



Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

APRIL 23, 2026

VOLUME 10, NO. 8

2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (3)

MI Open (Peters, D)
NC Open (Tillis, R)

Ossoff (D-Ga.)

Tilt Democratic (1)

NH Open (Shaheen, D)

Tilt Republican (2)

Collins (R-Maine)
Husted (R-Ohio)#

Lean Democratic

Lean Republican (1)

Sullivan (R-Ak.)

Likely Democratic (1)

MN Open (Smith, DFL)

Likely Republican (5)

IA Open (Ernst, R)
MT Open (Daines, R)
Cornyn (R-Texas)
Graham (R-S.C.)#
Ricketts (R-Neb.)#

Solid Democratic (9)

IL Open (Durbin, D)
Booker (D-N.J.)
Coons (D-Del.)
Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)
Lujan (D-N.M.)
Markey (D-Mass.)
Merkley (D-Ore.)
Reed (D-R.I.)
Warner (D-Va.)

Solid Republican (13)

AL Open (Tuberville, R)
KY Open (McConnell, R)
OK Open (Armstrong, R)
WY Open (Lummis, R)
Capito (R-W.V.)
Cassidy (R-Lou.)
Cotton (R-Ark.)
Hagerty (R-Tenn.)
Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)
Marshall (R-Kan.)
Moody (R-Fl.)
Risch (R-Idaho)
Rounds (R-S.D.)

Takeovers in *Italics*, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans

CALENDAR

May 5	Indiana, Ohio Primaries
May 12	Nebraska, Wyoming Primaries
May 16	Louisiana Primary
May 19	Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon, Pennsylvania Primaries

2026 Senate Overview: Democratic Majority Within Reach

By Nathan L. Gonzales and Jacob Rubashkin

Just a few months ago, Republican strategists expressed optimism about their party's midterm fortunes. Despite President Donald Trump's mediocre job approval rating, gas prices were falling, the stock market was surging and tax refunds were imminent. Republicans felt like they had time to turn things around before November. But the president's war with Iran has at least stalled that momentum, Election Day creeps closer and there's considerable doubt that Republicans can reassemble the 2024 Trump coalition.

By this point in his first term Trump's job rating had taken a modest turn for the better. And Republicans still lost 40 House seats. This cycle, he's less popular and he's not even moving in the right direction yet.

Senate Republicans are hoping for a repeat of 2018, when they gained two seats despite facing a poor political environment. But following that blueprint will be difficult. Trump is in a weaker political position this cycle vs. eight years ago and Republicans are defending more of the battleground seats. At this point in 2018, Democrats were defending 10 seats rated as competitive, compared with just three vulnerable GOP seats. This cycle, Republicans are defending nine competitive seats, compared with four vulnerable Democratic seats.

The battleground continues to expand in favor of Democrats with the inclusion of states previously viewed as long-shots or no-shots (most recently Nebraska and South Carolina), although Democrats are still lacking any takeovers that look like "sure things." Democrats are facing low electoral ceilings in most of their opportunities, which could make it difficult to project with certainty which party will control the Senate before November.

While the broader, macro environment is working in favor of Democrats, Republicans are hoping to hold the majority at the individual race level. Potentially flawed Democratic nominees in Maine, Michigan and Iowa could be fatal to Democratic chances. Although, the electorate might be frustrated enough with the status quo and lack of GOP attention to affordability concerns that voters prefer flawed alternatives to the party in power.

Unlike 2018, Democrats are likely to gain seats in both chambers, but it's still not clear whether it will be enough for them to secure the Senate. Democrats are likely to gain 2-4 seats, with the top end of that range being enough for a majority.

Virginia House: Four House Races Shift Toward Democrats

By Jacob Rubashkin

Virginia voters approved a new congressional map on Tuesday that will help Democrats flip as many as four GOP-held seats this fall. The referendum passed, 51.5-48.6 percent, roughly half of the margin that Kamala Harris posted against President Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election.

Republican Reps. Rob Wittman, Jen Kiggans, John McGuire and Ben Cline saw their districts made significantly more favorable to Democrats or dismantled entirely. Republicans are still challenging the referendum in court, and a local judge enjoined the new map on Wednesday. But the ultimate authority on the matter, the state Supreme Court, has appeared hesitant to stop the new map from being used.

- As a result, Inside Elections is making five ratings shifts in the Old Dominion.
- 1st District (Rob Wittman, R) shifts from Lean Republican to Solid Democratic.
 - 2nd District (Jen Kiggans, R) shifts from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.
 - 5th District (John McGuire, R) shifts from Solid Republican to Solid Democratic.
 - 6th District (Ben Cline, R) shifts from Solid Republican to Lean Democratic.
 - 7th District (Eugene Vindman, D) shifts from Lean Democratic to Solid Democratic.
- A full write-up of the changes to the Virginia map can be found in the April 16 issue.
- Kiggans has said she will seek re-election to the 2nd District, though her path to victory is more difficult now. Cline gave a more cryptic

Race Ratings for Virginia's New Map

District	Current Member	RATINGS		2024 PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS	
		Old	New	Old	New
1st	Rob Wittman, R	Lean R	Solid D	Trump +5	Harris +8
2nd	Jen Kiggans, R	Toss-up	Tilt D	Even	Harris +5
3rd	Bobby Scott, D	Solid D	Solid D	Harris +35	Harris +26
4th	Jennifer McClellan, D	Solid D	Solid D	Harris +33	Harris +16
5th	John McGuire, R	Solid R	Solid D	Trump +12	Harris +9
6th	Ben Cline, R	Solid R	Lean D	Trump +24	Harris +3
7th	Eugene Vindman, D	Lean D	Solid D	Harris +3	Harris +8
8th	Don Beyer, D	Solid D	Solid D	Harris +49	Harris +18
9th	Morgan Griffith, R	Solid R	Solid R	Trump +44	Trump +49
10th	Suhas Subramanyam, D	Solid D	Solid D	Harris +8	Harris +12
11th	James Walkinshaw, D	Solid D	Solid D	Harris +34	Harris +13

answer, telling reporters he plans on “running in the current 6th District, where I currently live and have represented for eight years.” But that district does not exist on the new map, which placed Cline’s home in the neighboring 9th District.

For his part, 9th District Rep. Morgan Griffith isn’t too worried about Cline running against him, telling *Punchbowl* “it’s 81 percent my district.”

Vindman, as expected, said he would run in the new 1st District, opening up the 7th District. And at least one Democrat got a new primary challenger in the hours after the referendum passed, as former fighter pilot Jason Knapp switched from running in the 1st District to challenge Don Beyer in the new 8th District.

Democrats need a net gain of three seats nationwide to win back the House majority this fall. After these ratings changes, Democrats are favored in 216 districts, Republicans are favored in 210 districts, and 9 districts are rated as toss-ups. The magic number for a majority is 218.

