

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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2024 Gubernatorial Overview: Small Cycle, Big Turnover

By Jacob Rubashkin

2024 Gubernatorial Ratings

Toss-up (2)

NC Open (Cooper, D)

NH Open (Sununu, R)

Tilt Democratic

Tilt Republican

Lean Democratic

Lean Republican

Likely Democratic (1)

WA Open (Inslee, D)

Likely Republican

Solid Democratic (1)

DE Open (Carney, D)

Solid Republican (7)

IN Open (Holcomb, R)

MO Open (Parson, R)

ND Open (Burgum, R)

WV Open (Justice, R)

Cox, R (Utah)

Gianforte, R (Mont.)

Scott, R (Vt.)

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

CALENDAR

April 30	New York's 26th District Special Election
May 7	Indiana Primary
May 14	Maryland, Nebraska & West Virginia Primaries
May 21	Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon Primaries
May 28	Texas Primary Runoff
June 4	Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, South Dakota Primaries
June 6	NBA Finals begin
June 10	NHL Finals begin
June 11	North Dakota, South Carolina, Maine, Nevada Primaries
June 25	Colorado, New York, Utah Primaries
July 15	Republican National Convention begins
July 15	Second Quarter Fundraising Reports Due

Eleven states will choose a governor this November. But nearly all of the suspense will play out over the next five months, as primary voters pick nominees that will almost assuredly win their general elections.

Just three states are playing host to races that appear competitive for both parties, and just two of those are highly competitive.

That is not to say there aren't heated elections for governor; they're just mostly in primaries. At least eight incumbent governors are not seeking re-election, and every open-seat race had or has a competitive primary election on one or both sides. Already, two of those states, Indiana and West Virginia, have attracted tens of millions of dollars in advertising spending.

Looking to November, the main events will almost certainly be North Carolina and New Hampshire, which are the best takeover opportunities for Republicans and Democrats, respectively. Both have the potential to be expensive contests that draw national attention as they play out alongside pitched presidential battles in their crowded media markets.

Holding a majority of governorships doesn't bring extra power, but does give parties more control over state policies. Currently, there are 27 Republican governors and 23 Democratic governors around the country.

Delaware. Open; John Carney Jr. (D) term-limited. July 9 filing deadline. Sept. 10 primary. Newcastle County Executive Matt Meyer, Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long, and recent entrant Collin O'Mara, a former state official and the CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, are vying for the Democratic nomination. Meyer is the early fundraising leader, with \$1.7 million in the bank on Dec. 31. Hall-Long, whose campaign was mired in financial irregularities last year, had \$688,000. O'Mara, the husband of 2018 Maryland gubernatorial candidate Krish Vignarajah, had \$870,000 but most of that came from a \$750,000 personal loan to the campaign. While Delaware is a small state with a penchant for retail politics, roughly two-thirds of its population is covered by the pricey Philadelphia media market, so money matters. Republicans don't have a candidate yet. Solid Democratic.

Indiana. Open; Eric Holcomb (R) term-limited. May 7 primary. Sen. Mike Braun has been the candidate to beat since the beginning of the race, but he has to survive a crowded GOP primary field that includes two other wealthy candidates — real estate CEO Brad Chambers and investor Eric Doden — as well as Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch.

Continued on page 8

Pennsylvania: Primary Results Set Stage for Key Battleground

By Nathan L. Gonzales

With Pennsylvania's primary in the books, there's clarity for the general elections in the Keystone State. And with competitive races for the White House, Senate and House, Pennsylvania stands to play a key role in which party is in power next year.

Senate. Democratic Sen. Bob Casey Jr. and Republican Dave McCormick ran unopposed in their respective primaries, but the matchup is officially set in one of the most important races in the fight for control of the Senate. With Republicans likely to pick up a seat in West Virginia, Democrats can't afford to lose any more of their own, including Casey.

With those high stakes, the DSCC greeted McCormick to the general election with an ad questioning the Republicans' rural roots and highlighting his business ties to China. Republicans are attacking Casey as a hypocrite for talking about being independent, but voting close to lockstep with President Joe Biden. There will be plenty more attacks over the next six months. Tilt Democratic.

1st District (Northern Philadelphia suburbs) Brian Fitzpatrick, R, re-elected 55%. Biden 52%. The congressman took pro-life activist Mark Houck seriously — and a Democratic group tried to boost Houck — but Fitzpatrick prevailed, and it wasn't particularly close in the end. Fitzpatrick won 61-39 percent with 99 percent of the estimated vote counted. For some context, Fitzpatrick won his 2022 primary, 66-34 percent. Democrat Ashley Ehasz, who lost to Fitzpatrick by 10 points in the 2022 general election, didn't have a primary this time. She'll be an underdog again this year. Likely Republican.

7th District (Lehigh Valley) Susan Wild, D, re-elected 51%. Biden 49.7%. State Rep. Ryan Mackenzie defeated Air Force veteran Kevin Dellicker 43-34 percent in the GOP primary. Mackenzie had help from

the Koch-affiliated Americans for Prosperity. The winner will take on Wild, who had more than \$2.6 million in the bank on March 31. But Biden narrowly carried the district in 2020, and may indeed lose it to Trump this November, making Wild's task more difficult. Tilt Democratic.

