

# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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## 2026 Senate Overview: Will There be More Beyond the Core Four?

By Nathan L. Gonzales and Jacob Rubashkin

Republicans and Democrats don't see eye-to-eye on much these days, but the two parties agree on the core of the Senate battleground. Georgia, Maine, Michigan and North Carolina are at the center of the fight for the majority, though Democrats can't get control without reaching further into Republican territory.

Two strong incumbents and two competitive open seats are unofficially referred to as the "core four." Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia and Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine have proven to be difficult to defeat but represent states where voters are more familiar with supporting candidates from the other party. And both parties are defending open seats in swing states after GOP Sen. Thom Tillis decided not to seek re-election in North Carolina and Democratic Sen. Gary Peters announced he's not running again in Michigan.

The good news for Republicans is that even if Democrats manage to sweep the quartet of races, Democrats would still be two seats short of a majority and need to reach further into Republican territory.

President Donald Trump won Iowa, Texas and Alaska by more than 10 points each in 2024 and yet those states are at the top of the Democratic target list as the party tries to get to 51 seats because there aren't better opportunities. It will take a combination of a positive national political environment (independent voters being frustrated with the party in power or apathetic Trump-first Republicans not turning out to vote) combined with local factors (Republicans nominating Ken Paxton in Texas and Sen. Joni Ernst's townhall comment) to give Democrats a chance.

Considering the challenging landscape for Senate Democrats and House Republicans trying to solidify their majority with newly-drawn congressional maps in Texas, Ohio and Missouri, next year could embolden the GOP and be deeply disappointing for Democrats.

*Continued on page 3*

### 2026 Senate Ratings

#### Toss-up (3)

MI Open (Peters, D)

Ossoff (D-Ga.)

NC Open (Tillis, R)

#### Tilt Democratic (0)

#### Tilt Republican (1)

Collins (R-Maine)

#### Lean Democratic (1)

#### Lean Republican (0)

NH Open (Shaheen, D)

#### Likely Democratic (1)

#### Likely Republican (2)

MN Open (Smith, DFL)

Ernst (R-Iowa)

Cornyn (R-Texas)

#### Solid Democratic (9)

#### Solid Republican (18)

IL Open (Durbin, D)

AL Open (Tuberville, R)

Booker (D-N.J.)

KY Open (McConnell, R)

Coons (D-Del.)

Capito (R-W.V.)

Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)

Cassidy (R-Lou.)

Lujan (D-N.M.)

Cotton (R-Ark.)

Markey (D-Mass.)

Daines (R-Mont.)

Merkley (D-Ore.)

Graham (R-S.C.)

Reed (D-R.I.)

Hagerty (R-Tenn.)

Warner (D-Va.)

Husted (R-Ohio)

Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)

Lummis (R-Wyo.)

Marshall (R-Kan.)

Moody (R-Fl.)

Mullin (R-Okla.)

Ricketts (R-Neb.)

Risch (R-Idaho)

Rounds (R-S.D.)

Sullivan (R-Ak.)

### CALENDAR

<b>Sept. 9</b>	Virginia's 11th District Special General Election
<b>Sept. 23</b>	Arizona's 7th District Special General Election
<b>Oct. 7</b>	Tennessee's 7th District Special Primary Elections
<b>Nov. 4</b>	Texas' 18th District Special Primary Election
<b>Nov. 4</b>	New Jersey & Virginia Gubernatorial Elections
<b>Dec. 2</b>	Tennessee's 7th District Special General Election

# Report Shorts

**New York's 17th District.** GOP Rep. Mike Lawler is not running for governor, in a reversal that comes after the Hudson Valley congressman has been teasing a bid for over a year. His decision clears the way for Congresswoman Elise Stefanik to secure the GOP nomination next year for an uphill battle against Gov. Kathy Hochul. And Lawler's decision to seek re-election makes it easier for Republicans to hold his seat in the House and potentially hold the majority. Toss-up.

**Pennsylvania's 7th District.** Pennsylvania Professional Firefighters Association President Bob Brooks is gearing up for a run against freshman Republican Ryan Mackenzie. Brooks, a 20-year veteran of the Bethlehem FD, will be the fourth Democrat in the race, which already includes Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure, former energy executive Carol Obando-Derstine, and former federal prosecutor Ryan Crosswell. Toss-up.

**Tennessee's 7th District.** GOP Rep. Mark Green resigned from the House, with a potential job lined up in the private sector. Trump finished ahead of Harris 60-38 percent in 2024, so the seat should stay in Republican hands, but it's not a guarantee. At a minimum, Speaker Mike Johnson will be down a vote until the seat is filled. The special primary election is set for October 7 followed by a December 2 special general election. Solid Republican.

**Texas Redistricting.** With strong encouragement from the White House, Texas Republicans have been tasked with redrawing the congressional lines ahead of the 2026 elections in order to try and gain as many as five seats. The legislation is currently in special session and redistricting is one of many items placed on the docket by GOP Gov. Greg Abbott. Republicans could try to make districts in South Texas and the Dallas and Houston areas easier to capture. There's some risk that Republicans would have more difficulty holding those seats in the future because GOP voters are diluted to maximize opportunities. But for now, Republicans are emboldened by recent election results in the state and President Trump is committed to retaining Republican majorities to help him pass his priorities and insulate him from a future Democratic majority. We'll analyze the specific races when new lines are completed and implemented.



## 2026 House Ratings

### Toss-Up (3D, 8R)

- |                        |                       |                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)    | MI 7 (Barrett, R)     | VA 2 (Kiggans, R) |
| CA 13 (Gray, D)        | NC 1 (Davis, D)       |                   |
| CA 45 (Tran, D)        | NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R) |                   |
| CO 8 (Evans, R)        | NY 17 (Lawler, R)     |                   |
| IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R) | PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)   |                   |

### Tilt Democratic (7D)

- CA 47 (Min, D)
- ME 2 (Golden, D)
- MI 8 (McDonald Rivet, D)
- NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
- NY 4 (Gillen, D)
- TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
- WA 3 (Perez, D)

### Tilt Republican (5R)

- AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
- MI 10 (Open; James, R)
- NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
- PA 10 (Perry, R)
- WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

### Lean Democratic (16D)

- CA 21 (Costa, D)
- CA 27 (Whitesides, D)
- CA 49 (Levin, D)
- CA 9 (Harder, D)
- FL 23 (Moskowitz, D)
- IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
- MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)
- NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)
- NJ 9 (Pou, D)
- NV 1 (Titus, D)
- NV 3 (Lee, D)
- NV 4 (Horsford, D)
- NY 19 (Riley, D)
- NY 3 (Suozzi, D)
- TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
- VA 7 (Vindman, D)

