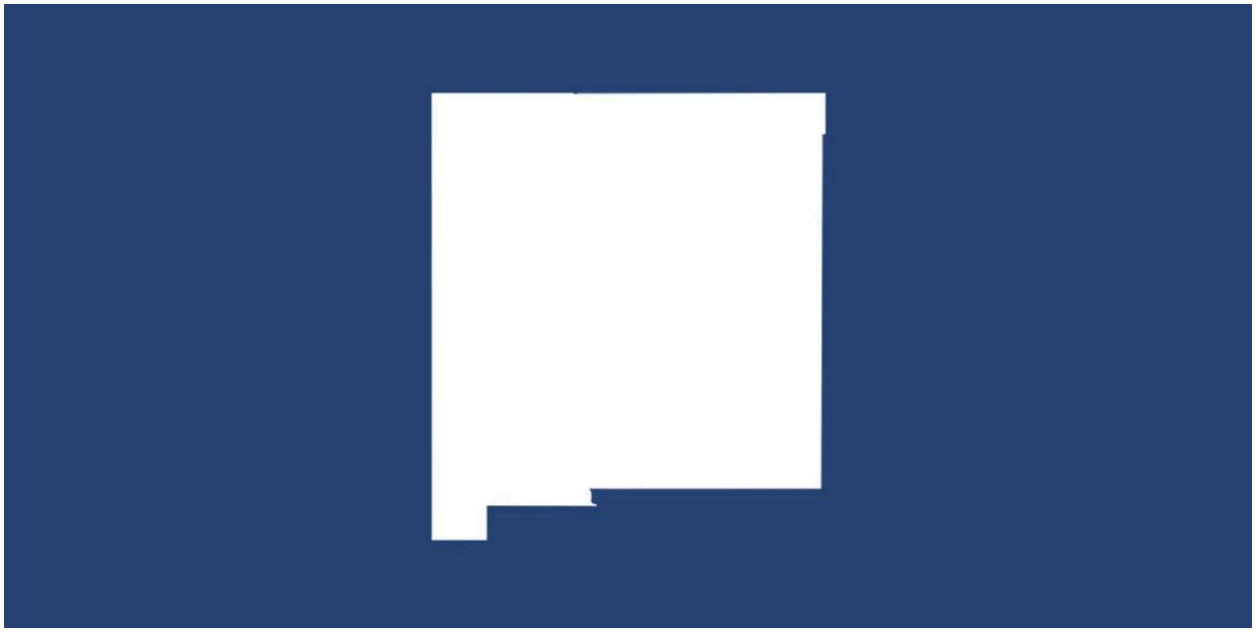
abolishing ICE, and fighting Trump-era policies, make up his policy platform. Lasher also enjoys endorsements from many of his previous bosses and has the highest fundraising potential with Michael Bloomberg's support. He already has the second-most raised at $1,374,760, and with deep governing experience, he will certainly appeal to older voters and more mainline Democrats. But without something to make him stand out besides his experience, this NYC district may just have gotten a taste of Zohran Mamdani's politics and push for someone more progressive than Lasher. If this happens, Lasher may just end up being the control experiment for onlookers to measure this race by. But if this isn't the case, Lasher stands in a strong position to win the race if this becomes a financial battle of attrition.

Recent Interviews:

Full interview with U.S. House candidate Micah Lasher | The Point 3.8.26

Engagement Resources:

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels:
    - United States House of Representatives elections in New York, 2026 - Ballotpedia
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness:
    - 2026 CPR House Race ratings | Cook Political Report
    - 2026 CPR Senate Race ratings | Cook Political Report
- The New York Times and City & State New York are both great local resources for coverage of elections and issues facing New York.



New Mexico

Morgan Davidson | 6/3/2026

New Mexico, or the Land of Enchantment, has a Senate seat up for grabs, along with 3 House races. All 5 of New Mexico's current congressional seats are held by Democrats & all 4 offices on the ballot are being defended by Democratic incumbents. Incumbent Ben Ray Luján will face the Republican candidate, Larry Marker, who ran as a write-in candidate & need to surpass a vote total to be on the ballot in November.

Voters made their voices heard in the primary on June 2nd & will return to the polls for the general election on November 3rd.

Senate

Ben Ray Luján first entered the Senate in 2020 & looks poised to continue his tenure in 2026. Luján will face Republican write-in candidate Larry E. Marker, who qualified for the ballot after receiving 4,770 votes, well above the 2,531 required. Despite securing a challenger, Republicans enter the race at a significant disadvantage given Luján's incumbency, name recognition, & New Mexico's recent voting trends.