8th District (Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and northeastern Pennsylvania) Matt Cartwright, D, re-elected 51%. Trump 51%. Kuharchik Construction CEO Robert Bresnahan won the GOP nomination without opposition. With his personal money and union ties, GOP strategists are confident he'll be a better challenger than political consultant Jim Bogner, who has lost the last two races to Cartwright. But defeating the congressman won't be easy. Even though Cartwright represents a district Trump won narrowly in 2020, the Democratic incumbent has weathered plenty of attacks in the past. Cartwright had \$3.2 million in the bank on April 3 for this race, and Pennsylvania media markets will be saturated with presidential and Senate ads, so this will be an expensive race for Bresnahan and the GOP. Tilt Democratic.

10th District (Harrisburg and York areas) Scott Perry, R, re-elected 54%. Trump 51%. Former WGAL anchor Janelle Stelson finished ahead of former TOPGUN pilot Mike O'Brien 44-23 percent with 99 percent of the estimated vote counted in the Democratic primary. Democrats believe Stelson's past as a Republican could be an asset in the district and that Perry is vulnerable on his attempt to overturn the 2020 election. But the district supported Trump in the past and may very well do so again, making Stelson's task more difficult. Lean Republican.

12th District (Pittsburgh and eastern suburbs) Summer Lee, D, elected 56%. Biden 59%. Lee fended off Edgewood Councilwoman Bhavini Patel 61-39 percent in the Democratic primary. The congresswoman also had to deal with GOP mega-donor Jeff Yass, who funded the pro-Patel super PAC. Solid Democratic.

17th District (Western and northern Pittsburgh suburbs) Chris Deluzio, D, elected 53%. Biden 52%. State Rep. Rob Mercuri won the GOP nomination without opposition and will face the congressman in this suburban district. Republicans want to run the same playbook against Deluzio as they did last cycle, painting him as too liberal for the district, while Democrats will use access to abortion against Mercuri, as they will in dozens of districts across the country. Deluzio had \$1.5 million in the bank on April 3 compared to Mercuri's \$541,000. Lean Democratic.

Report Shorts

New Jersey's 10th District. Rep. Donald Payne, Jr., a six-term Democrat, died on Wednesday. Because the primary is in just a few weeks, county party leaders will select a replacement nominee to succeed Payne in the Newark district. Gov. Phil Murphy can call a special election to fill out the remainder of Payne's term, but it may not take place for four or five months. Solid Democratic.

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2024 Presidential Battlegrounds: Georgia

By Bradley Wascher

Georgia emerged as a top presidential battleground in 2020 and subsequently became ground zero for former President Donald Trump’s efforts to overturn the election. Unsurprisingly the state, currently rated as a Toss-up, is shaping up to be competitive again this November.

President Joe Biden carried the Peach State by one-third of a point in 2020, putting it in the Democrats’ column for the first time in decades; a string of Senate wins and success in the suburbs have boosted optimism further. Yet Georgia still slightly favors Republicans overall, and prophecies inspired by the state’s changing demographics haven’t yet come true — at least not enough to fully neutralize the GOP’s advantage among rural white voters.

Georgia in Recent Elections

Prior to 2020, Republicans had carried Georgia in eight of the last nine presidential elections (the exception being 1992). Trump won the state by 5 points in 2016, and although his margin was similar to the two previous GOP victories (8 points in 2012 and 5 points in 2008), the election exposed cracks for Republicans. Hillary Clinton made meaningful gains in the fast-growing and diverse suburbs of Atlanta, despite underperforming Barack Obama virtually everywhere else in the country.

This suburban shift became national news in 2017, when Democratic now-Sen. Jon Ossoff narrowly lost a super-hyped special election in

the 6th Congressional district located north of Atlanta. Then in 2018, Democrats flipped that district, almost took the neighboring 7th District, and made modest gains in the state legislature. Most prominently, Democrat Stacey Abrams became a breakout star in her campaign for governor, and although she eventually lost to Republican Brian Kemp by 1.4 points, Abrams’s 2018 efforts laid important groundwork for her party in the form of voter engagement and registration (even if her future campaigns and projects have somewhat dimmed her star power).

Democrats finally broke through statewide in 2020, with Biden winning the Peach State by 0.3 points and Democratic candidates flipping both Senate seats after suspenseful runoffs in the new year. Biden’s razor-thin margin — just 11,779 votes statewide — quickly put Georgia at the center of Trump’s efforts to overturn his loss, with the incumbent president asking state officials including Governor Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to “find” votes for him. Republicans fared better in 2022 with Trump not on the ballot, carrying Georgia’s eight statewide offices by an average of 7 points (compared to 4 points in 2018 and 13 points in 2014). The one victorious statewide Democrat last cycle was Sen. Raphael Warnock, who earned a full term by defeating Republican Herschel Walker, a former football star turned underwhelming candidate, 51.4-48.6 percent in a runoff.

According to Baseline, the typical Democrat in Georgia is expected to earn 47.3 percent against the typical Republican’s 51.8 percent. Republicans’ advantage of 4.5 points in our 2022 Baseline calculations (which are based on a trimmed average of all statewide and federal races between 2016 and 2022) is much narrower than the GOP’s 12.5-point edge in 2016 (using all elections between 2010 and 2016). In fact, by this metric Georgia has shifted more than any other battleground state in the last eight years.