### Lean Republican (5R)

- CA 22 (Valadao, R)
- CA 40 (Kim, R)
- CA 41 (Calvert, R)
- IA 3 (Nunn, R)
- PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)

### Likely Democratic (8D)

- CA 25 (Ruiz, D)
- IL 17 (Sorensen, D)
- MI 3 (Scholten, D)
- NH 2 (Goodlander, D)
- NY 18 (Ryan, D)
- NY 22 (Mannion, D)
- OR 5 (Bynum, D)
- PA 17 (Deluzio, D)

### Likely Republican (11R)

- AK AL (Begich, R)
- AZ 2 (Crane, R)
- CA 3 (Kiley, R)
- CO 5 (Crank, R)
- FL 13 (Luna, R)
- IA 2 (Hinson, R)
- MI 4 (Huizenga, R)
- PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
- TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)
- VA 1 (Wittman, R)
- WI 1 (Steil, R)

### Pending New Map (3D)

- OH 1 (Landsman, D)
- OH 9 (Kaptur, D)
- OH 13 (Sykes, D)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	181	176
Likely/Lean/Tilt	21	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>207</b>
Toss-up		11
Ohio map TBD		15
Needed for majority		218

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

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**Alabama. Open; Tommy Tuberville (R) running for governor. Filing deadline Jan. 23. Primary May 19. Runoff (if necessary) June 16.** State Attorney General Steve Marshall looks like the frontrunner to succeed Tuberville but the GOP primary is still highly unsettled and several more candidates could jump in before the end of the year. Former Navy SEAL Jared Hudson is also in the race and recently began advertising on TV; local GOP sources say he's not as polished a candidate. Rep. Barry Moore, who represents lower Alabama in Congress and is a close ally of the Club for Growth, has signaled he will join the race in mid-August. Auburn University basketball coach Bruce Pearl continues to be the subject of speculation among Republicans, but the vocal pro-Israel advocate sounded cooler to the idea of running for Senate in an interview with radio host Scott Jennings earlier this month. Pearl would also face a significant hurdle to getting on the ballot thanks to his recent donations to Democratic members of Congress.

Also in the mix are former state Secretary of State John Merrill, who is looking to come back from an embarrassing sex scandal that derailed his previous Senate ambitions; former Tuberville national security aide Morgan Murphy; and even potentially former Rep. Mo Brooks, a onetime ally of Trump's who has since fallen out with the president. One person who isn't running is Caroleene Dobson, the attorney and 2nd District nominee in 2024 who is pursuing the state Secretary of State office instead. On the Democratic side, Mobile construction CEO Kyle Sweetser is the most notable candidate. A former Republican who says he voted for Trump twice, he spoke at the DNC last year in support of Kamala Harris's candidacy. Solid Republican.

*McLaughlin & Associates (R) for Steve Marshall, July 14-17 (LVs)(live caller/text message)— GOP primary ballot: Marshall 35%, Moore 12%, Hudson 9%.*

**Alaska. Dan Sullivan (R), elected 2014 (48%) and 2020 (54%). Filing deadline June 1. Primary Aug. 18.** All eyes remain on former Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola as she decides whether to run for governor or Senate. She may keep Republicans and Democrats guessing for several more months, and will freeze the Democratic field until then. The NRSC recently produced a digital ad bucking up Sullivan in the wake of his vote for Trump's reconciliation bill, which Democrats hope to use as a cudgel against him. The Democratic bench drops off after Peltola. Lt. Gov. Valerie Davidson, now the president of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Marine veteran/state trooper/Anchorage Assemblyman Zac Johnson, state Sen. Forrest Dunbar, and US Army veteran Kyle Kaiser are all potential statewide candidates. Solid Republican.

**Arkansas. Tom Cotton (R), elected 2014 (57%) and 2020 (67%). Filing deadline Nov. 11. Primary March 3. Runoff (if necessary) March 31.** Hallie Shoffner, a sixth-generation seed farmer from Newport, Arkansas (population 8,000), is challenging Cotton as a Democrat and has some national strategists buzzing about her nascent campaign. The Natural State is inhospitable to Democrats these days but having any candidate will be an improvement from 2020, when the party didn't even field a challenger against Cotton. Solid Republican.

**Colorado. John Hickenlooper (D), elected 2020 (54%). Filing deadline March 17. Primary June 30.** Karen Breslin, an attorney and instructor at the University of Colorado Denver, is challenging

Hickenlooper in the Democratic primary, but the former governor shouldn't have much trouble dispatching her thanks to his 450-to-1 cash advantage at the end of June (\$2.7 million to \$6,000). Republicans haven't won a statewide race in Colorado in a decade and don't look likely to start now. Marine Colonel George Markert is running, and former state Rep. Janak Joshi filed to run but has not announced a campaign — he lost the 8th District primary to now-Rep. Gabe Evans last year. Solid Democratic.

**Delaware. Chris Coons (D), elected 2010 (57%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (59%). Filing deadline July 14. Primary Sept. 15.** Coons had \$3 million in campaign cash on June 30 and no announced or potential GOP opponents. Solid Democratic.

**Florida. Ashley Moody (R), appointed 2025. Filing deadline April 24. Primary Aug. 18.** It looks like Moody will avoid a contested GOP primary for the special election to fill out the remaining two years of Secretary of State Marco Rubio's term. A pro-Moody super PAC led by Trump advisors Chris LaCivita and Tony Fabrizio is stockpiling cash, and Reps. Cory Mills and Kat Cammack have backed away from their



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Ashley Moody

earlier enthusiasm about running.

National Democrats know they have to pull off a few upsets to win back the majority next year. Even so, Florida is not a serious topic of conversation and rates behind Iowa, Texas, Ohio and Alaska as a pickup opportunity.

So far the only announced candidate is teacher Josh Weil, whose longshot special election campaign for a Daytona Beach congressional seat earlier this year raised \$15 million (he lost by 14 points). Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, one of the whistleblowers behind Trump's first impeachment, said earlier this year he was considering a run. His twin brother Eugene is a member of Congress from Virginia and one of the strongest fundraisers in the Democratic Party — he raised \$18 million in 2024, more than any House candidate except Speaker Mike Johnson and Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries. So if Alexander runs, it's not hard to see him replicating that success, though raising tens of millions of dollars is just the entrance fee for a statewide race in Florida. If Democrats don't field a credible candidate it will be the first time since 1994 that the party essentially cedes a Florida Senate race. Solid Republican.

**Georgia. Jon Ossoff (D), elected 2020 (51%). Filing deadline March 6. Primary May 19.** Ossoff is a top target for Republicans, who view the circumstances of his 2020/2021 runoff victory as a fluke. Rep. Buddy Carter, who represents Savannah, is running and loaned his campaign \$2 million. State insurance commissioner John King is also running; the retired Army major general had just \$450,000 in cash on June 30. Rep. Mike Collins looks like he's going to jump in imminently, releasing a video all but declaring his intention to take on Ossoff. His father, former Rep. Mac Collins, sought the GOP nomination for Senate in 2004. And former University of Tennessee football coach Derek Dooley is considering a bid and is being encouraged by allies of Gov.