The Virginia results give Democrats the potential edge in the mid-decade redistricting war that was started by the White House in order to try and preserve the GOP majority. But Democrats striking back with new maps in California and Virginia might have some Republican strategists second-guessing whether it was worth the effort.

Inside Elections Podcast

- Episode 69:** Nathan, Jacob and Randi B. Hagi of WMRA Public Radio focused on the new congressional map in Virginia.
- Episode 68:** Jacob, Erin Covey of The Cook Political Report and Kirk Bado of National Journal’s Hotline draft the best and most memorable campaign TV ads of the 21st century.
- Episode 67:** Nathan, Jacob and Mary Ellen McIntire of Roll Call break down the fight for the House majority including rating changes in a dozen races.

Inside Elections

with Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

609 H Street NE, 4th Floor
Washington, DC, 20002
202-546-2822



Nathan L. Gonzales
Editor & Publisher
nathan@insideelections.com
@nathanlgonzales



Jacob Rubashkin
Deputy Editor
jacob@insideelections.com
@jacוברubashkin



Bradley Wascher
Contributing Data Editor
bradley@insideelections.com
@bradwascher

Will Taylor
Production Artist
will@insideelections.com

Stuart Rothenberg
Senior Editor
stu@insideelections.com

Report Shorts

California's 14th District. Over the course of just a few days, Democratic congressman Eric Swalwell went from potential governor of California to dropping out and resigning his seat in disgrace and scandal. Democrats are still trying to avoid getting locked out of the June 2 primary for governor if two Republicans finish atop the field. And they will be without a Democratic vote on the Hill until sometime after August 18, when there will be a special election runoff to replace him. Solid Democratic.

Florida's 20th District. Democrat Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick resigned minutes before a House Ethics Committee hearing that could have resulted in a recommendation of expulsion. Cherfilus-McCormick is under federal indictment for financial fraud and the Ethics Committee found "clear and convincing" evidence she had committed 25 breaches of House rules. The seat is unlikely to be filled before the end of this Congress. Activist Elijah Manley, former 2 Live Crew rapper Luther Campbell, former Broward County Commissioner Dale Holness, and physician and veteran Rudy Moise are all running in the regular election. Solid Democratic.

Georgia's 13th District. Democratic Rep. David Scott, 80, died this week. Politically, he was facing a serious primary challenge from state Rep. Jasmine Clark, who now looks like the clearer frontrunner to succeed the congressman. The candidate filing deadline passed on March 6 ahead of the May 19 primary, but a special election will take place around the same time. Solid Democratic.

Georgia's 14th District. Republican Clayton Fuller won a special election last week, defeating Democrat Shawn Harris by 12 points in the race to succeed GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who resigned in January. A win is a win for Republicans, but it's a far cry from President Donald Trump's 37-point romp in the district in 2024 and more evidence that Democrats are on the march around the country. Fuller should win easily in November though. Solid Republican.

Maryland's 1st District. The Maryland legislature adjourned without acting - or enacting - a new congressional map that could have helped Democrats gain another House seat. That's great news for Andy Harris, the lone Republican in the Maryland delegation. Democratic Gov. Wes Moore and national Democrats were for the redraw, but there weren't enough votes in the state senate to pass it.

Missouri's 6th District. Long-time GOP Rep. Sam Graves announced he will not seek re-election. Trump finished ahead of Harris by nearly 40 points in the northern Missouri district, so even in a poor political environment, Republicans shouldn't have trouble holding it. Solid Republican.

New Jersey's 11th District. Democrat Analilia Mejia won the special general election, 60-40 percent, to succeed Democratic Gov. Mikie Sherrill. While Mejia's primary victory was a surprise, the general election was a formality in the current political environment. She shouldn't have trouble winning a full term. Solid Democratic.

New York's 4th District. After more than a year of speculation, former GOP Rep. Anthony D'Esposito let the clock run out

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (2D, 7R)

AZ 1 (Open; Schweikert, R) IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R) NY 17 (Lawler, R) PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)
AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R) MI 7 (Barrett, R) OH 1 (Landsman, D) TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
CO 8 (Evans, R)

Tilt Democratic (6D, 3R)

CA 13 (Gray, D) VA 2 (Kiggans, R)#
CA 45 (Tran, D) WA 3 (Perez, D)
CA 48 (Open; Issa, R)
NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
NY 4 (Gillen, D)
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)

Tilt Republican (1D, 6R)

CA 22 (Valadao, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)
PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Lean Democratic (9D, 1R)

FL 23 (Moskowitz, D) NV 3 (Lee, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D) NY 19 (Riley, D)
MI 8 (McDonald Rivet, D) NY 3 (Suoizzi, D)
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D) VA 6 (Cline, R)#
NJ 9 (Pou, D)
NV 1 (Titus, D)

Lean Republican (1D, 3R)

IA 3 (Nunn, R)
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)
NC 1 (Davis, D)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)

Likely Democratic (7D)

CA 6 (Open; Bera, D) NV 4 (Horsford, D)
CA 21 (Costa, D) PA 17 (Deluzio, D)
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)
MI 3 ((Scholten, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)

Likely Republican (2D, 13R)

AK AL (Begich, R) NC 11 (Edwards, R)
AZ 2 (Crane, R) TN 5 (Ogles, R)
CO 3 (Hurd, R) TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)
CO 5 (Crank, R) TX 23 (Vacant Gonzales, R)
FL 7 (Mills, R) TX 35 (Open; Casar, D)
FL 13 (Luna, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
IA 2 (Open; Hinson, R)
ME 2 (Open; Golden, D)
MT 1 (Open; Zinke, R)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	184	190
Likely/Lean/Tilt	26	26
Total	210	216
Toss-up	9	
Needed for majority	218	

Takeovers in *Italics*, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans

on a comeback bid against Democratic Rep. Laura Gillen, who beat him in 2024. After keeping their ballot line open for D'Esposito for weeks, local party leaders instead handpicked Hempstead Town receiver of taxes Jeanine Driscoll, a local official who starts as an underdog in the general election. Tilt Democratic.

Texas' 23rd District. GOP Rep. Tony Gonzales had already dropped out of the race amidst allegations of inappropriate relationships with his staff, but he resigned altogether on April 14. Likely Republican.

Washington's 3rd District. President Trump endorsed Republican John Braun. Republicans are hoping he's boring enough (compared to the previous nominee) to knock off Democratic Rep. Marie Gleusenkamp Perez in a district that has been shifting toward Democrats. Tilt Democratic.

Alabama. Open; Tommy Tuberville (R) running for governor. Primary May 19. Runoff (if necessary) June 16. State Attorney General Steve Marshall led in GOP primary polling all of last year and early in 2026 but Rep. Barry Moore has powered ahead of him in recent weeks. That's all thanks to an endorsement from Trump and nearly \$9 million in supportive paid media from a cryptocurrency super PAC, the Club for Growth, and his own campaign. Former Navy SEAL Jared Hudson is also running a credible campaign and has a super PAC spending on his behalf.