Demographic Trends: Race and Education

To understand elections in Georgia, look toward Atlanta and its suburbs. The Peach State has seen a large migration of people from other states and countries, meaning the population has become much more diverse in a relatively short time: between 2010 and 2020, the number of Black residents grew by 15 percent, from 3 million to 3.5 million, while the Hispanic population increased by 22 percent and the number of Asians rose 42 percent. Moreover, seven of the nation’s 10 counties with the fastest-growing Black populations are near Atlanta, and Rockdale County’s share of Black residents leapt from 18 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2020 — the largest percentage point increase of any county in the country. In total, Georgia’s population is 50 percent non-Hispanic white, 31 percent Black, 10 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 4 percent Asian.

Another key factor is educational attainment. Trump famously made big gains in 2016 among white voters without a college degree, but suffered among voters who had finished college. Approximately 35 percent of Georgia residents have a bachelor’s degree — in line with the national average — while the share in Atlanta suburbs can exceed 45 or even 50 percent.

As a result, suburban counties — including Georgia’s Cherokee, Cobb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Henry, Gwinnett, and Walton — have trended away from Republicans in the Trump era. Clinton was the first Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976 to carry Cobb and Gwinnett counties, each

Continued on page 4

2024 Senate Ratings

Toss-Up (3)

AZ Open (Sinema, I) Tester (D-Mont.)
Brown (D-Ohio)

Tilt Democratic (3) Tilt Republican

MI Open (Stabenow, D)
Casey (D-Penn.)
Rosen (D-Nev.)

Lean Democratic (1) Lean Republican

Baldwin (D-Wis.)

Likely Democratic (1) Likely Republican (1)

MD Open (Cardin, D) Cruz (R-Texas)

Solid Democratic (14) Solid Republican (11)

CA Open (Butler, D) IN Open (Braun, R)
DE Open (Carper, D) UT Open (Romney, R)
Cantwell (D-Wash.) WV Open (Manchin, D)
Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) Barrasso (R-Wyo.)
Heinrich (D-N.M.) Blackburn (R-Tenn.)
Hirono (D-Hawaii) Cramer (R-N.D.)
Kaine (D-Va.) Fischer (R-Neb.)
King (I-Maine) Hawley (R-Mo.)
Klobuchar (D-Minn.) Ricketts (R-Neb.)
Menendez (D-N.J.) Scott (R-Fla.)
Murphy (D-Conn.) Wicker (R-Miss.)

Sander (I-Vt.)
Warren (D-Mass.)
Whitehouse (D-R.I.)

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

Continued from page 3

swinging by around 15 points from 2012. Clinton also made big gains in Fulton County, which includes Atlanta and some of its suburbs. According to the ACS, 39 percent in Gwinnett County and 49 percent in Cobb County have a bachelor’s degree, while Fulton County is 58 percent college educated, the most of any county in Georgia. According to exit polls, Trump won white voters with a college degree in Georgia by 11 points, 55-44, while this group preferred Biden by 3 points nationwide.

These counties are also quickly growing: between 2010 and 2020, Fulton County’s population increased by 16 percent (an additional 200,000 residents), Gwinnett’s population increased by 19 percent (from 805,000 to 957,000), and Cobb’s population increased by 11 percent (to 766,000). Fulton County’s northern suburbs (including Sandy Springs, Alpharetta, and Johns Creek) have moved dramatically to the left in the Trump era, despite being ruby-red during the Obama years.

Politically, this population growth favors Democrats. In Forsyth County, a heavily Republican suburban/exurban county about half an hour northeast of Atlanta, Democrats are nowhere close to winning, but they have made major gains the past few cycles. Obama finished with just 18 percent here in 2012, then Clinton improved to 24 percent in 2016, and Biden pulled 33 percent in 2020 (the highest support for a Democratic presidential candidate in Forsyth County since 1980). Abrams earned 28 percent in 2018 and 27 percent in 2022, only a 1-point decrease countywide despite underperforming by 6 points statewide. Demographically, Forsyth County is less racially diverse than the state overall yet it has a high Asian population — among the fastest-growing of any county in the United States. 57 percent of adults have a college degree, and incomes are higher here compared to statewide and nationally. Based on our estimates, Republicans need to win this county by around 35 points in order to carry the state.

Traveling beyond Atlanta, Georgia’s assorted cities and college towns (including Augusta and Macon, as well as Athens with the University

of Georgia and Savannah with SCAD) generally display a more muted version of the shifts seen in the suburbs, having moved toward Democrats by approximately 10 points since 2016. Republicans, on the other hand, have traditionally enjoyed support throughout the north and south. These counties are typically more rural, and many also tend to be heavily white; GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene’s 14th District is located in the northwest. One lasting concern that has not yet fully come true for Republicans is that they’ve begun to “max out” their support among these voters, and therefore cannot make significant gains with them in future elections.

An important group in 2022 was voters who split their tickets between Kemp and Warnock. Most Kemp-Warnock voters came from the high-income suburbs north of Atlanta, particularly in Gwinnett and Cobb Counties, according to a *New York Times* analysis, and many of these crossover precincts also previously flipped from Trump to Biden in 2020. Warnock also outran Abrams in 2022 in DeKalb, Henry, Douglas, and Newton counties by a combined 13,090 votes — hardly more than Biden’s margin statewide of 11,779 votes.