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Brian Kemp. Dooley's more successful father Vince was a Georgia legend who led the Bulldogs to a national championship in 1980 and his mother ran for Congress in 2002, losing to eventual congressman Max Burns in the GOP primary. Other potential candidates include Rep. Rich McCormick, who represents the Atlanta suburbs, and state Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, whose name has been floated but whose toxic relationship with Trump would likely foreclose any success in a GOP primary. Lurking on the sidelines is Veterans' Affairs Secretary Doug Collins, who sought the state's other Senate seat in 2020 and could be drawn into the race if Trump decides he prefers him to the other candidates. Toss-up.

*Cygnal (R) for pro-John King group, June 16-18 (LVs)(online panel/text-to-web) — General election ballots: Ossoff over King, 50% - 40%. Ossoff over Carter, 49% - 42%. Ossoff over Dooley, 50% - 41%.*

**Idaho. Jim Risch (R), elected 2008 (58%), 2014 (65%), 2020 (63%). Filing deadline March 6. Primary May 19.** Armed with a Trump endorsement and \$2.9 million in campaign cash as of June 30, Risch looks like a lock for a fourth term that will keep him in the Senate until he is 89. Real estate agent and perennial candidate David Roth is the only announced Democratic candidate and reported \$26 in campaign funds at the end of the second quarter, but former state Rep. Todd Achilles recently left the Democratic Party to run as an independent. Solid Republican.

**Illinois. Open; Dick Durbin (D), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline Nov. 3. Primary March 17.** Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton and Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi and Robin Kelly make up the top tier of Democratic candidates vying to succeed Durbin. Krishnamoorthi begins the race as the frontrunner thanks to his higher name ID and \$21 million war chest he has stockpiled over the past decade. But Stratton (\$666,000 in cash as of June 30) is looking to leverage support from Gov. JB Pritzker and his bottomless pockets to leapfrog Krishnamoorthi; she's also secured an endorsement from Sen. Tammy Duckworth. Kelly (\$2.2 million on June 30) has a narrower path to victory — her allies hope the other two candidates focus on each other. Krishnamoorthi has already begun advertising on TV, eight months before the primary. Awisi Quartey Bustos, the chief executive officer of the Illinois Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, is also running but not seen as a top-tier candidate.



Juliana Stratton

Courtesy Stratton Campaign

Republicans don't have a deep bench in Illinois, where they haven't won a Senate race since Mark Kirk in 2010. Former 10th District GOP nominee Doug Bennett, perennial candidates Casey Chelbek and Cary Capparelli, police officer John Goodman, and occupational therapist Pamela Long are all running. Solid Democratic.

*GBAO (D) for Raja Krishnamoorthi, June 5-10 (LVs)(live caller/text-to-web) — Democratic primary ballot: Krishnamoorthi 32%, Stratton 19%, Kelly 14%.*

**Iowa. Joni Ernst (R), elected 2014 (52%) and 2020 (52%). Filing deadline March 13. Primary June 2.** Ernst is keeping Iowa and Washington, DC guessing about her plans for next year as rumors fly



Nathan Sage

Courtesy Sage Campaign

that the 55-year-old won't seek re-election. While Ernst recently dismissed those rumors as "chitter-chatter," she hasn't offered any more clarity about her plans and raised an anemic \$723,000 from April through June. Party operatives expect her

to make her intentions public by her annual Roast and Ride event on Oct. 11. If she doesn't run, Rep. Ashley Hinson is in pole position to run in her stead, though Rep. Zach Nunn and others might take a look at the open seat as well.

Democrats are fired up to take on Ernst, who they see as vulnerable thanks to her "we all are going to die" comment about Medicaid cuts, Ernst's lingering problems with some of the Republican base, and the impact of Trump's trade policy on the Iowa economy. Nathan Sage, a Marine veteran and executive director of the Knoxville, Iowa Chamber of Commerce was the first candidate in the race and is running an aggressively populist campaign. State Rep. JD Scholten, a minor league professional baseball player and former congressional candidate, was the next to jump in, followed by state Sen. Zach Wahls, a former minority leader in the statehouse. Wahls reported \$626,000 in the bank on June 30, followed by Sage with \$334,000 and Scholten with \$156,000. The field could still grow. Jackie Norris, the chair of the Des Moines School Board and a former chief of staff to Michelle Obama, has hired campaign consultants in anticipation of a run. And state Rep. Josh Turek, a gold medal-winning Paralympian who represents Council Bluffs, could run as well. Likely Republican.

**Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2020 (53%). Filing deadline June 1. Primary Aug. 4.** Christy Davis, a former USDA official in the Biden administration and 2020 1st District congressional candidate, is exploring a run against Marshall as a Democrat. But she'd face an uphill battle against the first-term senator, who turned back a well-funded challenge from state Sen. Barbara Bollier in 2020. Solid Republican.

**Kentucky. Open; Mitch McConnell (R), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline Jan. 9. Primary May 19.** Rep. Andy Barr, former state Attorney General Daniel Cameron, and Lexington businessman Nate Morris are vying for the GOP nomination to succeed McConnell, the winner of which will be the heavy favorite in the general election. Cameron begins the race with a name ID advantage thanks to his time as a statewide elected official and 2023 gubernatorial nominee, and if the election were held today he would likely win. But the onetime rising GOP star has struggled to build momentum or fundraise.

Barr is not well-known outside of the Lexington media market but has been barnstorming the state and building up a campaign war chest. He reported \$6.1 million in cash on June 30 compared to just \$532,000 for Cameron. But Barr also has powerful enemies in the anti-tax Club for

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Growth, which has said it will spend “whatever it takes” to beat Barr in the primary. Morris, who is close to Donald Trump, Jr. and Vice President J.D. Vance, is more of a wild card. He is personally wealthy but has yet to file a financial disclosure or campaign finance report because he entered the race after July 1. He is, however, spending \$1.2 million on ads blanketing the state introducing himself to voters. There’s also an anti-Morris super PAC drawing attention to his company’s DEI policies.

All three candidates are working to distance themselves from McConnell now that the former majority leader is on Trump’s bad side, but they’ve all feted him in the past as well. CNN contributor Scott Jennings, whose conservative punditry often goes viral online, has the potential to shake up the race if he gets in, but he’s said he’ll only do it if Trump asks him to run.