Before joining the Senate, Luján represented New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District in the House of Representatives & served as House Assistant Speaker. A native of Nambé, a small community north of Santa Fe, Luján has built his political career around healthcare access, economic development, environmental conservation, & support for New Mexico's rural communities. During his time in Congress, he has championed efforts to protect patients with pre-existing conditions, expand clean energy investment, strengthen New Mexico's economy, support victims of natural disasters, & advocate for Native American communities. With nearly

two decades in federal office & a well-established statewide profile, Luján enters 2026 as a heavy favorite to retain his seat.

House

Over in the House, Democrats won handily in 2024, with their narrowest margin of victory coming in at just over 4 points, in a year when the party underperformed nationally. Given the current political environment, where Republicans face headwinds nationally, Trump remains unpopular, the war with Iran continues, & prices continue to rise across the board, Democrats appear well-positioned for another sweep in New Mexico. That outlook is strengthened by Republicans' struggles to field a top-of-the-ticket candidate.

NM-01

New Mexico's 1st Congressional District is a Democratic safe haven that includes most of the Albuquerque metro area, the state's largest population center. Incumbent Melanie Stansbury (female, 47) ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & should have little trouble continuing to represent NM-01 in Washington.

Before joining Congress, Stansbury served in the New Mexico House of Representatives & built a reputation around water policy, environmental issues, economic development, & public lands management. Since winning a special election in 2021, she has consistently carried the district by comfortable margins. Given the district's strong Democratic lean, her incumbency advantage, name recognition, campaign infrastructure, & the lack of a serious Republican challenge, NM-01 is expected to remain securely in Democratic hands in 2026.

NM-02

New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District is likely to be the most competitive district in the state, though that is not saying much in 2026. The district stretches from Texas to Arizona & includes much of southern New Mexico. Areas in the southeast are heavily tied to the oil & gas industry and politically resemble neighboring West Texas, while population centers such as Las Cruces help offset those conservative votes. The result is a district that is more competitive than the rest of the state, but one that still leans Democratic in the current political environment.

Incumbent Gabriel Vasquez (male, 41) ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & should continue to represent NM-02. Vasquez was born & raised in Las Cruces and has built much of his political profile around issues important to southern New Mexico, including economic development, public lands, water policy, and border communities. While Republicans would likely target this district first if they hoped to make gains in New Mexico, the combination of incumbency, demographic trends, & the current political climate leaves Vasquez in a strong position heading into November.

NM-03

Finally, New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District is currently represented by incumbent Teresa Leger Fernandez (female, 66). She ran unopposed in the Democratic primary & will face Republican Martin Reuben Zamora in the general election. The district includes northern New Mexico, the state capital of Santa Fe, & large portions of the state's eastern region. Born in Las Vegas, New Mexico, Leger Fernandez earned her undergraduate degree from Yale before building a career as an attorney, advocate, & public servant focused on issues affecting New Mexico communities.

Leger Fernandez enters the race with several advantages. She is a well-established incumbent with deep roots in the district, strong name recognition, & a proven record of winning elections. Combined with the district's Democratic lean & her longstanding ties to northern New Mexico, those factors should place her in a strong position heading into November. Barring a major shift in the political environment, NM-03 is expected to remain comfortably in Democratic hands.

Recent Interviews

Senator Ben Luján Question RFK (PBS)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPtM2DTfTj0

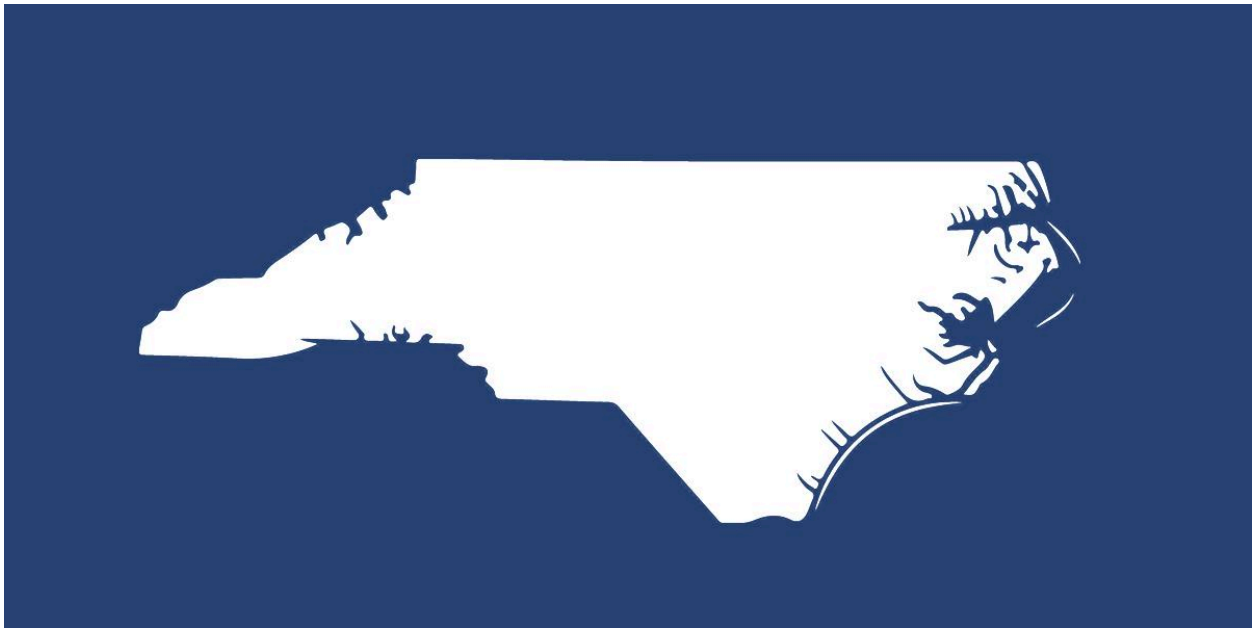
Inside the Epstein Files with Melanie Stansbury- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLzED3JOmMA