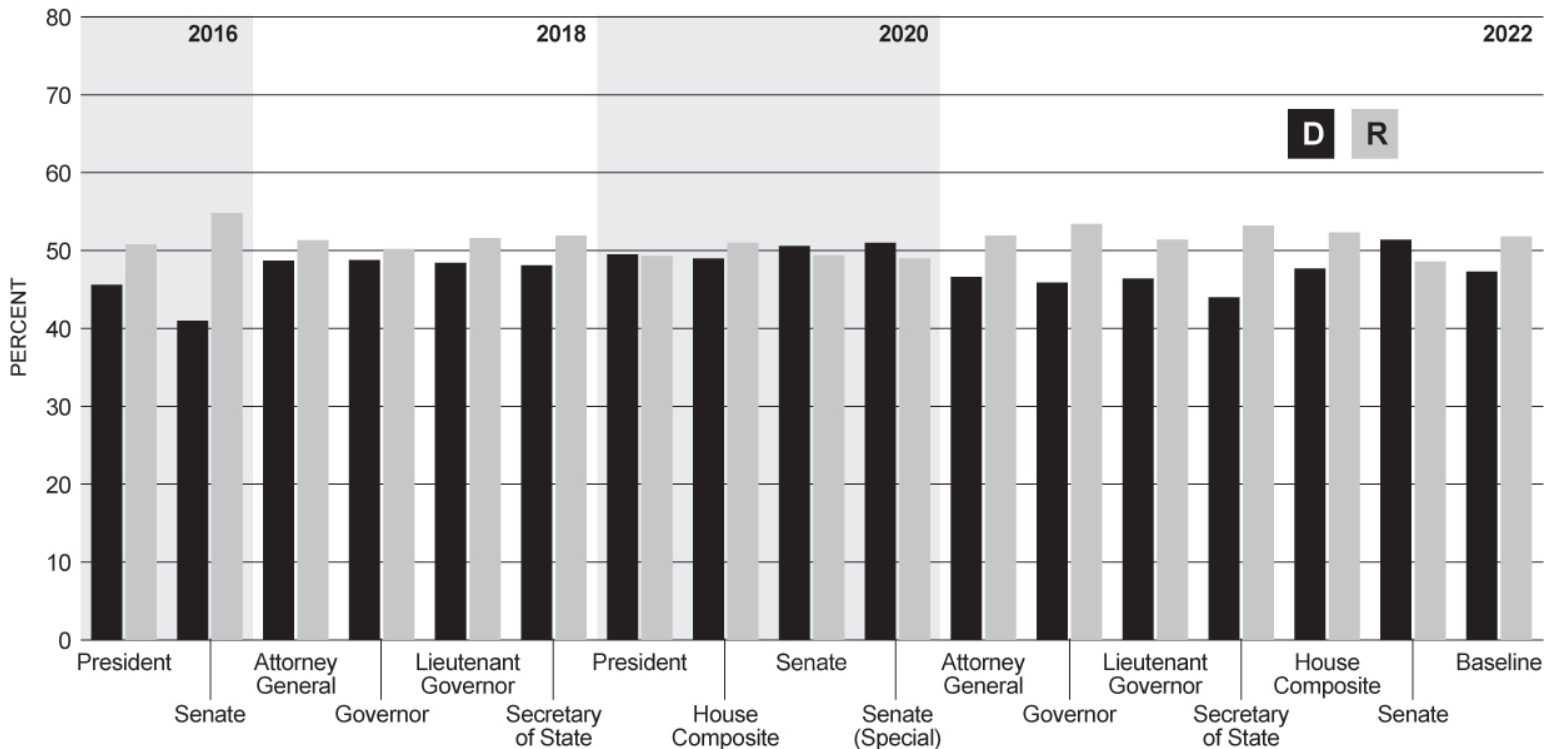
Early Polls

In early Georgia polls, Trump is leading by approximately 3–6 points. The 538 average shows Trump+5.9, while the RealClearPolitics average suggests Trump+4 and the Decision Desk HQ / The Hill average is Trump+4.6. Since mid-March, Fox News found Trump up 7 points, whereas Morning Consult / Bloomberg saw Trump+8, the *Wall Street Journal* reported Trump ahead by 3 points, and Marist College measured Trump+5.

Early polls nationwide and in Georgia show Trump drawing around 1-in-5 Black voters, although in 2020 he won just half as many. This disconnect between history and crosstabs has sparked one of the more heated polling debates so far this cycle. That’s a discussion for another day, but one thing is apparent: if this realignment of Black voters toward

Continued on page 5

Statewide Election Results for Georgia



Continued from page 4

Republicans were to happen, it might not necessarily materialize in the Atlanta suburbs. Many of those counties rank among the highest in the state for educational attainment and have soured on Trump specifically more than they have on the GOP as a whole.

Instead, Trump would probably see improvements in the (otherwise stable) Black Belt and central Piedmont region. Many counties here have large shares of Black voters, yet substantially lower college attainment rates, and are generally more friendly for Republicans. In 2022, a few counties even split their ballots for Warnock and Kemp: Baldwin County (42 percent Black, 24 percent bachelor's degree, Republican+3 Baseline); Jefferson County (52 percent Black, 11 percent bachelor's degree, Democratic+3 Baseline); and Washington County (51 percent Black, 17 percent bachelor's degree, Republican+3 Baseline).