Steve Marshall

Courtesy Marshall Campaign

Wholesale fuel retailer Rodney Walker is running and loaned his campaign \$1.9 million but hasn't spent most of it. So far this race still looks destined for a runoff, but if any candidate can avoid that it'll be Moore. Democrats are choosing between Mobile construction CEO/2024 DNC speaker Kyle Sweetser, pet care entrepreneur Dakari Larriett and chemist Mark Wheeler. Solid Republican.

Tarrance Group (R) for Alabama Strong (pro-Marshall), April 11-14 (500 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Moore 28%, Marshall 27%, Hudson 24%.

Peak Insights (R) for Barry Moore, April 11-13 (500 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Moore 34%, Marshall 16%, Hudson 12%, Walker 2%.

American Pulse Research (R), March 30 - April 1, (505 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Moore 26%, Marshall 21%, Hudson 14%.

Alaska. Dan Sullivan (R), elected 2014 (48%) and 2020 (54%).

Filing deadline June 1. Primary Aug. 18. Former Rep. Mary Peltola raised \$8.7 million in her first three months in the race, nearly equivalent to what Sullivan has raised over the past five and a half years. Early polling shows a very competitive race, but Republicans retain a clear lead on the generic ballot, suggesting that if Sullivan can make the race more partisan he should pull ahead. To that end, Republicans are eager to pick through Peltola's congressional record and highlight the carveouts for Alaska included in Republicans' reconciliation package that passed last year. Peltola will look to emphasize her own Alaska bona fides while portraying Sullivan as having "gone Washington." Neither candidate will lose for lack of resources in what local sources expect to be the most expensive race in Alaskan history. Lean Republican.

Alaska Survey Research (D), March 19-22 (LV) — General election ballot: Peltola over Sullivan, 52% - 48% in final round of ranked-choice voting.

Arkansas. Tom Cotton (R), elected 2014 (57%) and 2020 (67%).

Farmer Hallie Shoffner is running a more credible campaign than Arkansas Democrats have managed in recent years but she's still a heavy underdog against Cotton, who is taking the race seriously even as he looks toward a potential 2028 presidential candidate. Solid Republican.

Colorado. John Hickenlooper (D), elected 2020 (54%). Primary

June 30. Hickenlooper faces a challenge from his left flank in the Democratic primary. State Sen. Julie Gonzales earned a spot on the ballot at the state party's assembly, and has an endorsement from the Working Families Party; she also won a large enough victory to prevent another

progressive, former National Park Service policy advisor/ attorney Karen Breslin, from making the ballot. Hickenlooper, who dropped out of the assembly process after qualifying for the ballot via petition, is in a similar position to 2020, when he eschewed the assembly process and still defeated a more progressive rival in the primary. Gonzales is at a severe financial disadvantage, and reported just \$114,000 in the bank on March 31 compared to \$4 million for Hickenlooper. Republicans nominated state Sen. Mark Baisley at their convention. Solid Democratic.

Data for Progress (D) for Working Families Party (pro-Gonzales), Feb. 20-25 (LV)(web panel/text-to-web) — Democratic primary ballot: Hickenlooper over Gonzales, 45% - 13%, Breslin 3%.

Delaware. Chris Coons (D), elected 2010 (57%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (59%). Filing deadline July 14. Primary Sept. 15. Former Democratic state Sen. Michael Katz is running as a Republican against Coons. He previously won 4 percent as an independent in the 2024 Senate race. He joins Army veteran John Shulli in the GOP primary. Neither will beat Coons this fall. Solid Democratic.

Florida. Ashley Moody (R), appointed 2025. Filing deadline June 12. Primary Aug. 18. Alex Vindman, the Army officer and National Security staffer who rose to prominence during the first Trump impeachment, is running as a Democrat and raised \$8 million in his first few weeks in the race. Vindman, whose twin Eugene is a first-term congressman from Virginia and one of the House's strongest fundraisers, ended June with \$6.4 million on hand to Moody's \$7.1 million. Democratic state Rep. Angie Nixon is also running but had just \$177,000 in the bank on March 31.

Republicans are confident that Florida will remain in their column thanks to significant conservative in-migration over the past six years. But special election results in the Sunshine State have been good for Democrats and there's evidence there and around the country that the significant gains Trump and Republicans made among Hispanic and Latino voters in 2024 aren't being sustained. Outside Democratic groups are unlikely to spend in Florida due to the high cost of advertising in such a large state, but if Vindman is able to continue fundraising at breakneck pace he could put some real pressure on Moody, especially if the electorate starts to look more like 2020 than 2022 or 2024. Solid Republican.

Echelon Insights (R) for NetChoice, April 3-9 (406 LV)(online panel/text-to-web) — General election ballot: Moody over Vindman, 50% - 43%.

MDW (D) for Edge Communications, March 27-April 3 (1834 LV)(text-to-web/email) — General election ballot: Moody over Vindman, 43% - 42%.

Public Policy Polling (D) for Alex Vindman, April 2-3 (574 RVs) — General election ballot: Moody over Vindman, 43% - 40%.

Emerson College, March 29-31 (1125 LV)(online panel/text-to-web) — General election ballot: Moody over Vindman, 46% - 38%; Moody over Nixon, 47% - 36%.

Georgia. Jon Ossoff (D), elected 2020 (51%). Primary May 19. Runoff (if necessary) June 16. The GOP primary appears destined for a runoff between Rep. Mike Collins and either Rep. Buddy Carter or former Tennessee Volunteers football coach Derek Dooley. Collins is running the most aggressive ground game and has the fiercest support among grassroots Republicans, and has established himself as the polling leader.

Carter, a personally wealthy congressman from Savannah, has started to hit Collins on the airwaves over an ongoing House Ethics investigation into his office's spending practices, marking the beginning

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

of negative advertising in the race. Dooley, who has largely languished in third place despite the backing of Gov. Brian Kemp, also went up on TV recently, with an ad highlighting his outsider credentials. It's not clear how much more support he can expect from Kemp's super PAC; that group already spent more than \$1 million on his behalf through March but only had \$464,000 in the bank on March 31.

Trump doesn't seem eager to pick a candidate, much to the chagrin of Republican strategists who want to put the primary behind them and focus instead on Ossoff, who had stocked an astounding \$32 million by March 31. But a narrow GOP House majority has made Trump hesitant to alienate any sitting members by endorsing against them in primaries. That has stayed his hand with two House members running in Georgia.

A decidedly purple state, Georgia is shaping up to be expensive and hard fought, but Republicans still have work to do to put the heat on Ossoff this fall. Toss-up.

Idaho. Jim Risch (R), elected 2008 (58%), 2014 (65%), 2020 (63%). Primary May 19. Former Democratic state Rep. Todd Achilles is running as an independent and would love to have a one-on-one race, but perennial candidate David Roth is running in the Democratic primary; he was Crapo's 2022 opponent (and received 29 percent). Risch should be fine either way, but a three-way race would be a true walkover for the incumbent. Solid Republican.