On the Democratic side, state House Minority Leader Pam Stevenson is the only announced candidate. The retired Air Force colonel was her party’s 2023 nominee for state attorney general. She reported just \$49,000 in campaign funds on June 30. Personal injury attorney Logan Forsythe, who previously served as a special agent in the Secret Service, is also seriously considering a bid and is likely to run. Solid Republican.

**Louisiana. Bill Cassidy (R), elected 2014 (56%) and 2020 (59%).**

Cassidy is working hard to repair his relationship with Trump after voting to convict him in his 2021 impeachment trial. So far Trump has stayed out of the GOP primary that will determine Cassidy’s political future but that may be more about the quality of the incumbent’s challengers.

State Treasurer John Fleming has a reputation as an uninspired campaigner and is playing cute with his campaign finances by loaning himself the same \$2 million each quarter, making his overall haul look larger than it really is. He ended June with \$2.1 million in the bank and debts of \$2.5 million, all to himself. State Sen. Blake Miguez is also running and reported \$1.7 million in campaign cash, including a \$1 million loan. Cassidy, meanwhile, dominates the money picture with \$8.7 million.

Looming over the field is Rep. Julia Letlow, the well-liked 5th District congresswoman who could run as a more compelling alternative to Cassidy. But the former college administrator may also be a contender for the newly open presidency at Louisiana State University. Democrats would love former Gov. John Bel Edwards to run but he seems more likely to seek a return to the governor’s mansion in 2027. Solid Republican.

**Maine. Susan Collins (R), elected 1996 (49%), 2002 (58%), 2008 (61%) 2014 (69%), and 2020 (51%). Filing deadline March 15. Primary June 9.** Democrats are still searching for a candidate to take on Collins, who is the only Republican up for re-election from a state carried by Harris in the 2024 presidential election. Much of the speculation has landed on Gov. Janet Mills, who is term limited in 2026 and popular in the state. Mills, who would be 79 in 2027 and the oldest freshman senator in history, has kept her cards close to the vest and doesn’t appear to be in any rush to make a decision. That doesn’t worry national Democratic strategists, who believe that a shorter campaign might be in the party’s interest.

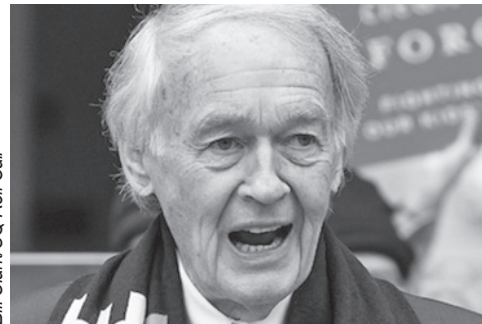
While Democrats wait for Mills’ process to play out, a few other candidates are poking around the contest. Jordan Wood, a Democratic political operative who worked for California Rep. Katie Porter, is running, and reported \$800,000 in the bank on June 30, but national strategists don’t see him as a top-tier general election candidate. State House Speaker Ryan Fecteau hasn’t ruled out a bid, and neither has

former state Sen. Cathy Breen, the director of government affairs for the Maine Conservation Alliance. A more outside-the-box potential candidate is brewery owner / attorney Dan Kleban.

Some Maine Democrats also harbor hope that some of the many candidates in the open governor’s race will switch over to the Senate race. Former state House Speaker Hannah Pingree, state Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, former state Senate President Troy Jackson, and energy executive Angus King III (the son of Sen. Angus King, Jr.) are currently running for governor in the Democratic primary.

Collins, for her part, hasn’t formally announced her re-election campaign but continues to signal she is going to seek a sixth term. She is stockpiling cash, reporting \$5.3 million in campaign funds on June 30. And she typically waits until December to announce her re-election campaigns. If she were to retire, Democrats would be well-positioned to flip this seat. But at the moment, she lacks a high-profile opponent and given her long history of overperforming the political environment, this race begins as Tilt Republican.

**Massachusetts. Ed Markey (D) elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (66%). Primary Sept. 15, 2026.** Speculation continues to swirl that 37-year-old Rep. Jake Auchincloss will challenge 80-year-old Markey in the Democratic primary, and Auchincloss isn’t doing much



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Ed Markey

to tamp down on the rumors. The third-term congressman reported more than twice as much money in the bank on June 30 as Markey did (\$5.9 million vs. \$2.5 million).

Markey’s no stranger to competitive primary races from younger members of the delegation. He defeated then-Rep. Joe Kennedy III in a closely watched 2020 race in which he began as an underdog but leveraged his progressive credentials and media savvy campaign to beat the scion of Massachusetts’s storied dynasty (Auchincloss is also from a prominent family loosely related to the Kennedys). But Auchincloss could learn from Kennedy’s uninspiring campaign, and age is a more salient campaign issue among Democrats than it was in 2020. On the GOP side, 2024 nominee John Deaton has expressed interest in running again. He lost to Elizabeth Warren last year by 20 points. Solid Democratic.

**Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline April 21. Primary Aug. 4.** The most exciting Democratic Senate primary this year is still more than a year away from its conclusion, making it difficult to handicap. Rep. Haley Stevens has the most cash-on-hand with \$2 million as of June 30. But she was out-raised over the past three months by two of her opponents, state Sen. Mallory McMorrow (who had \$826,000 in the bank after spending heavily) and former Wayne County health department director Abdul El-Sayed (\$1.1 million in campaign funds). Stevens is the early polling leader thanks to her higher name ID in the Detroit region but this race is just getting started. While most of the national media coverage has focused on Stevens

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and McMorrow, El-Sayed — the youngest and most progressive of the candidates — shouldn't be counted out, even as there's some concern from national Democrats that the Bernie Sanders-endorsed, Medicare for All supporter might be a weaker general election candidate. Former state House Speaker Joe Tate is also in the race. But the former offensive lineman for Michigan State, who signed to the Jacksonville Jaguars but never played and later joined the Marine Corps, has failed to gain traction. He showed just \$70,000 in campaign cash on June 30.

Former Rep. Mike Rogers is the only Republican in the race after falling just short in 2024's Senate race. He has backing from Senate leadership in Washington, DC, including Senate Majority Leader John Thune and NRSC Chairman Tim Scott, who see him as the party's best chance to win a Michigan Senate seat for the first time in decades. And after months of speculation, Western Michigan Rep. Bill Huizenga announced he won't run against Rogers in the primary. Even though Republicans loved to see McMorrow and El-Sayed outraise Stevens, Rogers' fundraising was lackluster (\$1.1 million) particularly with all his big-name support. He'll get more outside financial help than last cycle but will need to pick up his own fundraising. Toss-up.