Trump has already demonstrated that he can improve here. Biden won Baldwin, Jefferson, and Washington counties by around 3 points, slightly lower than Clinton's 4.4-point margin four years earlier. East of Jefferson, Trump flipped Burke County in 2020, where 45 percent of the population is Black and 14.7 percent have a college degree, after losing it four years earlier. Burke County's partisan lean according to Baseline is about 1 point to the right of Georgia, suggesting a GOP benchmark in the mid single digits.

The Bottom Line

Georgia was the closest state by percentage point margin in 2020, and it will almost surely be close again in 2024.

Thanks to their recent statewide pickups, Democrats now have a few examples of how to carve out a win in the Peach State. In 2020, high turnout made the difference: Biden earned 130,000 more votes than Clinton in Clayton, Fulton, and DeKalb counties. In the Senate runoffs

two months later, Warnock and Ossoff kept Black turnout high while Republicans failed to re-engage rural voters. In 2022, Warnock persuaded some GOP supporters to split tickets against Herschel Walker by highlighting Walker's Trump's endorsement and personal baggage.

Based on our calculations, in order to carry the state Biden would need to win Cobb County by approximately 15 points, Gwinnett County by a couple points more, and Henry County by at least 20 points, while also extending a 70-point margin in DeKalb County.

Republicans will pray for deflated Democratic enthusiasm in the suburbs, but they will have to keep their own turnout high in rural counties, including among white voters in the northwest. The GOP did well in 2018 due to strong support in the south, and many of these counties continued to reward Republicans in 2022, but the everlasting theory remains that the GOP has come close to "maxing out" its support in these counties.

It's also worth remembering that the Peach State is not a balanced prize in the Electoral College. After all, Biden could lose Georgia's 16 electoral votes and still reach 270 overall, with some room to spare: if Biden repeated the 2020 map exactly except for Georgia, he would earn 287 votes. By contrast, Georgia is more vital for Trump — this state wasn't even a top concern for Republicans until after 2016, then they lost it the very next cycle. If Trump falls short in Georgia again this November, his next-closest path would be to hold everything else from 2020 while also taking back Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin (three other states currently rated as Toss-ups by *Inside Elections*).

Such a scenario would have been hard to believe 10 years ago: Republicans relying on the "blue wall" and Democrats depending on the Deep South? But the reality is, Trump accelerated demographic trends surrounding education and race, and Georgia is a battleground at the intersection.



Arizona 6: Twice the Charm in Tucson?

By Jacob Rubashkin

The Arizona Supreme Court's recent abortion ruling put a national spotlight on the Grand Canyon State ahead of the 2024 elections. Beyond the highly competitive and consequential presidential and Senate contests taking place this fall, there are two House races in Arizona that could have national implications on the fight for the majority.

One of those contests, in Arizona's 6th District, features a rematch from 2022, when Republican Juan Ciscomani and Democrat Kirsten Engel met in one of the closest races of that cycle. Just a few thousand votes separated the two.

With Democrats needing a net gain of just four seats to reclaim the majority, their easiest path is through the 18 districts Joe Biden would have carried in the 2020 presidential election. That includes the 6th (albeit narrowly) and unlike in 2022, national Democrats expect to be fully engaged in this desert seat.

The Lay of the Land

Nestled in Arizona's southeastern corner, near the Mexico border to the south and New Mexico to the east, the 6th District is a predominantly Tucson-based seat but also includes rural areas east of the city. Roughly 72 percent of the largely suburban district lives in the Tucson metro area. The

district includes a sliver of the US-Mexico border east of Douglas, Arizona.

The citizen voting age population of the district is 68 percent white and 22 percent non-white Hispanic, per 2022 Census data. Roughly 40 percent of the adult population has a college degree, slightly higher than the national average of 36 percent, and with a median household income of \$71,000 the district ranks in the middle of all House seats.

Politically, the district is among the most closely divided in the nation. It's tied for the fourth most evenly split district in the country, according to Inside Elections' Baseline, with less than 1 point separating the two parties' performance over the last four cycles.

Joe Biden would have carried it by just a few hundred votes in the 2020 presidential election, 49.3-49.2 percent. In the 2020 Senate race, Mark Kelly carried the district by just 1 point, 50.5-49.5 percent, over Sen. Martha McSally.

Democratic strength is concentrated in Pima County, which casts about three-quarters of the district's votes. In 2020, Biden carried Pima by 9 points while losing the district's other four counties.

In 2022, Democrats did better. In the Senate race, Kelly (who lives in Tucson and whose wife, Gabby Giffords, once held this district) led the way against Republican Blake Masters, carrying the seat 54-44 percent.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Katie Hobbs beat Kari Lake, 52-48 percent, in the gubernatorial race. The one statewide GOP candidate to carry the seat was state Treasurer Kimberly Yee, who won it 54-46 percent.

But unlike in 2020, when the district's results were a touch more red than the statewide outcomes (Biden won by 0.3 points, Kelly by 2.3 points), in 2022 the district voted to the left of the state overall (Kelly won statewide by 5 points and Hobbs by 0.6 percent).