Gabriel Vasquez- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yt8FVkmL62M

Teresa Leger Fernandez on Iran- https://www.pbs.org/video/leger-fernandez-on-iran-cesar-chavez-reckoning-7wast6/

Take Action

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org/New_Mexico_elections,_2026
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com/
- Source New Mexico is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Land of Enchantment.- https://sourcenm.com/



North Carolina

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Morgan Davidson | 6/15/2026

North Carolina, the Tar Heel state, enters the 2026 election cycle as one of the nation's most closely watched battleground states. While Republicans have enjoyed success in many statewide federal races over the last decade, Democrats remain highly competitive thanks to continued growth in urban centers such as Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, & Greensboro. At the same time, Republicans continue to dominate much of rural eastern & western North Carolina, creating a state that is often decided on the margins. That said, North Carolina may represent Democrats' best Senate pickup opportunity in 2026.

Unlike states such as New Mexico or Missouri, where one party enters the cycle with a clear advantage, North Carolina remains highly contested. Rapid population growth, changing suburban voting patterns, & competitive statewide elections have made the Tar Heel State a major target for both parties. As a result, candidates can expect significant national attention, outside spending, & voter outreach efforts throughout the campaign.

North Carolinians cast their primary ballots on March 3 & will be returning to the polls for the general election on November 3rd.

Senate

Democrat Roy Cooper (male, 69) will face Republican Michael Whatley in November after incumbent Senator Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) announced his retirement amid growing criticism from portions of the Republican base and disagreements with the Trump administration. Tillis' departure transforms what could have been a difficult Democratic challenge into one of the party's best pickup opportunities in 2026.

Cooper enters the race as one of the strongest Democratic candidates Republicans could have faced. A former governor and attorney general, Cooper has won statewide office multiple times in a state that has often favored Republicans in federal elections. His record of electoral success, statewide name recognition, & established fundraising network give Democrats reason for optimism heading into the general election. While Michael Whatley enters the race with strong ties to the national Republican Party, early indicators suggest Cooper begins the campaign as the favorite in what is expected to be one of the most closely watched Senate races in the country.

House

Over in the House, Democrats face a much tougher environment than they do in the Senate race. While national conditions may favor the party in 2026, North Carolina's congressional map remains tilted toward Republicans. As a result, Democrats are likely to spend more time defending their existing seats than pursuing major gains.

NC-01: Incumbent Don Davis (Democrat, male, 54) faces the most difficult re-election campaign of any Democratic incumbent in the state. Following redistricting, the historically Black district has become significantly more competitive and is viewed as a prime Republican pickup opportunity.

NC-02: Incumbent Deborah Ross (Democrat, female, 63) should have little trouble retaining her seat. The Raleigh-area district remains one of the safer Democratic seats in North Carolina.

NC-03: Raymond Smith Jr. (Democrat, male, 64) will challenge incumbent Republican Gregory Murphy. Despite Smith's experience in public service, the district remains strongly Republican and is expected to stay in GOP hands.

NC-04: Incumbent Valerie Foushee (Democrat, female, 70) is expected to comfortably win re-election. The district's Democratic lean and her incumbency make her one of the safest Democrats on the ballot.

NC-05: Chuck Hubbard (Democrat, male, approximately 60) will face incumbent Republican Virginia Foxx. While Hubbard has local ties and experience, the district remains heavily Republican and favors Foxx.

NC-06: Cyril Jefferson (Democrat, male, 34) will challenge incumbent Republican Addison McDowell. Jefferson is one of the younger Democratic candidates on the ballot and could emerge as a figure to watch in future cycles, though he faces long odds in 2026.

NC-07: Kimberly Hardy (Democrat, female, 49) is expected to fall short against incumbent Republican David Rouzer. However, Hardy's involvement within the Democratic Party has helped establish her as a recognizable figure among party activists.

NC-08: Colby Watson (Democrat, male, 37) will face incumbent Republican Mark Harris. The district leans Republican and Watson enters the race as a clear underdog.