Public Policy Polling (D) for Todd Achilles, March 16-17 (639 RVs)(text/IVR) — General election ballot: Risch over Achilles, 48% - 34%.

Illinois. Open; Dick Durbin (D), not seeking re-election. Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton's come-from-behind victory over Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi in the March Democratic primary positions her as the likely next senator from the Land of Lincoln. Former state GOP chairman Don Tracy is her general election opponent. Solid Democratic.

Iowa. Open; Joni Ernst (R), not seeking re-election. Primary June 2. Rep. Ashley Hinson is the strongest GOP non-incumbent on the map. The former newscaster had \$6.5 million in the bank on March 31 and has a reputation as a disciplined campaigner. Democrats are still sorting through a primary that looks a lot more straightforward than last year, when five candidates were running. State Sen. Zach Wahls is the polling and fundraising leader and has support from many of the state's unions, but state Rep.



Ashley Hinson

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Josh Turek is the preferred candidate of national Democratic strategists who like his compelling life story and past victories in Republican areas. VoteVets, which typically supports veterans, has spent \$4.3 million boosting Turek, a Paralympic wheelchair basketball player whose father was a Vietnam veteran. There isn't polling to suggest if that money has helped him catch up to Wahls, who has deep roots in the state's Democratic grassroots but hasn't advertised on TV yet. Republicans maintain an edge in this race. But a strong gubernatorial effort from

Democratic state Auditor Rob Sand is causing headaches for the Iowa GOP and could help lift the Democratic Senate nominee into contention. Likely Republican.

Echelon Insights (R) for NetChoice, April 3-9 (LV) — General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 46% - 45%. Wahls over Hinson, 46% - 44%.

GQR (D) for ModSquad (pro-Turek), March 10-16 (LV)(live caller/sms) — General election ballot: Hinson over Turek, 47% - 43. Hinson over Wahls, 47% - 44%.

Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2020 (53%). Filing deadline June 1. Primary Aug. 4. Marshall isn't the most popular senator in Washington, DC, and his approval rating isn't great in Kansas either, according to Democratic and Republican polls. That's prompted nearly a dozen Democrats to jump into the race despite the long odds any would face in a general election. Former congressional candidates Christy Davis and state Sen. Patrick Schmidt, former financial services executive Sandy Spidel Neumann, and Army veteran Noah Taylor are all running, among others. Adam Hamilton, a popular United Methodist pastor from the Kansas City area, is also considering running as an independent. Solid Republican.

Kentucky. Open; Mitch McConnell (R), not seeking re-election. Primary May 19. Rep. Andy Barr appears to be gaining ground in the GOP primary as spending has picked up over the past two months. Barr has a friendly super PAC and millions of dollars saved up in his campaign account, and one Kentucky GOP source said he "is working the hardest on the trail." Former state Attorney General Daniel Cameron was the polling frontrunner for all of last year but has struggled to fundraise and local GOP sources say he's coasting on his name ID as a longtime statewide elected official. Cameron has not advertised at all; his only air support is a small buy from a supportive super PAC with links to the Republican Main Street Partnership. A third candidate, Lexington entrepreneur Nate Morris, has self-funded his campaign with millions of dollars and benefitted from an Elon Musk-funded super PAC but hasn't been able to translate that financial strength into a political advantage and remains in third. Morris's much-hyped personal relationships to Trump-world figures such as Vice President JD Vance and Donald Trump Jr. have failed to help him secure an endorsement from the president. Trump may also be wary of alienating House members such as Barr at a moment when the GOP House majority is so thin.

Long Democratic odds haven't stopped a pack of hopefuls from throwing their hat into the ring, either — though some candidates probably see a Senate campaign as the best way to boost their profile before running for more competitive state-level races next year. Former fighter pilot Amy McGrath and former state Rep. Charles Booker are the best-known candidates thanks to their previous Senate runs, but prominent horse trainer Dale Romans is hoping his less traditional background will speak to Democratic primary voters. Romans and McGrath are the top fundraisers in the field and the only candidates who have advertised on TV. Also running are state House Minority Leader Pam Stevenson, and attorney and former Secret Service agent Logan Forsythe. Solid Republican.

Emerson College for WDKY/Nexstar, March 29-31 (549 LV)(sms/email/online panel) — GOP primary ballot: Barr 28%, Cameron 21%, Morris 15%.

Public Opinion Strategies (R) for Keep Kentucky Great PAC (pro-Barr), March 10-12 (600 LV)(live caller) — GOP primary ballot: Cameron 31%, Barr 29%, Morris 15%.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Louisiana. Bill Cassidy (R), elected 2014 (56%) and 2020 (59%). Primary May 16. Runoff (if necessary) June 27. Polling of the GOP primary agrees that the race is headed to a runoff but not much else. Cassidy, whose relationship with Trump never fully recovered after he voted to convict the president following the January 6 insurrection, faces two challengers, Trump-endorsed Rep. Julia Letlow and state Treasurer/former Rep. John Fleming. Polls show any two of those three advancing to a runoff. Cassidy has a massive financial advantage over his opponents; he has outspent his two opponents combined on paid media by 2-1, and a friendly super PAC has spent more than \$10 million on negative ads hitting Letlow. But as with his neighbor John Cornyn, an incumbent polling in the mid-30s in his own primary is definitionally in a lot of trouble. Even if Cassidy makes it to a runoff he may have to contend with Trump and his well-heeled super PAC, which so far has not engaged in this race. Despite the uncertainty on the GOP side, Democrats didn't recruit a candidate into this race. Navy veteran Gary Crockett, farmer Jamie Davis, and former staffer to then-Gov. John Bel Edwards Nick Albares are running. Solid Republican.

American Pulse Research (R), March 20-24 (455 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Letlow 31%, Fleming 25%, Cassidy 21%. GOP runoff ballot: Letlow over Fleming, 37% - 34%. Letlow over Cassidy, 54% - 24%. Fleming over Cassidy, 49% - 29%.

Actionable Intel (R) for Harris, DeVille & Associates, March 13-19 (683 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Cassidy 45%, Letlow 34%, Fleming 21%. GOP runoff ballot: Cassidy over Letlow, 54% - 46%. Cassidy over Fleming, 51% - 49%.

BDPC, March 16-17 (600 LV) — GOP primary ballot: Letlow 29%, Fleming 24%, Cassidy 20%. GOP runoff ballot: Letlow over Cassidy, 50% - 24%. Letlow over Fleming, 34% - 33%. Fleming over Cassidy, 49% - 26%.