*Normington Petts (D) for Yes Michigan (pro-McMorrow), June 12-16 (LVs) (live caller/text-to-web) — General election ballots: Rogers over McMorrow, 48% - 44%. Stevens over Rogers, 47% - 45%.*

*Global Strategy Group (D) for Mallory McMorrow, May 28-June 2 (LVs) (live caller/text-to-web) — Democratic primary ballot: Stevens 24%, McMorrow 20%, El-Sayed 15%.*

**Minnesota. Open; Tina Smith (DFL), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline June 2. Primary Aug. 11.** Rep. Angie Craig has an early fundraising lead over Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan in the DFL primary, reporting \$1.8 million in campaign funds on June 30 to Flanagan's \$783,000, though Flanagan is racking up support from progressive leaders in Minnesota and nationally such as state Attorney General Keith Ellison and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren. A looming wrinkle is the DFL endorsement convention; winning doesn't make you the nominee but it does come with some advantages, and Flanagan's relationships in the more activist and progressive wings of the party could help her secure that support.

Republicans want to avoid former NBA player and conspiracy theorist Royce White as their nominee after he lost by double digits last year. But retired Navy SEAL Adam Schwarze has struggled to fundraise in his campaign for the nomination. Former NBA player Willie Burton

is a potential candidate; he played for University of Minnesota and recently returned to the state to pursue a PhD after living in Michigan. Former NFL reporter Michelle Tafoya is also a potential candidate. She said she was "90 percent" toward a decision back in February but hasn't elaborated since. Baird Vice Chairman John Taft (great-grandson of former President William Howard Taft) could also run, though his stances on LGBTQ issues could be a challenge for him in a primary. State Sen. Julia Coleman (the daughter-in-law of former U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman) and state Sen. Zach Duckworth would be more conventional candidates but have ruled out bids. Likely Democratic.

**Mississippi. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R), appointed 2018, elected 2018 special (54%) and 2020 (54%). Filing deadline Feb. 2. Primary March 10. Runoff (if necessary) April 7.** Lowndes County District



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Cindy Hyde-Smith

Attorney Scott Colom is being talked up by Democrats (including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer) as a potential candidate but hasn't made any moves toward running since earlier this year. Veteran/attorney Ty Pinkins,

who ran for Senate in 2024 as a Democrat, is running as an independent this year. Hyde-Smith has a primary challenger in physician Sarah Adlakha, who loaned her campaign \$201,000. The incumbent has been endorsed by Trump, which should head off any serious primary issues. Solid Republican.

**Montana. Steve Daines (R), elected 2014 (58%) and 2020 (55%). Filing deadline March 9. Primary June 2.** Former state Rep. Reilly Neil remains the only Democrat in the race against Daines, who outpaced her in cash-on-hand by more than 100-to-1 at the end of June, \$3.2 million to \$20,000. Several other Democrats are still circling the race. Former state Rep. Kathleen Williams, who ran for the House in 2018 and 2020, is a potential candidate, as is 2024 gubernatorial nominee Ryan Busse. And Democrats have been attempting to sway John Herrington, the first enrolled Native American astronaut and now an aerospace CEO in Marion, Montana, to run for something. A dark horse candidate might be University of Montana president Seth Bodnar, a West Point graduate, Rhodes Scholar, Special Forces veteran and former GE executive. Solid Republican.

**Nebraska. Pete Ricketts (R), appointed 2023, elected 2024 special (63%). Filing deadline March 1. Primary May 12.** Union leader Dan Osborn is again running as an independent after coming up 7 points short of Sen. Deb Fischer last year. Unlike Fischer, Ricketts will be ready for the hard-charging mechanic and won't get caught asleep at the wheel like his seatmate; he also has significant personal wealth to draw from to fund his campaign. The first big test in this race will be if Osborn can cooperate with Nebraska Democrats to ensure they don't field a candidate and that he gets a chance to take on Ricketts head-to-head. A Democratic nominee on the ballot likely precludes an Osborn victory. Solid Republican.

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## Inside Elections Podcast

*Nathan, Jacob and expert guests discuss the latest election news in a nonpartisan, data-driven and accessible way.*

**Episode 52:** Nathan and Jacob unveil the new Senate race ratings and break down the fight for the majority

**Episode 51:** All things Iowa, including races for Senate, House and governor with Brianne Pfannenstiel of The Des Moines Register

**Episode 50:** A legacy of nonpartisan political handicapping with Stuart Rothenberg, founder of The Rothenberg Political Report

Continued from page 6

**New Hampshire. Open; Jeanne Shaheen (D), not seeking re-election. Filing deadline June 12. Primary Sept. 8.** Rep. Chris Pappas successfully navigated a potentially dicey situation with his colleague Rep. Maggie Goodlander and barring any major surprises will be the Democratic nominee next fall. He reported \$2 million in cash on hand on June 30. The picture is less clear for Republicans. Former Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown is the most notable candidate in the race but state Sen. Dan Innis is also running. Phil Taub, the head of private equity at law firm Nixon Peabody, is considering a run after passing on a 2022 bid, as is businessman Walter McFarlane, who most recently worked as the CFO of a specialty foods company and placed fifth in the 2024 GOP primary for the 1st District. Where Trump stands is an open question as well, and there's some chatter among Republican operatives that the president and his allies are still looking for an alternative to Brown to support. Lean Democratic.

**New Jersey. Cory Booker (D), elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Filing deadline March 23. Primary June 2.** Former Tabernacle Mayor Justin Murphy said earlier this year he plans to run against Booker but hasn't made any moves since. The Navy veteran ran for Congress twice, in 2008 and 2010, and also for Senate in 2024. Former Acting US Attorney Alina Habba, whose appointment was not extended by the district judges of New Jersey this week, is a potential candidate. Both parties will be watching New Jersey's fall 2025 elections closely for clues as to whether the once-reliable Democratic state really has become more fertile territory for Republicans in the wake of 2024's narrow presidential result, when the state voted for Harris by less than 6 points. Until then, Booker appears in solid shape, especially with \$19.6 million in campaign funds as of June 30. Solid Democratic.

**New Mexico. Ben Ray Luján (D), elected 2020 (51%). Filing deadline Feb. 3. Primary June 2.** New Mexico Republicans seem more interested in the open gubernatorial race than challenging Luján, who has no announced opponents and reported \$2.7 million in campaign funds on June 30. Solid Democratic.

**North Carolina. Open; Thom Tillis (R) not seeking re-election.** Filing deadline Dec. 19. Primary March 3. Runoff (if necessary) May 12. Gov. Roy Cooper will reportedly jump into the Senate race after months of speculation, giving Democrats a top-tier recruit in a must win state. Former Rep. Wiley Nickel is in the primary already but will probably defer to Cooper

Republicans also received some clarity this week. Lara Trump, the president's daughter-in-law and former co-chair of the RNC, will not run, despite Republicans signalling that they would have cleared the field for her. Instead, current RNC chairman Michael Whatley will run with Trump's support. He previously led the North Carolina GOP. Rep. Pat Harrigan, former Ambassador to Denmark James P. Cain, and 2024 superintendent of public instruction nominee Michele Morrow have all been floated



Michael Whatley

Courtesy Gage Skidmore

in the past, but Trump's early endorsement should keep other top-tier Republicans out of the race. This is Democrats' best chance to flip a Senate seat and is a crucial step on their exceedingly narrow path to the majority. Toss-up.

**Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. Filing deadline Feb. 4. Primary May 5.** Democrats continue to wait for Sherrod Brown to decide what, if anything, he wants to run for next year. The former senator is



Emilia Sykes

keeping his name in the news and could run for either the Senate or the open governor's mansion. Plenty of Democrats are waiting in the wings if Brown doesn't run. Former Rep. Tim Ryan, state Sen. Casey Weinstein, and state Rep. Allison Russo are all potential candidates. And if Republicans in the state legislature choose to aggressively redraw the state's congressional map, they could push Akron Rep. Emilia Sykes or Cincinnati Rep. Greg Landsman into the Senate race as well because running for re-election to the House could be more difficult.

For the moment, Husted appears to be in good shape, with \$2.7 million in campaign cash as of June 30, no GOP primary opponents, and plenty of uncertainty surrounding the Democratic field. If Brown ultimately runs, this race could vault into the top tier of pickup opportunities for Democrats, but if he doesn't, it's hard to see how his party regains its footing in the Buckeye State. Solid Republican.

**Oklahoma. Markwayne Mullin (R), elected 2022 special (62%). Filing deadline April 3. Primary June 16.** Nurse and Chickasaw Nation member N'Kiyla "Jasmine" Thomas is running as a Democrat against Mullin, and reported raising less than \$5,000 for her campaign. Mullin reported \$1.7 million in the bank on June 30 and shouldn't have an issue winning a full term. Solid Republican.

**Oregon. Jeff Merkley (D), elected 2008 (49%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Filing deadline March 10. Primary May 19.** After a few months of uncertainty, Markley announced that he'll seek a fourth term. His decision takes virtually all of the drama out of race. If Merkley, 68, had decided to retire, then there would have likely been a competitive primary between two, three or even four Democratic women from the House delegation for the open Senate seat. And then there would have been multiple open House seats with competitive primaries. Instead, aspiring politicians will have to wait at least another cycle to see if Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, 76, follows through on running for re-election in 2028 or for Merkley to come up again in 2032. For now, Merkley had \$4.7 million on hand on June 30 and Republicans don't even mention Oregon when talking about long-shot takeover opportunities. Solid Democratic.

**Rhode Island. Jack Reed (D), elected 1996 (63%), 2002 (78%), 2008 (73%), 2014 (71%), and 2020 (67%). Filing deadline June 24. Primary Sept. 8.** Reed faces a challenge in the Democratic primary

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from 30-year-old elder-care worker Connor Burbridge, who is hoping to make an argument of generational change against the 75-year-old incumbent. But unless something fundamental changes for Reed, who reported \$2.5 million in the bank on June 30, the Rhode Island institution shouldn't have much trouble in the primary. On the GOP side, 2024 candidate Ray McKay, an Army veteran and former Warwick city administrator, hasn't formally announced a candidacy but is raising money. Solid Democratic.

**South Carolina. Lindsey Graham (R), elected 2002 (54%), 2008 (58%), 2014 (55%), and 2020 (54%). Filing deadline March 30. Primary June 9. Runoff (if necessary) June 23.** Former Lt. Gov. Andre Bauer

officially launched his primary campaign against Graham this month, joining Greenville appliance store owner Mark Lynch in the GOP primary. It's not obvious if Graham is in much danger of losing, especially as he's become one



Annie Andrews

of Trump's strongest allies and earned an early endorsement from the president (who once read his personal cell number aloud at a rally to harass him). Bauer hasn't held office in South Carolina since the 2000s, and lost primaries for governor and the 7th District in 2010 and 2012, respectively. Lynch loaned his campaign \$5 million at the beginning of the year but has spent very little of it. And Graham has stockpiled \$15.6 million in anticipation of his re-election campaign, so he'll have the resources to defend himself.

Physician Annie Andrews is the most notable Democrat in the race and raised a respectable \$1.2 million in her first three months in the race. She lost the 2022 race for South Carolina's 1st District. Also running are 2022 Senate candidate Catherine Fleming Bruce and former 4th District House candidate Brandon Brown. A more outside-the-box candidate would be former Illinois Rep. Joe Walsh, the fiery Tea Party congressman who underwent a political conversion to anti-Trump Republican and now registered Democrat, who is reportedly moving to South Carolina. Solid Republican.

**South Dakota. Mike Rounds (R), elected 2014 (50%) and 2020 (66%). Filing deadline March 31. Primary June 2. Runoff (if necessary) July 28.** Former state trooper Julian Beaudion, now the executive director of the South Dakota African American History Museum, is running as a Democrat and had \$47,000 in campaign funds on June 30. Veteran Brian Bengs, the Democratic nominee for Senate in 2022, is running as an independent; he reported \$19,000 in the bank on June 30. Rounds (\$2.5 million in cash-on-hand on June 30) doesn't seem to be in any danger, especially after Trump endorsed him (three years ago Trump said he would "never endorse this jerk again"). Solid Republican.

**Tennessee. Bill Hagerty (R), elected 2020 (62%). Filing deadline March 10. Primary Aug. 6.** Hagerty has endorsements from Trump, current seatmate and future governor Marsha Blackburn, and Gov. Bill

Lee. The wealthy businessman shouldn't have any issue in the primary or general election. Solid Republican.

**Texas. John Cornyn (R), elected 2002 (55%), 2008 (65%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (55%). Filing deadline Dec. 8. Primary March 3. Runoff (if necessary) May 26.** Under normal political conditions, Texas elects



Ken Paxton

Republicans. GOP Sen. Ted Cruz's 9-point win and Trump's 14-point wins in 2024 are just the latest evidence. But nominating Ken Paxton is not normal. Despite considerable baggage, the controversial state attorney general is

currently leading Cornyn in GOP primary match-ups. Cornyn's allies believe the dynamic will shift once the senator exercises his fundraising advantage (\$5.9 million to \$2.5 million on June 30) and voters learn more about Paxton. But it's difficult to see how the well-known, four-term incumbent rebounds significantly, especially because Trump will be less likely to endorse a candidate he believes will lose. The fight is deeply personal between Cornyn and Paxton, and might leave the senator in the difficult position of losing to Paxton in a primary or bowing out of the race under the pressure of losing to Paxton. Rep. Wesley Hunt is keeping his name in the news ahead of a potential opportunity.