NC-09: Richard Ojeda (Democrat, male, 55) is among the more interesting Democratic challengers in the state. A former West Virginia State Senator, military veteran, and one-time presidential candidate, Ojeda brings significant name recognition and a unique political background. Despite that profile, he remains a long shot against incumbent Republican Richard Hudson.

NC-10: Ashley Bell (Democrat, female, in her 40s) will challenge incumbent Republican Pat Harrigan. While Bell has worked to build support throughout the district, Harrigan enters the race with a significant advantage.

NC-11: Jamie Ager (Democrat, male, 47) may be Democrats' most intriguing challenger outside of NC-01. A farmer and the grandson of former Congressman Jamie Clarke, Ager has deep roots in western North Carolina and could attract attention in a district that has occasionally produced competitive races. He still faces an uphill battle against incumbent Republican Chuck Edwards.

NC-12: Incumbent Alma Adams (Democrat, female, 80) is expected to win another term representing the Charlotte-based district. Adams remains one of the most secure Democratic incumbents in the state.

NC-13: Paul Barringer (Democrat, male, 58) will challenge incumbent Republican Brad Knott. The district favors Republicans, making Barringer a significant underdog.

NC-14: Lakesha Womack (Democrat, female, 48) will seek to hold the district for Democrats. Given the district's partisan makeup, Democrats enter the race in a favorable position and should remain competitive heading into November.

Democrats’ Best Chance to Flip

Democrats' best pickup opportunity in North Carolina is the U.S. Senate race. Following Thom Tillis' retirement, former Governor Roy Cooper enters the race against Republican Michael Whatley with a strong statewide profile, significant name recognition, & a history of winning competitive elections. What was once expected to be one of the nation's premier toss-up races has shifted in Democrats' favor, making the Senate seat their clearest path to a gain in North Carolina.

In the House, Democrats face a much more difficult map. While national conditions may favor the party in 2026, mid-decade redistricting has made many congressional districts significantly harder to contest. As a result, Democrats may find themselves in the unusual position of being favored in a marquee statewide race while struggling to translate that success into gains down ballot.

Among House races, Democrats' best opportunity appears to be NC-11. While the district still leans Republican, Democratic nominee Jamie Ager has emerged as a strong challenger with deep roots in western North Carolina, significant fundraising success, & a profile that aligns well with the district's rural character. National Democrats have increasingly focused on the seat,

viewing it as one of the few Republican-held districts in the state where favorable national conditions could create a path to victory. Ager remains an underdog against incumbent Chuck Edwards, but among Democratic challengers in North Carolina, he appears to have the clearest path to an upset should a Democratic wave materialize in 2026.

At the same time, Democrats must play defense in NC-01, where incumbent Don Davis faces a much tougher district following redistricting. What was once a relatively secure Democratic seat has become one of the GOP's top targets, highlighting the challenges Democrats face under the current congressional map.

North Carolina serves as a reminder that candidate quality, fundraising, & voter enthusiasm are only part of the equation. District lines matter, & Republicans have benefited from a map that helped shift the state's congressional delegation from a 7-7 split earlier in the decade to a 10-4 Republican advantage. While Democrats cannot control the maps, they can continue to organize, recruit candidates, & build relationships with voters across the state. Those investments help build the infrastructure & candidate bench needed to compete in future elections.

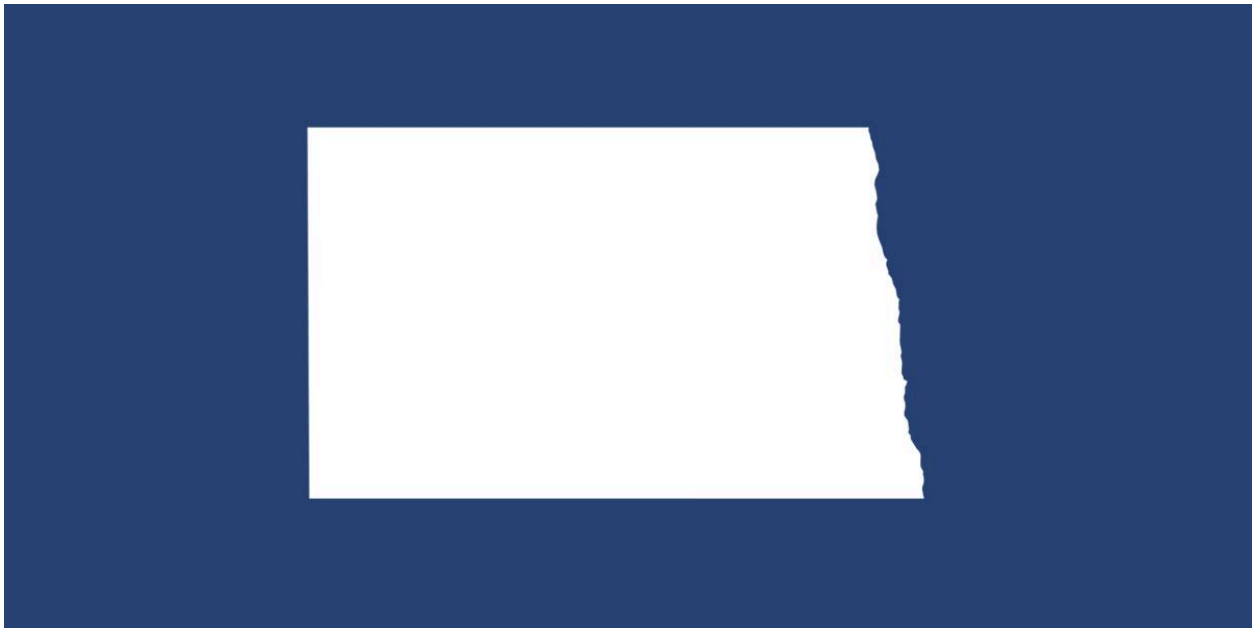
If Democrats leave 2026 with a Senate pickup while maintaining most of their House seats, it would represent a strong result given the challenges posed by the current map. More importantly, it would position the party to remain competitive in one of the nation's most important battleground states for years to come.