Maine. Susan Collins (R), elected 1996 (49%), 2002 (58%), 2008 (61%) 2014 (69%), and 2020 (51%). Primary June 9. Marine veteran and oysterman Graham Platner remains in pole position in the Democratic primary despite his long history of writing off-color and offensive comments on Reddit and his (now covered) tattoo of a Nazi symbol. Platner, who has emerged as a top Democratic fundraiser, has outspent his opponent in the primary, Gov. Janet Mills, by more than 3-1 on paid media. Mills ran some TV ads for three months highlighting Platner's past derision of sexual assault victims, but has been off the airwaves for two weeks. She trails badly in polling, reported just \$1 million in the bank compared to Platner's \$2.7 million on March 31, and there's no indication outside help is coming for her despite national Democratic strategists remaining skeptical of Platner.

The biggest beneficiary of the Democratic primary is probably Collins, who is relishing Platner's insurgent bid as she prepares for her most difficult re-election campaign ever. Outside groups aren't waiting for the general election to start either; pro-Collins super PACs have already



Graham Platner

Courtesy Platner Campaign

spent more than \$15 million on positive advertising, while Democratic groups have spent several million dollars on ads hitting the Republican on her record.

A Platner-Collins matchup has the potential to be volatile, unpredictable and extremely expensive. Collins and her allies will leave no dollar unspent reminding voters of all of the things Platner has said in his past. And while Platner has weathered the storm so far, and currently polls ahead of Collins in hypothetical matchups, it's not obvious what \$50 million or more in negative advertising will do to his standing. His strengths are obvious, but so are his vulnerabilities, giving him a high ceiling and low floor in a general election. Collins is an escape artist who has earned the benefit of the doubt for now, but if the political environment continues to deteriorate for Republicans and the president is still underwater by more than 20 points nationwide on Election Day, her time may have come. Tilt Republican.

Echelon Insights (R) for NetChoice, April 3-9 (LV)(mixed mode) — General election ballot: Platner over Collins, 51% - 45%. Mills over Collins, 48% - 46%.

Workbench Strategy (D) for Graham Platner, April 6-9 (600 LV)(live caller/text/email) — Democratic primary ballot: Platner over Mills, 64% - 29%.

Maine People's Resource Center (pro-Platner), March 30-31 (LV) — Democratic primary ballot: Platner over Mills, 61% - 28%. General election ballot: Collins over Mills, 45% - 42%. Platner over Collins, 48% - 39%.

Impact Research (D) for Troy Jackson, March 19-23 (LV) — Democratic primary ballot: Platner over Mills, 66% - 28%.

Massachusetts. Ed Markey (D) elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (66%). Filing deadline June 2. Primary Sept. 15, 2026. A late primary means there's plenty of time for the Democratic primary between Markey and Moulton to develop. Markey begins with a clear but not overwhelming advantage and has beaten back younger challengers before, but Moulton has outtraised him 2-1 over the past six months. Solid Democratic.

Suffolk Univ. for the Boston Globe, April 9-13 (500 LV)(live caller) — Democratic primary ballot: Markey over Moulton, 47% - 30%.

Univ. of New Hampshire Survey Center, Feb. 12-16 (352 LV)(online panel) — Democratic primary ballot: Markey over Moulton, 35% - 23%, Alex Rikleen 7%.

Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election. Primary Aug. 4. Rep. Haley Stevens, state Sen. Mallory McMorrow, and former Wayne County health director Abdul El-Sayed are locked in a three-way tie for the Democratic nomination, with primary day still more than three months away. The race has attracted increasing amounts of national attention after an attack on a synagogue in the Detroit area and El-Sayed's decision to campaign with streamer and left-wing pundit Hasan Piker. McMorrow denounced Piker in an escalation of the race's chippiness, and tensions were similarly high at the state convention as Stevens was loudly booed during her speech by a crowd supportive of El-Sayed. None of the candidates are raising enough money to begin TV advertising before the beginning of the summer, so this race isn't likely to shift in any significant ways any time soon. Stevens begins with an advantage in the Detroit market thanks to her previous competitive House races, and has strength among older voters, Black voters and union members. El-Sayed is strongest among younger voters and progressives, while McMorrow has targeted college-educated voters and looked to thread an ideological needle between her two opponents.

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

A recent poll from Emerson College showing Stevens' support collapsing looks like an outlier for now. Former Rep. Mike Rogers is the presumptive GOP nominee but isn't raising a ton of money either. He and his allies would prefer to run against El-Sayed, who they see as uniquely beatable. Some Republicans are starting to see Michigan as the party's best pickup opportunity this cycle despite a Senate losing streak that extends back 30 years. Toss-up.

Emerson College for WOOD-TV, April 11-13 (LV)(email/panel) — Democratic primary ballot: McMorrow 24%, El-Sayed 24%, Stevens 23%.

Data for Progress (D) for Zeteo News, April 2-8 (LV) — Democratic primary ballot: Stevens 23%, El-Sayed 22%, McMorrow 22%.

Global Strategy Group (D) for Mallory McMorrow, March 19-22 (LV) — Democratic primary ballot: McMorrow 30%, El-Sayed 25%, Stevens 23%.

Minnesota. Open; Tina Smith (DFL), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline June 2. Primary Aug. 11. Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan has a polling lead over Rep. Angie Craig and looks headed for a dominant victory in the party's nonbinding endorsement convention at the end of May. Flanagan has support from prominent progressives such as Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, and even secured an unexpected endorsement from Smith, who had previously said she would stay out of the race to replace her. But Craig, a moderate who flipped a swing district in 2018, has a significant financial advantage: \$4.9 million to \$1.1 million on March 31. She'll have to spend that money to catch up to Flanagan, who would make history as the first Native American woman to serve in the Senate. Craig's vote for the Laken Riley Act last year continues to haunt her even though she apologized for it after the ICE crackdown on Minneapolis in which federal agents killed two citizens. "I don't know if there's a state where it would be a worse credential in a Democratic primary at this point," said one Craig ally.

Republicans like former NFL sideline reporter Michele Tafoya, who turned in a strong fundraising quarter for a first-time candidate and reported \$1.8 million in cash-on-hand on March 31. She'll need to get past a passel of less well-heeled primary opponents such as 2024 nominee/former NBA player Royce White and Navy SEAL veteran Adam Schwarze, but her campaign's early polling puts her far ahead of the field.

Given the larger political environment, Republicans face long odds in Minnesota. Senate Leadership Fund, the main GOP super PAC, notably left the state off of its initial ad reservations. Likely DFL.

Emerson College, Feb. 6-8 (1000 LV)(text-to-web/online panel) — General election ballot: Craig over Tafoya, 47% - 40%. Flanagan over Tafoya, 47% - 41%.

Peak Insights (R) for Michele Tafoya, Jan. 31- Feb. 1 (500 LV)(sms-to-web) — GOP primary ballot: Tafoya 41%, White 11%, Schwarze 4%, David Hann 3%.