The Republican Incumbent

Ciscomani, 41, was born in Sonora, the Mexican state that borders Arizona, and immigrated with his family to Tucson at age 11, where his dad drove a bus to support their family.

Ciscomani is a 2003 graduate of Pima Community College and a 2005 graduate of University of Arizona, where he worked after graduation for eight years as a program development specialist. In 2011, he also began working as the membership director of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

In 2015, Ciscomani became an adviser to Republican Gov. Doug Ducey, where he remained until running for Congress.

Ciscomani's 2022 run was his second bid for office. In 2008, he lost a campaign for a Democratic-leaning state House district in Tucson, finishing with just 15 percent in the four-person race for the multi-member district. His 2022 bid fared better. Armed with an endorsement from then-Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and backed by \$744,000 in outside support from the Congressional Leadership Fund and a Ken Griffin-backed super PAC, Ciscomani won 47 percent of the GOP primary vote.

He entered the general election as a top priority for House Republicans: young, telegenic, and with the potential to make history as the first immigrant member of Congress from Arizona at a time when

Republicans were looking to gain momentum among Hispanic and Latino voters.

And the 6th District, evenly divided and up for grabs with incumbent Democrat Ann Kirkpatrick not seeking re-election, was among the lowest-hanging fruit for Republicans in their quest for the majority.

In the general election, GOP outside groups spent roughly \$5.4 million to support Ciscomani's bid, while Democratic outside groups, on defense across the country, did not spend on Engel's behalf. Ultimately, Ciscomani won by 1.4 points, 50.7-49.3 percent. The 5,232-vote margin made it among the closest races in the country.

In Congress, Ciscomani sits on the Appropriations and Veterans Affairs committees, and is a member of the Problem Solvers Caucus and the Republican Main Street Partnership. He was chosen to deliver the Republicans' Spanish-language response to Biden's State of the Union in 2023.

His campaign team includes general consultant Daniel Scarpinato (Ducey's former chief of staff), media consultant Larry McCarthy of McCarthy Hennings Whalen, and New Mexico-based pollster Nicole McCluskey of Public Opinion Strategies.

The Democratic Challenger

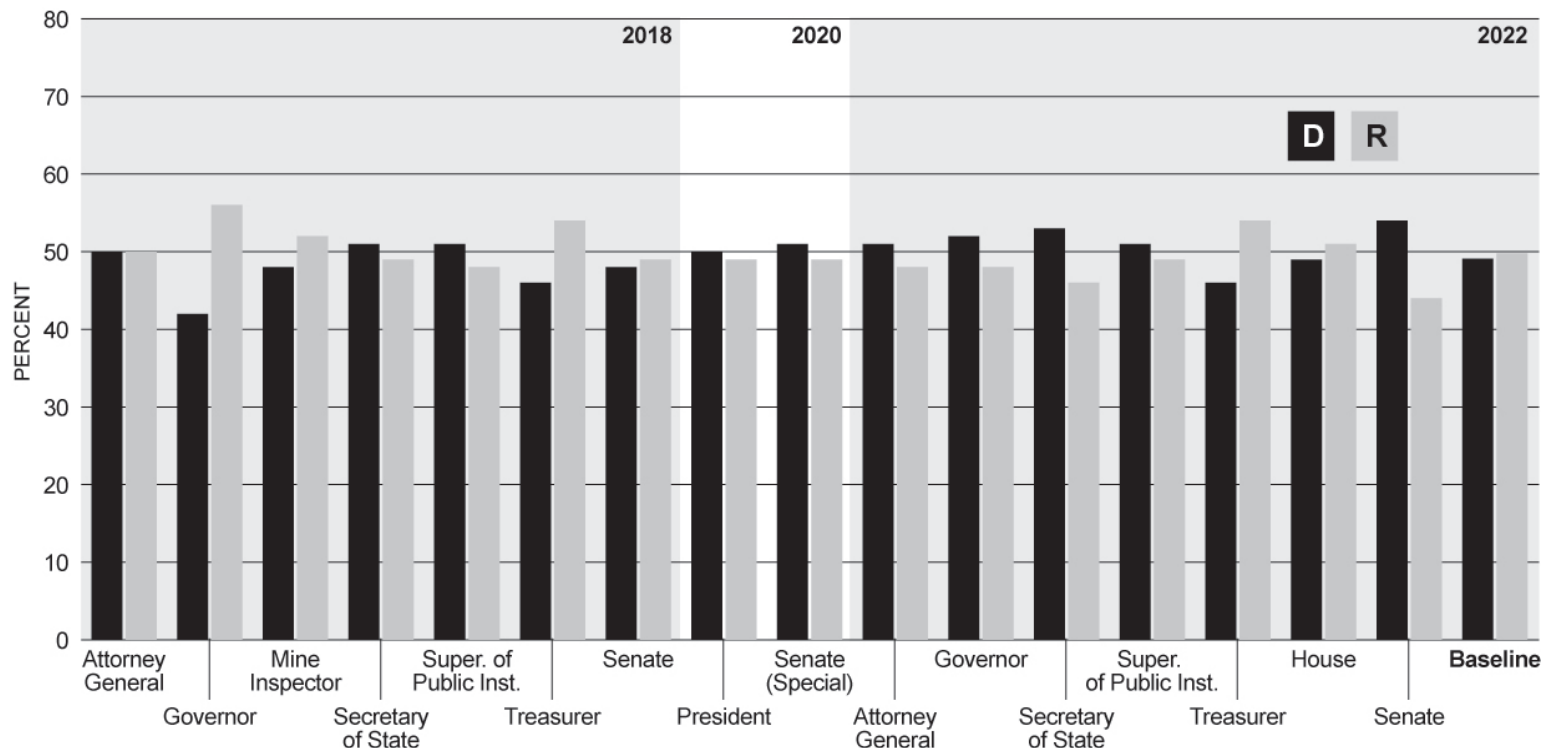
Engel, 62, was born in Chicago and graduated from Brown University in 1983 and Northwestern law school in 1986. She worked briefly for the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund before spending eight years as a law professor at Tulane in the 1990s, and then five years in the Massachusetts attorney general's office working on environmental issues.