Recent Interviews

- Senate: Roy Cooper- https://www.youtube.com/shorts/iRtormxHGUQ
- NC-01: Don Davis- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riR26BBNYWY
- NC-02: Deborah Ross- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GDTkGcFUls
- NC-03: Raymond Smith Jr.- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1dn_K8vNjs
- NC-04: Valerie Foushee- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi7kFpo4ehI
- NC-05: Chuck Hubbard- https://www.facebook.com/ChuckHubbardNC/videos/i-want-to-take-a-moment-to-introduce-myself-to-all-of-the-new-followers-im-happy/1647855966267113/
- NC-06: Cyril Jefferson- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bmIlm18doM
- NC-07: Kimberly Hardy- https://www.facebook.com/reel/1247581780779299
- NC-08: Colby Watson- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtcvVOtvD2s
- NC-09: Richard Ojeda- https://www.facebook.com/RichardOjeda2020/videos/why-im-a-democrat/2019571348634996/
- NC-10: Ashley Bell- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mBDwDZJp_k
- NC-11: Jamie Ager- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU3qYqVW83o
- NC-12: Alma Adams- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYqQkEJmJSu/
- NC-13: Paul Barringer- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVZcOq3jlrj/
- NC-14: Lakesha Womack- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyFszdvNecM

Take Action

- Ballotpedia- serves as an initial go-to for candidates and races at all levels: https://ballotpedia.org
- Cook Political Report- CPR evaluates races by competitiveness: https://www.cookpolitical.com
- Carolina Public Press is a nonprofit outlet known for tracking political happenings in the Tar Heel State. https://carolinapublicpress.org/



North Dakota

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Ryan Dulaney | April 21, 2026

Summary

North Dakota's 2026 federal elections will feature a single at-large U.S. House race, the state's only federal contest. The state remains among the most reliably Republican in the nation — no Democrat has won statewide since Heidi Heitkamp's Senate victory in 2012 — and the at-large House seat is not considered competitive by national forecasters. However, the Democratic-NPL Party has consolidated behind a strong, organized candidate in Trygve Hammer, making the primary outcome largely settled. The central story for Democrats is less about a contested primary and more about whether an energized base, anti-tariff sentiment among farmers, and national backlash politics can move a deeply red state in an unusually volatile environment.

Most Competitive Races

ND At-Large (U.S. House)

North Dakota has a single at-large congressional district covering the entire state. The seat is held by Republican Julie Fedorchak, who won with nearly 70% of the vote in 2024. The district carries a Cook PVI of approximately R+20, making it a structural long-shot for Democrats. Nonetheless, the Dem-NPL convention in March 2026 demonstrated significant party energy and organizational strength, drawing a large crowd to Bismarck State College. Democrats have pointed to farm-country anxiety over Trump-era tariffs and proposed healthcare cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act as potential wedge issues that could improve their margin, if not flip the seat outright. The race is rated Safe Republican by all major forecasters.

Most Competitive Candidates

Trygve Hammer (ND At-Large)

Hammer is the Dem-NPL endorsed candidate for the at-large U.S. House seat and the overwhelming favorite in the June 9 Democratic primary. A Naval Academy graduate and former Marine helicopter pilot who served a combat deployment in Iraq, Hammer has also worked in North Dakota's oil industry and as a public school science teacher in Minot. He received the party's endorsement by a commanding margin of 360 convention votes to 64 for Vern Thompson and 25 for Helene Neville. His campaign focuses on opposition to tariffs, defense of healthcare programs threatened by federal spending cuts, and criticism of incumbent Fedorchak for avoiding public town halls. He draws support from the full breadth of the Dem-NPL coalition, including veterans, agricultural communities concerned about trade policy, organized labor, and progressive activists. Hammer previously ran against Fedorchak in 2024, earning about 30% of the vote.