Mississippi. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R), appointed 2018, elected 2018 special (54%) and 2020 (54%). A Democratic poll from the Southern Poverty Law Center found district attorney Scott Colom trailing Hyde-Smith by just a few points. Mississippi Democrats have been in similar positions before, in two races against Hyde-Smith and the last two gubernatorial contests, but bump up against a hard ceiling below 50 percent, thanks to the state's racially polarized voting. The state is significantly less expensive to advertise in than other "reach" seats such as Texas and Florida, which might make it attractive for outside Democratic groups looking to be efficient with their spending, but structurally the path is more challenging for any Democrat. Solid Republican.

Impact Research (D) for SPLC, April 8-12 (500 LV)(live caller/sms) — General election ballot: Hyde-Smith over Colom, 42% - 39%, Ty Pinkins (I) 6%. Hyde-Smith over Colom, 47% - 44%.

Montana. Open; Steve Daines (R), not seeking re-election.

Primary June 2. Daines surprised Democrats and Republicans alike when he dropped his re-election bid at the literal last minute and engineered a switcheroo with US Attorney Kurt Alme. Daines' maneuver ensured that Alme would run unopposed for the nomination and that Democrats



Courtesy Alme Campaign

Kurt Alme

couldn't coax a top-tier candidate into an open race before the filing deadline, but it has caused some ruffled feathers among in-state Republicans who were cut out of the process entirely.

Former University of Montana President Seth Bodnar, a Green

Beret veteran and Rhodes Scholar, is running as an independent with support from former Sen. Jon Tester and much of Tester's campaign team. If he can get to a one-on-one race against Alme in the general election, he might have a shot. He reported \$1.1 million in the bank on March 31; Alme reported \$910,000.

But first, Bodnar's backers have to figure out how to navigate a Democratic Party that is similarly frustrated about being cut out of that conversation. The most notable Democratic candidate, former state Rep. Reilly Neill, has been highly critical of Bodnar. If another candidate wins the nomination — several others are running but none had more than \$11,000 in campaign funds on March 31 — they might drop out and clear the way for Bodnar. But the odds are decreasing that Bodnar can pull off such a maneuver. One plugged-in ally of the independent said it was "within the range of possibility but it feels like the inertia is drifting away." A three-way race results in an Alme win. Likely Republican.

Nebraska. Pete Ricketts (R), appointed 2023, elected 2024 special (63%). Primary May 12.

Ricketts has plenty of advantages that his colleague Deb Fischer lacked in 2024, when she finished just 7 points ahead of independent Dan Osborn. He's personally wealthy, with deep-pocketed friends in Washington, DC and Nebraska, and he won't get caught sleeping like Fischer was two years ago. But the political environment looks much less favorable for Republicans than in 2024, and the billionaire Ricketts creates a compelling contrast for the blue-collar Osborn. Ricketts is also more well-defined than Fischer, thanks to his two terms as governor.

William Forbes, a pastor who says he voted for Trump three times and attended a GOP training summit, filed to run as a Democrat, scrambling Osborn's and Democrats' plan to give the independent a clean shot at Ricketts. In response, Osborn's allies recruited their own candidate, Cindy Burbank, to run in the primary, with the implicit understanding that she will drop out if she wins the nomination. A similar story is playing out in the Legal Marijuana Now Party primary, where Osborn hopes the winner does not accept their nomination.

If Osborn can succeed in getting to a two-person race against Ricketts,

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

the Republican will have to take the challenge seriously. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Impact Research (D) for Dan Osborn, Feb. 2-5 (LV) — General election ballot: Ricketts over Osborn, 48% - 47%.

New Hampshire. Open; Jeanne Shaheen (D), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline June 12. Primary Sept. 8. Former New Hampshire Sen. John E. Sununu is the favorite in the GOP primary, but former Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown isn't going away quietly, which is a headache for Republicans because of the late primary date.

Sununu has backing from NRSC chairman Sen. Tim Scott and a \$1 million cash-on-hand advantage over Brown as of March 31. The winner will face Rep. Chris Pappas, who only has nominal opposition for the Democratic nomination. It's



Chris Pappas

likely that outside groups start spending here well before primary day. Republicans continue to believe this race is a very real pickup opportunity even in a poor political environment given New Hampshire's fierce independent streak. Democrats plan to dig into Sununu's lobbying record and make plenty of unfavorable comparisons between him and his popular brother, former Gov. Chris Sununu. Tilt Democratic.

Emerson College, March 21-23 (LV)(mixed mode) — General election ballot: Pappas over Sununu, 45% - 44%. Pappas over Brown, 48%, 39%. GOP primary ballot: Sununu over Brown, 48% - 19%.

St. Anselm College, March 16-18 (RV) — General election ballot: Pappas over Sununu, 46% - 43%. Pappas over Brown, 47% - 38%. GOP primary ballot: Sununu over Brown, 49% - 28%.

New Jersey. Cory Booker (D), elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Primary June 2. Booker has more than \$22 million stockpiled in his campaign account and probably plans to spend most of it on a presidential run in 2028 rather than this year. Former Tabernacle committeeman Justin Murphy, state trooper Richard Tabor, and former Optimum News12 reporter Alex Zdan are all running for the GOP nomination and each have earned endorsements from a handful of county parties. Physician Robert Lebovics is also in the race. Solid Democratic.

New Mexico. Ben Ray Luján (D), elected 2020 (51%). Primary June 2. No Republicans qualified for the primary ballot, but oilman and building contractor Larry Marker is running as a write-in candidate in the primary, with backing from the state party. Solid Democratic.

North Carolina. Open; Thom Tillis (R) not seeking re-election. The race is set between Democratic former Gov. Roy Cooper and Republican Michael Whatley, a former chairman of the Republican National Committee and state GOP. Cooper starts with a polling advantage over Whatley, who has never run for office before and isn't well-known in the state. Cooper, who has won six statewide campaigns

since 2000, is the strongest Democratic candidate the party could hope for and has already stockpiled \$18 million as of March 31, compared to \$2.5 million for Whatley. But any Democrat has a low ceiling in the evenly divided Tar Heel State — even as Cooper posts large margins in polling, his vote share has never crossed 50 percent in a public survey, and the race should tighten as Whatley introduces himself to more Republicans. Whatley may also be one of the primary beneficiaries of MAGA Inc. The Trump-affiliated super PAC has a massive war chest and has remained tight-lipped about its spending plans, but Whatley is a close ally of the president, who handpicked him to run here. Toss-up.

YouGov for High Point University, March 26-April 6 (LV) — General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 50% - 42%.

Quantus Insights (R), March 31-April 1 (LV)(sms) — General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 49% - 44%.

Harper Polling (R) for The Carolina Journal, March 22-23 (LV)(live caller/text-to-web) — General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 49% - 41%.

Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. Primary May 5. Former Sen. Sherrod Brown reported \$16.5 million in the bank on March 31, double Husted's \$8.2 million cash-on-hand. Brown will want as large a hard-dollar spending advantage as possible after he faced an onslaught of outside spending in his unsuccessful 2024 re-election campaign. Husted is not well-known while Brown's image seems to have recovered following last cycle's loss, and Democrats are hoping to define him early by pointing out his ties to the FirstEnergy bribery legal drama that recently ended in a mistrial and will return to the courtroom in September. Public and private polling shows a competitive, close race and the Republican Senate Leadership Fund recently booked \$79 million in advertising for the fall, its largest reservation of any state. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

YouGov for Bowling Green State Univ., April 7-14 (1,000 RV) — General election ballot: Husted over Brown, 50% - 47%.