In 2005, Engel moved to Tucson to take a position at the University of Arizona law school, where she continues to teach.

Engel's first run for office came in 2016, when she narrowly won a state House district in Tucson, outpacing an incumbent Democrat by

Continued on page 7

Statewide Election Results for Arizona's 6 District



Continued from page 6

just 0.6 percent in a multi-member district. Two years later, Engel won a more comfortable re-election by 8 points, and in 2020, she ran for state Senate, winning her primary unopposed and easily clinching the general election, 59-41 percent.

In 2021, she resigned from her state Senate seat to focus on her bid for Congress. In the Democratic primary, she faced state Rep. Daniel Hernandez. Hernandez had a bit of a national profile — he was an intern for then-Rep. Giffords when she was shot and administered first aid on the scene — but Engel, who focused her campaign on abortion rights, won a convincing 59-35 percent primary victory.

In the general election, while Engel managed to run more closely to Ciscomani in hard-dollar candidate fundraising, she did not receive support from outside groups despite her campaign’s polling consistently showing a tied race.

Engel’s campaign team includes media consultant Lucinda Guinn of Ralston, Lapp, Guinn, and pollster Anna Greenberg of GQR Research. Mission Control does her direct mail.

How It Plays Out

Strategists from both parties anticipate a closely fought campaign, and one that will see much more national attention than last cycle.

Engel’s allies are excited for her to litigate more negatives against Ciscomani now that she will have more resources.

Abortion will again be a focus, especially with the renewed attention following a state supreme court decision reinstating a highly restrictive 1864 abortion ban (the state legislature may soon overturn that law and replace it with a 15-week restriction). While Engel ran ads attacking Ciscomani on abortion rights last election, she and her allies will use the incumbent’s vote in committee to ban mail-order mifepristone as part

of a larger agriculture bill to further paint him as anti-abortion. Ciscomani, who put out a statement disagreeing with the state supreme court decision, may take to the airwaves himself to defend his stance on abortion; he says he opposes a national ban and backed the state’s 15-week ban.



Kirsten Engel

Courtesy Engel Campaign

But Democrats are also telegraphing that they will introduce new messages against Ciscomani and attempt to pierce his image as a moderate by digging into his past. Engel’s allies are especially interested in his involvement in the Patriot Academy, a conservative organization that runs “Biblical citizenship” classes and combination handgun and Constitution courses for Arizonans as young as 11.

GOP strategists see Engel as a weak opponent and believe they have her dead to rights on several key issues they intend to litigate in paid media: defunding the police, and the border.

Border issues may be a salient hit against Engel, given the district’s location and recent nationwide polling that suggests immigration has rocketed to the top of voters’ concerns alongside the economy. Ciscomani and his allies will make extensive use of video clips of Engel from 2022 saying that she does not believe Arizona has an “immigration crisis.”

And national GOP strategists see Ciscomani as uniquely well-positioned to talk about immigration because of his own background.

In a 2022 forum, Engel was asked if she supported “a reduction in police budgets to fund social programs and including a shift of some police responsibilities to social workers.” She replied that she agreed with that statement, and a clip of the exchange was used in \$1.5 million worth of GOP TV ads. But none of the ads included the full question or answer, and one particularly egregious NRCC ad edited the exchange to make it appear as if Engel was directly asked “do you support defund the police?” and responded “yes.”

The national and state-level environment will go a long way in determining the course of the race, and both parties have reason for optimism.

Continued on page 8

2024 House Ratings

Toss-Up (5D, 5R)

CA 13 (Duarte, R)	NC 1 (Davis, D)
CA 27 (Garcia, R)	NY 4 (D’Esposito, R)
CO 8 (Caraveo, D)	NY 17 (Lawler, R)
MI 7 (Open; Slotkin, D)	OR 5 (Chavez-DeRemer, R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)	WA 3 (Perez, D)

Tilt Democratic (8D, 1R)

AK AL (Peltola, D)
CA 47 (Open; Porter, D)
MI 8 (Open; Kildee, D)
NY 22 (Williams, R)
OH 13 (Sykes, D)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)
PA 7 (Wild, D)
PA 8 (Cartwright, D)
VA 7 (Open; Spanberger, D)

Tilt Republican (9R)

AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)
CA 22 (Valadao, R)
CA 41 (Calvert, R)
IA 3 (Nunn, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
NY 19 (Molinaro, R)
VA 2 (Kiggans, R)