Vern Thompson (ND At-Large)

Thompson is a former state legislator and independent trucker who ran in the Democratic primary to give voice to rural and agricultural concerns. He served in the North Dakota House from 1989 to 1990 and in the Senate from 1997 to 2000, representing the Devils Lake/Minnewaukan area. Thompson drew on his personal history as a farmer during the 1980s farm crisis to argue for stronger protections against Trump tariff policies he views as devastating to North Dakota agriculture. He received 64 convention votes and did not secure the party endorsement, but will remain on the June primary ballot. His support base consists of rural populists, independent-minded voters, and farmers skeptical of both parties.

Helene Neville (ND At-Large)

Neville entered the Democratic primary race for the at-large seat and competed for the party convention endorsement, receiving 25 delegate votes. She did not secure the endorsement and has a limited public profile compared to Hammer or Thompson. Her candidacy represents the broader desire within the Dem-NPL base to field as many voices as possible in the primary and build grassroots capacity for future cycles.

State Political Context

North Dakota has not elected a Democrat to federal office since Heitkamp's narrow 2012 Senate win. The state has experienced over three decades of Republican trifecta control at the state level. The Democratic-NPL Party — the state's fusion of the Democratic Party with the progressive Nonpartisan League tradition — operates as a minority party with limited resources but retains pockets of organizational strength in Fargo, Grand Forks, and Bismarck. Former Sen. Heitkamp spoke at the March 2026 convention and challenged attendees to hold Republican officeholders accountable, lending credibility and visibility to the party's 2026 effort. Primary date: June 9, 2026. General election: November 3, 2026.

Oklahoma

2026 Democratic Primary Preview Series | Oklahoma | Ryan Dulaney | April 21, 2026

Summary

Oklahoma's 2026 federal elections will feature one U.S. Senate race and five House contests. The state is reliably Republican across all five congressional districts, and post-redistricting maps have made each seat structurally safe for the GOP. However, 2026 presents unusual circumstances: incumbent Sen. Markwayne Mullin vacated his seat in March 2026 after being confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security, creating an open Senate seat for the first time in years. The Republican primary to replace him is highly competitive, while Democrats are fielding a primary field of their own for the general election. Democrats hold no realistic path to winning any of the five House seats following the 2020 redistricting, but are running candidates in all districts to build infrastructure and candidate pipelines. The Senate Democratic primary is the main organizational focal point for the party in 2026.

Most Competitive Races

U.S. Senate (Open Seat)

Oklahoma's Senate seat became open when Mullin was confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security on March 23, 2026. Gov. Kevin Stitt appointed oil and gas executive Alan Armstrong as interim senator, though Armstrong is prohibited by a state law oath from running for the full term. The Republican primary to fill the seat is highly contested, with Rep. Kevin Hern, who vacated his Tulsa-area House seat to run, entering as a frontrunner alongside several other candidates. Democrats are fielding a primary of their own on June 16, with a potential runoff on August 25 if no candidate clears 50%. The general election will be November 3, 2026. No Democratic

candidate is considered competitive in the general, but the open seat dynamic and the unsettled Republican field make it a higher-visibility race than typical Oklahoma Senate contests.

OK-05 (Oklahoma City Suburbs)

Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District, centered on Oklahoma City and its suburbs, is the historically most competitive district in the state. Democrat Kendra Horn held the seat from 2019 to 2021, and the district has since been redrawn to a Cook PVI of R+9 — more Republican than before, but still the most reachable of the state's five districts for Democrats in a favorable national environment. Incumbent Republican Stephanie Bice is running for a fourth term. Democrat Jena Nelson, a former educator who ran for State Superintendent in 2022, is the most publicly visible Democratic challenger. The race is rated Safely Republican by forecasters, but it remains the only district where a hypothetical Democratic wave scenario could produce a competitive outcome.

OK-01 (Tulsa Area — Open Seat)

The Tulsa-area 1st Congressional District became an open seat after Rep. Kevin Hern announced his Senate bid on March 11, 2026. The open Republican primary features a crowded field of twelve Republican candidates, including state Corporation Commission Chair Kim David, state Rep. Mark Tedford, combat veteran Dan Rooney, and country singer Ty England. One Democrat has filed. The district carries a Cook PVI well above R+15 and is not considered competitive at the general election level. However, the open-seat dynamic and multi-candidate Republican primary make the primary itself the main event. Democrats are running a candidate primarily to maintain ballot presence and conduct voter registration activity.