A small crowd of Democrats have emerged to take advantage of the GOP uncertainty. Former Rep. Colin Allred, who lost to Cruz in 2024, is running again and starts the race as the frontrunner based on previous name I.D., but he is not alone and the race is still taking shape. Astronaut Terry Virts, a retired Air Force colonel and former International Space Station commander, is running and had \$85,000 in campaign cash on June 30. State Rep. James Talarico is getting national attention for appearing on Joe Rogan's popular podcast and looks increasingly likely to run after hiring veteran Democratic strategist Lis Smith. Former presidential candidate/Senate nominee/former Rep. Beto O'Rourke isn't viewed as a likely candidate, but anything is possible until he officially announces his intentions. Republicans are trying to tempt Rep. Jasmine Crockett into the race because they believe she'd be too extreme to win, but she hasn't made the jump.

If Cornyn were to be the nominee, this wouldn't be a serious race. But even though Democrats are extremely wary of jumping back into Texas after multiple expensive and high-profile losses, the potential for a Paxton nomination is drawing them back in. Get ready for some drama. Likely Republican.

*Pulse Decision Science (R), June 17-22 (LVs)(live caller) — GOP primary ballots: Paxton over Cornyn, 57% - 38%; Paxton 49%, Cornyn 32%, Hunt 13%.*

*Stratus Intelligence (R) for Conservative Policy Project, June 6-8 (LVs) — GOP primary ballot: Paxton over Cornyn, 49% - 33%.*

**Virginia. Mark Warner (D), elected 2008 (65%), 2014 (49%), and 2020 (56%). Filing deadline April 2. Primary June 16.** Warner has not officially announced his re-election campaign but raised another

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\$3 million from April through June, the fourth-most of any senator or candidate in the country. He reported \$10.2 million in cash on hand as of June 30. There's still some speculation among Democrats that the 70-year-old former governor won't seek re-election but until he makes an announcement no other candidates are going to make any moves — especially with high-stakes state elections sucking up all of the oxygen until November. Republicans wish outgoing Gov. Glenn Youngkin would run, but there's no indication he'll make the jump. Solid Democratic.

**West Virginia. Shelley Moore Capito (R), elected 2014 (62%) and 2020 (70%).** Filing deadline Jan. 31. Primary May 12. Former state Rep. Derrick Evans stormed the Capitol on January 6, served three months in prison, and was pardoned by Trump along with 1,600 others for his role in the insurrection. Now he's running against Capito in

the primary, though he hasn't gained much traction. While he raised \$335,000 over the past three months, he spent the same amount and ended June with just \$83,000 in campaign cash, compared to \$3.4 million for Capito. Solid Republican.

**Wyoming. Cynthia Lummis (R), elected 2020 (73%).** Filing deadline May 29. Primary Aug. 18. Lummis faces a primary challenge from investor Reid Rasner, who previously ran against Wyoming's other senator, John Barrasso, in the 2024 GOP primary. Rasner spent \$1.3 million of his own money and won 25 percent of the vote. This year, he has loaned his campaign \$188,000. Lummis is loudly touting her endorsement from Trump but Rasner's personal resources (he recently led a group that made a highly publicized offer to buy TikTok for \$50 billion) means she'll have to take the race seriously. Solid Republican.



## Senate Fundraising 2026

STATE	CANDIDATE	RAISED CYCLE TO DATE	PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	CASH ON HAND (JUNE 30, 2025)	STATE	CANDIDATE	RAISED CYCLE TO DATE	PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	CASH ON HAND (JUNE 30, 2025)
AK	Dan Sullivan, R	\$4,672,930	\$0	\$3,907,620	MI	Abdul El-Sayed, D	\$1,793,730	\$3,500	\$1,100,200
AL	Steve Marshall, R	\$396,320	\$0	\$382,950	MI	Joe Tate, D	\$192,770	\$0	\$70,210
AL	Jared Hudson, R	\$209,720	\$0	\$201,130	MI	Mike Rogers, R	\$1,228,850	\$0	\$1,121,800
AR	Tom Cotton, R	\$9,249,540	\$0	\$8,988,850	MN	Angie Craig, D	\$2,111,990	\$373,000	\$1,816,100
CO	John Hickenlooper, D	\$4,889,980	\$0	\$2,771,350	MN	Peggy Flanagan, D	\$1,363,560	\$1,000	\$783,220
DE	Chris Coons, D	\$3,910,140	\$0	\$3,041,550	MN	Royce White, R	\$444,130	\$0	\$183,840
FL	Josh Weil, D	\$82,310	\$0	\$221,840	MN	Adam Schwarze, R	\$217,280	\$0	\$96,770
FL	Ashley Moody, R	\$2,379,530	\$0	\$2,262,500	MS	Cindy Hyde-Smith, R	\$2,862,370	\$0	\$1,454,300
GA	Jon Ossoff, D	\$33,280,860	\$0	\$15,492,490	MT	Steve Daines, R	\$4,835,180	\$0	\$3,251,290
GA	Buddy Carter, R	\$1,608,900	\$2,000,000	\$4,076,870	NC	Wiley Nickel, D	\$1,272,400	\$770,840	\$794,930
GA	John King, R	\$518,180	\$0	\$450,410	NC	Don Brown, R	\$61,950	\$7,560	\$43,650
IA	Nathan Sage, D	\$709,130	\$0	\$334,380	NE	Dan Osborn	\$209,540	\$0	\$108,530
IA	Zach Wahls, D	\$656,560	\$0	\$626,350	NE	Pete Ricketts, R	\$1,670,140	\$0	\$1,458,780
IA	J.D. Scholten, D	\$175,620	\$0	\$156,600	NH	Chris Pappas, D	\$2,467,170	\$0	\$2,015,790
IA	Joni Ernst, R	\$6,817,530	\$0	\$3,404,500	NJ	Cory Booker, D	\$24,985,970	\$0	\$19,643,810
ID	Jim Risch, R	\$849,390	\$0	\$2,885,330	NM	Ben Ray Lujan, D	\$4,883,950	\$0	\$2,680,640
IL	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D	\$12,454,810	\$0	\$11,758,710	OH	Jon Husted, R	\$3,052,200	\$0	\$2,650,460
IL	Robin Kelly, D	\$2,457,120	\$0	\$2,204,920	OK	Markwayne Mullin, R	\$3,436,240	\$0	\$1,716,550
IL	Juliana Stratton, D	\$1,061,060	\$0	\$666,420	OR	Jeff Merkley, D	\$3,686,420	\$0	\$4,665,030
KS	Roger Marshall, R	\$2,561,260	\$0	\$2,731,100	RI	Jack Reed, D	\$2,242,990	\$0	\$2,532,530
KY	Pamela Stevenson, D	\$219,940	\$0	\$48,670	SC	Annie Andrews, D	\$1,245,400	\$0	\$671,880
KY	Andy Barr, R	\$3,337,860	\$0	\$6,109,240	SC	Lindsey Graham, R	\$12,938,590	\$0	\$15,616,790
KY	Daniel Cameron, R	\$893,220	\$0	\$532,030	SC	Mark Lynch, R	\$174,510	\$5,050,000	\$5,085,840
LA	Bill Cassidy, R	\$8,670,530	\$0	\$8,739,320	SD	Mike Rounds, R	\$2,011,080	\$0	\$2,503,180
LA	Blake Miguez, R	\$810,260	\$1,011,250	\$1,742,590	TN	Bill Hagerty, R	\$11,282,160	\$0	\$3,653,200
LA	John Fleming, R	\$390,520	\$4,030,000	\$2,142,650	TX	Terry Virts, D	\$151,130	\$50,000	\$85,600
MA	Ed Markey, D	\$3,709,560	\$0	\$2,540,640	TX	John Cornyn, R	\$8,063,520	\$0	\$5,907,350
ME	Jordan Wood, D	\$1,344,090	\$257,100	\$804,070	TX	Ken Paxton, R	\$2,908,590	\$0	\$2,517,450
ME	Susan Collins, R	\$5,828,050	\$0	\$5,255,920	VA	Mark Warner, D	\$12,904,210	\$0	\$10,129,700
MI	Haley Stevens, D	\$2,792,060	\$0	\$1,956,480	WV	Shelley Moore Capito, R	\$3,121,280	\$0	\$3,418,240
MI	Mallory McMorrow, D	\$2,093,520	\$0	\$826,910	WY	Cynthia Lummis, R	\$2,094,680	\$0	\$1,301,560