Echelon Insights (R) for NetChoice, April 3-9 (413 LV) — General election ballot: Husted over Brown, 51% - 45%.

OnMessage (R) for Insurance Watchdog Coalition, March 3-8 (600 LV) — General election ballot: Brown over Husted, 47% - 45%.

Oklahoma. Open; Alan Armstrong (R), not seeking election to a full term. Primary June 16. Armstrong, a former oil executive, is not running for a full term. That leaves Rep. Kevin Hern as the odds-on favorite to win the GOP nomination. Hern is endorsed by Trump and the Club for Growth, and faces nominal opposition in the primary from country singer Ty England, Air Force veteran William Buckner, former congressional candidate Nick Hankins, and paramedic Brian Ragain. Jim Priest, the CEO Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma, is running as a Democrat. So is former GOP state Sen. Ervin Yen, who also ran as an independent in the 2022 gubernatorial election. Solid Republican.

Oregon. Jeff Merkley (D), elected 2008 (49%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Primary May 19. Any serious candidates Republicans could muster are running for governor. Meanwhile, Merkley had \$6.6 million in the bank on March 31 and the partisanship of the state on his side while the leading Republican candidate, state Sen. David Brock Smith, had \$24,000 cash on hand. Aspiring Democrats will have to see whether Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden follows through on his intent to run for re-election in 2028, or run in 2032 when Merkley is unlikely to run again. Solid Democratic.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

Rhode Island. Jack Reed (D), elected 1996 (63%), 2002 (78%), 2008 (73%), 2014 (71%), and 2020 (67%). Filing deadline June 24.

Primary Sept. 8. The Ocean State's governor is in deep trouble in his primary, but Reed is a shoo-in against elder care worker Connor Burbridge in the primary and Republican Raymond McKay in the general election. Solid Democratic.

South Carolina. Lindsey Graham (R), elected 2002 (54%), 2008 (58%), 2014 (55%), and 2020 (54%). Primary June 9. Runoff (if necessary) June 23.

Under normal political conditions, South Carolina elects

Republicans. And according to some metrics, this race will follow the same path. Graham has amassed a large war chest (\$11.6 million on March 31) and has cozied up to Trump, who has won the Palmetto State three times by double digits. But this may not be a typical election. Trump's popularity has dipped everywhere and Graham could be in a precarious situation as a well-known but disliked politician.



Annie Andrews

Courtesy Andrews Campaign

Democrats have an intriguing potential nominee in physician Annie Andrews. She ran unsuccessfully in the 1st District in 2022 (she lost to Nancy Mace by 14 points), had \$2.6 million in the bank on March 31 and, maybe most importantly, looks like a credible candidate that Democrats can invest in if the cycle gets even better. GOP strategists believe Graham won't have any problem in the primary, where he faces Greenville appliance store owner Mark Lynch, who had \$3.3 million at the end of March, and a better chance against the incumbent after former Trump administration official Paul Dans dropped out of the race.

While 2024 is the most recent presidential election, more than a year's worth of more recent elections point to 2026 being something closer to 2020, when Trump won South Carolina by a more modest 12 points. It's possible this develops into a headache for the GOP. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

South Dakota. Mike Rounds (R), elected 2014 (50%) and 2020 (66%). Primary June 2. Runoff (if necessary) July 28. Former Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem didn't end up filing to challenge Rounds in the GOP primary, despite some speculation the former governor would make a return to elected office. Former Air Force officer and 2022 Democratic nominee Brian Bengs is running as an independent and is more visible in the state than the presumptive Democratic nominee, former state trooper Julian Beaudion. Even as Democrats in other states such as Montana and Nebraska turn to independent candidates as possible solutions, South Dakota doesn't rank in the conversation yet. Solid Republican.

Tennessee. Bill Hagerty (R), elected 2020 (62%). Primary Aug. 6. Hagerty should coast to an easy re-election against one of the four Democrats who filed to run against him, most likely his 2020 opponent, Marquita Bradshaw. She received 35 percent. Solid Republican.

Texas. John Cornyn (R), elected 2002 (55%), 2008 (65%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (55%). Runoff May 26. National GOP strategists are increasingly resigned to Cornyn's potential loss in the GOP runoff to state Attorney General Ken Paxton. Trump briefly flirted with endorsing Cornyn after the two men finished neck-and-neck in the initial primary, but backed off after Paxton made Cornyn's perceived hesitance to pass the SAVE Act a major issue. Despite the election administration overhaul bill having no shot at passing the Senate, Paxton's elevation of the bill was enough to give Trump pause, and now he looks unlikely to endorse any candidate at all. Spending in the runoff has been minimal and limited to minor pro-Cornyn and anti-Paxton advertising, but incumbents who fall short of the 50 percent threshold in their primaries rarely succeed in making up that ground in a runoff, especially when facing the 8-point gap Cornyn has to surmount after winning just 42 percent in the first round. While the minimal amount of runoff polling is close, Cornyn is in a tough spot.

Waiting for the eventual winner is state Rep. James Talarico, who raised an astounding \$27 million over the first three months of the year and has established himself as the latest Democratic hope in the Lone Star State. Talarico, who had \$10 million in the bank on March 31, polls competitively against both Paxton and Cornyn but that is at least in part a function of GOP infighting, which he can't count on continuing until November. He still faces longer odds against Cornyn than Paxton thanks to the latter's laundry list of personal and professional baggage, but this looks increasingly like a real — and expensive — race no matter who Republicans nominate. If it's Paxton, Senate GOP leadership may look to MAGA Inc, the Trump-affiliated super PAC, to spend whatever money is necessary to win a general election. Likely Republican.

coefficient (R), April 11-14 (1,143 LV) — GOP runoff ballot: Cornyn over Paxton, 44% - 43%.

Peak Insights (R) for Texans for a Conservative Majority (pro-Cornyn), April 6-9 (LV) — GOP runoff ballot: Cornyn over Paxton, 44% - 43%.

Texas Public Opinion Research, April 6-7 (LV) — GOP runoff ballot: Paxton over Cornyn, 48% - 40%.

Virginia. Mark Warner (D), elected 2008 (65%), 2014 (49%), and 2020 (56%). Primary June 16. Navy veteran/former CIA officer David Williams and retired Army Major General Bert Mizusawa are running for the GOP nomination to take on Warner. Mizusawa has a stellar resume as a West Point and Harvard-educated decorated veteran but has struggled to gain political traction, mounting three previous unsuccessful bids for House and Senate. Warner is not considered vulnerable. Solid Democratic.