Most Competitive Candidates — U.S. Senate Democratic Primary

Jim Priest

Priest is a lawyer and former nonprofit executive who previously served as CEO of Sunbeam Family Services and Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma. He is running on a platform centered on economic opportunity, workforce development, and restoring institutional trust. His background in nonprofit leadership and civic engagement gives him credibility with moderate and socially-minded Democratic voters in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. He is viewed by party insiders as one of the more electable general-election profiles in the field.

Troy Green

Green is a former law enforcement officer and longtime martial arts instructor who founded Safe Haven Oklahoma, a nonprofit focused on combating human trafficking and child exploitation. He retired from teaching in 2022 after 30 years and has built a community profile around public safety and family protection. His campaign draws on grassroots networks in the nonprofit and veterans communities. He appeals to voters looking for a candidate with law enforcement credibility and a record of community service outside elected politics.

Rebekah LaVann

LaVann is running in the Democratic Senate primary and draws support from progressive and activist circles within the state party. Her candidacy reflects the grassroots organizing energy that has built within Oklahoma's Democratic base in response to Republican governance on education, healthcare, and social policy. She is positioned to the left of Priest in the field and appeals to younger, college-educated Democratic primary voters in the Oklahoma City and Norman areas.

N'Kiyla Thomas

Thomas, who goes by 'Jasmine,' is running in the Democratic Senate primary and is listed as a federal candidate on the Oklahoma Democratic Party's official candidate page. She represents the diversity-focused and community-activist wing of the primary electorate. Limited public information is currently available about her campaign platform and organizational infrastructure, though her presence in the race reflects the party's effort to field a broad and representative primary field.

Most Competitive Candidates — U.S. House Democratic Primaries

Jena Nelson (OK-05)

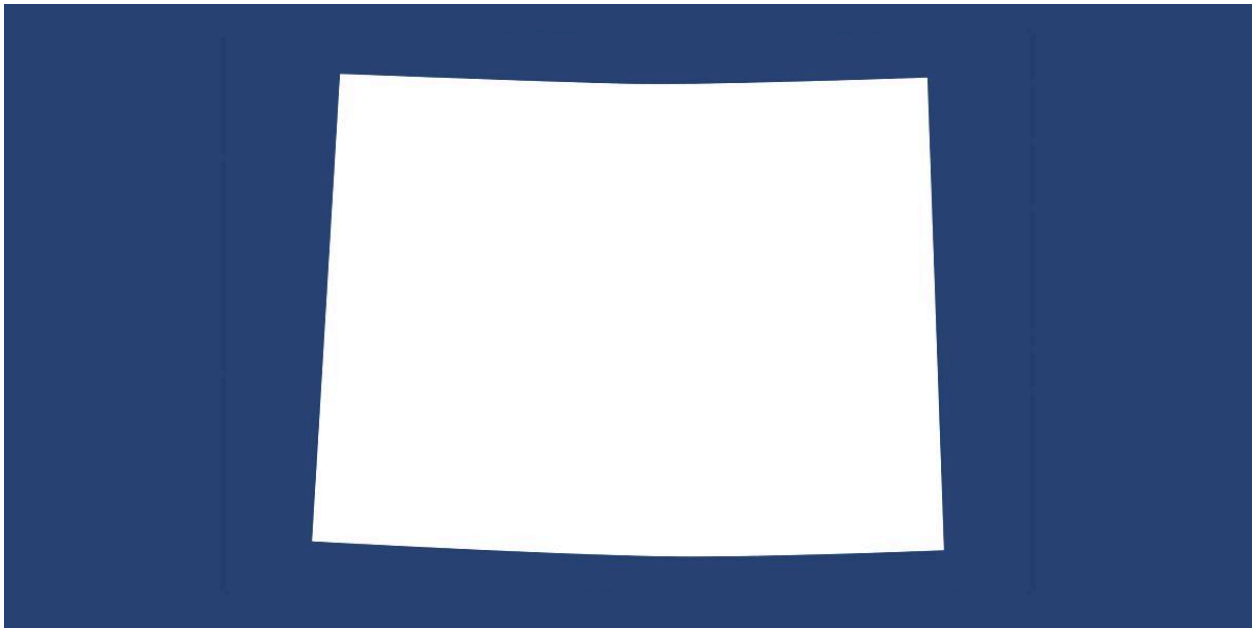
Nelson is running in the Democratic primary for Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District, the most visible House Democratic candidacy in the state. A former educator, she previously ran for State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2022 against Ryan Walters, giving her statewide name recognition and experience running in a contested race. She has been active in education advocacy through the organization We're Oklahoma Education (WOKE), which focuses on defending public education from what it views as partisan interference at the state Board of Education. She draws support from teachers, education advocates, suburban moderates, and voters energized by opposition to Walters-era education policy. She faces Republican incumbent Stephanie Bice in a district rated R+9.