Source: FEC, The Downballot

# Arizona 7: All in the Family

By Jacob Rubashkin

Sometimes, the most obvious outcome is the one that ends up happening. In the race to replace the late Rep. Raúl Grijalva in Arizona’s 7th District, that meant an easy Democratic primary win for Adelita Grijalva, the former congressman’s daughter and a Pima County supervisor with support from much of the Arizona political establishment and national progressive leaders.



Adelita Grijalva

Courtesy Grijalva Campaign

A largely sleepy affair since the elder Grijalva died in March, the primary began to attract national attention in

its closing week as speculation grew that progressive influencer Deja Foxx could pull off an upset.

Ultimately, Grijalva won with 62 percent over Foxx (21 percent) and former state Rep. Daniel Hernandez (14 percent). Grijalva led in every publicly released poll of the race, though never by such a large margin as the final results. She will be the heavy favorite against Republican Daniel Butierez in the Sept. 23 special general election. Butierez lost to Raúl Grijalva, 63-37 percent, in 2024.

When the race began, Hernandez had seemed the greater threat to Adelita Grijalva’s ascension, even as the county supervisor boasted endorsements from Sens. Ruben Gallego and Mark Kelly, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Hernandez is well-known thanks to his time in the state legislature, previous run for a neighboring congressional district, and the national attention he received after he helped save the life of Rep. Gabby Giffords in the 2011 shooting. He also led the field in fundraising. But support from outside groups never materialized for Hernandez, whose allies had hoped that Democratic Majority for Israel or United Democracy Project would spend in the race to boost his candidacy thanks to his longtime advocacy for Israel.

Democratic sources were always skeptical of Hernandez’s odds, and there was an effort to ease him out of the race to prevent him from being embarrassed after he similarly fell short in the primary in Arizona’s 6th District in 2022. “There’s no ill will or desire to embarrass [him],” said one person familiar with that effort ahead of this week’s primary, “but he’s going to lose worse here than he’s ever lost before, which could impact his future.”

But Hernandez evidently rebuffed those efforts, only to place third behind a 25-year-old political newcomer.

Foxx was known in some Democratic circles for her work on the Kamala Harris campaign and social media videos about reproductive rights, but had no political history in the district. Initially a distant third, she stood up a successful fundraising operation and impressed the other campaigns with her ground game. She received a boost from the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and then former DNC vice chairman David Hogg, whose PAC endorsed her and spent on her behalf.

After another young, media-savvy progressive scored an upset victory in the New York City mayoral primary against an opponent with a famous name, interest in Foxx picked up. Her campaign released a poll showing her down just 8 points, 43-35 percent. Days before the primary, national outlets began framing the race as a generational contest between the media-savvy Foxx and the 54-year-old Grijalva. “A Political Influencer Could Seriously Win a Seat in Congress,” claimed a Politico headline. The Daily Beast called Foxx “The Next AOC” as CNN stated “Arizona special election primary roiled by Democratic debates over age, experience and legacy.”

But Grijalva sailed to victory in the low-turnout election. Boosted not only by her famous last name and the deep support for her father in the district, but also her own 25-year political career on the school board and as a county supervisor, Grijalva doesn’t appear to have ever been in danger of losing the seat that many local observers penciled her in for years ago.

In the fall, there won’t be nearly as much suspense. Grijalva will be the heavy favorite in the general election in a district Harris carried by 22 points last November. Her victory will help replenish the Democratic ranks after three older members died earlier this year. **IE**

## 2026 Governor Ratings

### Battleground

#### Democratic-held (8D)

Hobbs (D-Ariz.)  
Hochul (D-N.Y.)  
Shapiro (D-Penn.)  
Evers (D-Wisc.)  
KS Open (Kelly, D)  
ME Open (Mills, D)  
MI Open (Whitmer, D)  
NM Open (Lujan Grisham, D)

#### Republican-held (3R)

Lombardo (R-Nev.)  
GA Open (Kemp, R)  
IA Open (Reynolds, R)

#### Solid Democratic (10D)

CA Open (Newsom, D)  
CO Open (Polis, D)  
Lamont (D-Conn.)  
Green (D-Hawaii)  
Pritzker (D-Ill.)  
Moore (D-Md.)  
Healey (D-Mass.)  
Walz (D-Minn.)  
Kotek (D-Ore.)  
McKee (D-R.I.)

#### Solid Republican (15R)

AL Open (Ivey, R)  
AK Open (Dunleavy, R)  
FL Open (DeSantis, R)  
OH Open (DeWine, R)  
OK Open (Stitt, R)  
SC Open (McMaster, R)  
TN Open (Lee, R)  
WY Open (Gordon, R)  
Sanders (R-Ark.)  
Little (R-Idaho)

### 2025 RACES

#### Tilt Democratic

VA Open (Youngkin, R)

#### Lean Democratic

NJ Open (Murphy, D)

Pillen (R-Neb.)

Ayotte (R-N.H.)

Rhoden (R-S.D.)

Abbott (R-Texas)

Scott (R-Vt.)