West Virginia. Shelley Moore Capito (R), elected 2014 (62%) and 2020 (70%). Primary May 12. State Sen. Tom Willis has been endorsed by conservative groups such as the Gun Owners of America and vaccine-skeptical Stand for Health Freedom in his primary challenge against Capito, but he's been unable to raise much money, ending March with \$90,000 in cash on hand. Capito had \$5 million and support from Trump. Former state Senate President Jeff Kessler is running as a Democrat. Solid Republican.

Wyoming. Open; Cynthia Lummis (R), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline May 29. Primary Aug. 18. Rep. Harriet Hageman will almost certainly be the next senator from the Cowboy State. Unless outgoing Gov. Mark Gordon launches a surprise bid for Senate, Hageman will face nominal opposition from Army veteran Jimmy Skovgard in the GOP primary and shouldn't have trouble with former Democratic state Rep. James Byrd in the general election. Solid Republican.

IE

Special Elections Point to House Flip in November

By Bradley Wascher

Back-to-back special elections in Georgia and New Jersey are the latest signs that Democrats are favored to take back the House — with the party’s net gains potentially extending far beyond the three seats they need for a majority.

The two recently filled congressional seats, Georgia’s 14th and New Jersey’s 11th, are respectively Solid Republican and Solid Democratic, so flips were never on the table. But in both races — like in every other special House election this cycle — the Democrat overperformed and the Republican underperformed.

According to *Inside Elections’* Baseline and Vote Above Replacement, Democrats have run 7.6 points ahead of the historical party average in the seven special elections to the 119th Congress featuring one member from each party. The mean Republican VAR in those seven races was -7.2.

A 7-point advantage for Democrats would align with other barometers of the national mood: recent polls show Democrats leading the generic ballot by around 5 points, while President Donald Trump’s approval rating is underwater by almost 20 points.

While all signs point in the same direction, the range is wide enough for wild speculation. And special elections are notorious for drawing voters who look demographically different from the typical electorate. Thinking specifically about the House, the possibilities span everything from a modest Democratic flip to a true blue wave.

Editor’s Note: For county-level analysis of the special elections and instructive charts and graphs, read Bradley’s full article at [InsideElections.com](#).

Range of Possibilities

But these best-case examples might be overkill. Whether the national electorate this November comes to prefer Democrats by 3 points, 7 points, or more, it would almost certainly be enough to take back the House.

For a rough sense of how the national environment corresponds to the size of the House majority, we can apply a uniform swing to each district’s Baseline average. In an actual election, no national swing is uniform. But because Baseline is calculated as a trimmed mean of all federal and statewide races over the past four cycles, it can serve as a benchmark of a neutral mood.

According to this approach, Democrats already hold a slight advantage in an even national environment: 223 districts lean toward Democrats in the Baseline average, while 212 favor Republicans. The magic number is 218 for a majority.

(For comparison, Trump won 224 districts in 2024, while Kamala Harris carried 211; districts reflect the Virginia map approved by voters in a recent ballot referendum, as well as the new map in Missouri, which is still under legal scrutiny.)

A 3-point national swing toward Democrats — resembling Mejia’s overperformance in New Jersey — would put the party at around 232 seats, or a pickup of 17. An environment of D+7 (reflecting the average Democratic VAR in all special congressional elections this cycle) could push Democrats up to 241 seats, a 26-seat gain.

Back in the real world, a 9-point lead in the national House popular vote translated to a 41-seat Democratic takeover in 2018. Even if the national mood in both midterm years does end up looking similar, 2026 will probably see fewer flips, not least because Democrats are now “starting” at 215 seats, compared to the 194 seats the party held heading into the 2018 elections.

Democrats Have Overperformed in Every Special House Election This Cycle

Vote Above Replacement scores; winners indicated with an asterisk (*)

Date	District	Party	Candidate	Percent Earned	Party Baseline	Vote Above Replacement (VAR)
Apr 1, 2025	FL-01	D	Gay Valimont	42.3	30.1	12.2
		R	Jimmy Patronis *	56.9	69.2	-12.3
Apr 1, 2025	FL-06	D	Joshua Weil	42.7	35.4	7.2
		R	Randy Fine *	56.7	63.9	-7.2
Sep 9, 2025	VA-11	D	James Walkinshaw *	75.1	68.2	7.0
		R	Stewart Whitson	24.7	31.0	-6.3
Sep 23, 2025	AZ-07	D	Adelita Grijalva *	68.9	66.0	3.0
		R	Daniel Butierez	29.4	33.2	-3.8
Dec 2, 2025	TN-07	D	Aftyn Behn	45.1	40.1	5.0
		R	Matt Van Epps *	53.9	57.7	-3.8
Apr 7, 2026	GA-14	D	Shawn Harris	44.1	29.1	15.0
		R	Clay Fuller *	55.9	69.9	-14.0
Apr 16, 2026	NJ-11	D	Analilia Mejia *	59.8	55.7	4.1
		R	Joe Hathaway	39.8	42.6	-2.8
Average VAR				Democrats		7.6
				Republicans		-7.2

*Note: Margin discrepancies due to rounding
Source: Inside Elections Baseline*

These kinds of margins would qualify as a blue wave; anything beyond could be interpreted as an even larger referendum against President Trump.

True national landslides are almost a thing of the past in polarized America. The most recent 10-point margin in a midterm election was 40 years ago, when Democrats won the House popular vote by double digits during both of President Ronald Reagan’s midterm cycles. In 1974, Democrats picked up nearly 50 seats following President Richard Nixon’s resignation, as the party won by 17 points nationwide amid an era of already-high Democratic House dominance.

Based on our 2026 Baseline simulation, a 10-point Democratic advantage nationwide would translate to 256 House seats, or a pickup of 41 — the same gain as in 2018.

But what if the lead grew further? The Downballot, which also tracks state legislative races, shows Democrats running 12.9 points ahead of Kamala Harris’ margin across 104 special elections since the beginning of 2025. It’s also close to Shawn Harris’ VAR in Georgia and Valimont’s in Florida.

Plug D+13 into the equation, and Democrats climb up to 265 seats: an even pickup of 50.

To reiterate, a double-digit win in the national House popular vote would be unprecedented in recent midterm cycles. Democrats’ current lead in the generic congressional ballot is barely half that, and the party’s brand isn’t popular among voters. Some of the gap between generic ballot polls and special election results could be explained by the fact that college graduates are both more likely to turn out and more likely to vote Democratic.

Plus, the House is only half the picture. Applying this same methodology at the statewide level, Democrats would need a national environment of approximately D+9 to flip the Senate.

At that point, a handful of Republican-held seats — Florida, Iowa, Ohio, and Texas — would all be in play, not accounting for candidate effects. But Democrats are on track to nominate strong contenders in a number of key Senate races, meaning the national swing required for a flip could be smaller than the basic model suggests.

Wherever that threshold may lie, many Democrats in special elections this cycle have already proven they can clear that bar.