Erica Watkins (OK-01)

Watkins is running as the Democratic candidate in Oklahoma's newly-open 1st Congressional District (Tulsa area) following Rep. Kevin Hern's departure to run for Senate. She served in the U.S. Army National Guard from 2007 to 2017 and was among the first groups of women to serve as combat assets. She earned degrees in Sociology and Global Affairs and is the Executive Director of We're Oklahoma Education (WOKE). Her campaign draws on both her military background and her education advocacy work, positioning her to reach veterans, women, and education-focused Democratic voters. The district is heavily Republican and rated Safe Republican, but the open seat creates an elevated profile for her candidacy.

State Political Context

Oklahoma has not elected a Democrat to statewide federal office since 2004. The 2020 redistricting effectively ended the competitiveness of OK-05, which had been a swing seat. The state Democratic Party is in a rebuilding phase under new leadership and is focused on fielding candidates in all races to develop future infrastructure. The 2026 cycle features unusual federal volatility due to the Mullin vacancy, an open Tulsa House seat, and statewide Republican primaries that will shape the GOP brand heading into the general election. Primary date: June 16, 2026. Runoff (if needed): August 25, 2026. General election: November 3, 2026. Note: Oklahoma primaries are closed — only registered Democrats may participate in the Democratic primary in 2026, following the state election board's December 2025 decision to close all primaries.



Wyoming

2026 Democratic Primary Series #27 | Ryan Dulaney | 6/30/26

Overview

Wyoming is the most Republican state in the country at the presidential level, having gone for Donald Trump by more than 45 points in 2024, and Democrats have not won a statewide race since 2006 or a U.S. Senate seat in the state since 1970. Both chambers of the state legislature carry large GOP supermajorities, and every statewide office and the state's lone congressional seat are held by Republicans. Still, 2026 is an unusually active cycle because both of Wyoming's federal seats are open at once: Senator Cynthia Lummis chose not to seek a second term, and Representative Harriet Hageman left her U.S. House seat to run for that open Senate seat. The resulting scramble pulled in a wave of Republican candidates and a small but real Democratic field in both races. The primary serves mostly to determine which Democrat carries the party's banner into an uphill general election, but it is still the only contest where Wyoming Democrats get to make their case to their own voters.

Primary date: August 18, 2026. Filing deadline: May 29, 2026. General election: November 3, 2026. Wyoming uses a closed primary, meaning only voters registered with a party may vote in that party's primary.

U.S. Senate Democratic Primary

Lummis's retirement opened a seat Republicans have held continuously since 1977. Five Republicans filed, led by Hageman, who gave up a safe House seat to run. Two Democrats filed: James Byrd and Billy Benavidez.

James Byrd

Byrd is a former state representative from Cheyenne who served Wyoming House District 44 from 2009 to 2019, including stints as minority whip and minority caucus leader. He is the son of Liz Byrd, the first Black woman to serve in the Wyoming Legislature, and has framed his campaign in part around that family history of public service. He announced his Senate bid in February 2026, becoming the first Democrat to enter the race, and has positioned his campaign less as a partisan fight than as a push to elect someone who represents what he calls Wyoming values rather than Washington's. He criticized the state's Republican delegation for supporting the sale of public lands and tariffs that he said damaged the state's agricultural exports. On energy, he describes himself as supportive of the existing fossil fuel industry while pushing for greater investment in nuclear, wind, and solar development, arguing Wyoming missed a chance to own emerging energy technologies rather than just extract resources. He has also criticized growing support for school choice and homeschooling in the state and opposed efforts to dismantle the federal Department of Education. Byrd lost a 2020 state Senate race to Republican Affie Ellis and lost a 2022 Democratic primary for a state House seat, so this Senate run comes after a stretch out of office; he has continued showing up at local Democratic events, including Pride gatherings, through the spring of 2026.

Billy Benavidez

Benavidez, of Sheridan, is the second Democrat in the Senate race, having filed by the May 29 deadline. He has run on a platform centered on personal freedom and limiting the federal surveillance state, including opposition to use of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act against Americans, paired with a pledge to serve only one term and support congressional term limits more broadly.

U.S. House At-Large Democratic Primary

Hageman's move to the Senate race opened Wyoming's single U.S. House seat for the first time since she won it in 2022. Ten Republicans filed, headed by Secretary of State Chuck Gray, making it the most expensive and closely watched primary in the state this cycle. Two Democrats filed: Elena Del Real and Lisa Kinney.

Elena Del Real

Del Real, of Lander, is one of two Democrats who qualified for the House primary ballot. As with most of the Democratic field this cycle, her campaign has drawn far less statewide media attention than the crowded Republican primary, which has been dominated by infighting between Gray and self-funding rival Reid Rasner.

Lisa Kinney

Kinney, of Laramie, is the second Democrat in the House race. Laramie sits in Albany County, one of the few pockets of the state with a meaningful Democratic presence, and is home to the University of Wyoming.