Lean Democratic (7D)

CT 5 (Hayes, D)	NH 1 (Pappas, D)
IL 17 (Sorensen, D)	NY 18 (Ryan, D)
ME 2 (Golden, D)	PA 17 (Deluzio, D)
MN 2 (Craig, DFL)	

Lean Republican (8R)

CO3 (Open; Boebert, R)	MT 1 (Zinke, R)
CA 45 (Steel, R)	NY 1 (LaLota, R)
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)	PA 10 (Perry, R)
MI 10 (James, R)	TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)

Likely Democratic (16D, 2R)

AL 2 (Open; Moore, R)	OH 1 (Landsman, D)
CA 49 (Levin, D)	OR 4 (Hoyle, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)	OR 6 (Salinas, D)
KS 3 (Davids, D)	TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
LA 6 (Graves, R)	VA 10 (Open; Wexton, D)
MD 6 (Open; Trone, D)	WA 8 (Schrier, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)	
NH 2 (Open; Kuster, D)	
NV 1 (Titus, D)	
NV 3 (Lee, D)	
NV 4 (Horsford, D)	
NY 3 (Suoizzi, D)	

Likely Republican (8R, 3D)

CA 3 (Kiley, R)	NC 14 (Open; Jackson, D)
CA 40 (Kim, R)	PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
FL 13 (Luna, R)	SC 1 (Mace, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)	WI 1 (Steil, R)
NC 6 (Open; Manning, D)	WI 3 (Van Orden, R)
NC 13 (Open; Nickel, D)	

	GOP	DEM
Solid	188	175
Likely/Lean/Tilt	28	34
Total	216	209
Toss-up		10
Needed for majority		218

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

Continued from page 7

Democrats say that the measure enshrining abortion access in state law, which is likely to appear on the ballot in November, is a net positive for Engel. And while Biden continues to struggle, Democrats are excited for the Senate race, which pits Rep. Ruben Gallego against Kari Lake, who did not fare well in this district in 2022. “If it were Biden and Trump and nobody else,” said one Democratic strategist, “it would be tougher.”

Republicans are more mixed on the effects of races higher up on the ballot, but point out that Ciscomani outperformed most other Republicans on the ballot last cycle. In 2022, Ciscomani had a Vote Above Replacement (VAR) score of 1, which means he outperformed a typical GOP candidate by a single point.

“You probably won’t see Ciscomani campaigning alongside Lake and Trump like you will other candidates,” said one GOP strategist, “but that doesn’t mean there aren’t synergies.”

Some Republicans are excited to have Trump back at the top of the ticket. Biden is trailing Trump in Arizona polls, and could lose this district to Trump in the fall. If he does, that will make this more difficult for Engel.

One Republican strategist expressed belief that the presidential election would result in a favorable turnout environment for Ciscomani, especially in the more rural areas of the district. Turnout in the midterm was extremely high. The vote total in the 6th was 80 percent of the total in 2020, ranking it among the top 20 districts, but was highest (80.7 percent of 2020) in Pima and Pinal counties, where Engel did best, and lower in the rest of the district (77 percent of 2020). While Pima and Pinal make up the vast majority of votes, even a small boost in the rest of the district could give Ciscomani a greater cushion.

The Financial Picture

Democratic strategists believe that Engel’s loss can be almost entirely attributed to the spending disparity she faced in the general election. Outside groups — fearful of a wipeout, focused primarily on incumbent protection and perhaps skeptical of their own data — funneled resources to protect incumbents such as Arizona Rep. Greg Stanton, who received \$5.6 million in support from the DCCC and House Majority PAC and won by 12 points, rather than challengers such as Engel.

This cycle will be different. House Majority PAC, which is aligned

Continued from page 1

Chambers (who has loaned his campaign \$8 million), Doden (whose parents have funneled millions into his bid), and Braun have dominated the airwaves so far with nearly \$30 million in paid advertising between the three of them. Both Chambers and Doden (and several outside groups) have launched attack ads against Braun citing his 2020 comments in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. While Braun has run negative ads on each of them, Chambers and Doden have not attacked each other.

Crouch has been quieter on the air, spending just \$3.7 million through April 23, but has the most money to spend in the closing weeks of the race; she reported more than \$3 million in cash on hand on March 31. She could use those funds to make a late push, but time is running out for her to catch Braun, who benefits from facing a fractured field. Former state Attorney General Curtis Hill is also running but not expected to be a

with Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, has reserved \$2.4 million in TV ads for the fall, and the DCCC is likely to engage as well. Advancing AZ, a Democratic 501(c)4 group that does not have to disclose its donors, has already spent more than \$2 million on anti-Ciscomani advertising.

Not only will Engel benefit from outside engagement, but she’ll also have more financial firepower herself; in 2022 she raised \$2.5 million



Courtesy Ciscomani Campaign

Juan Ciscomani

overall, about \$1 million of which she spent on her primary. This cycle, she has already raised \$2.5 million. Notably, she nearly doubled Ciscomani’s fundraising in the first three months of the year, pulling in \$1.18 million to his \$635,000.

Republican strategists are not yet concerned about Ciscomani’s financial position; he had \$2.5 million in cash on hand to Engel’s \$1.9 million on March 31, and will also have outside support in the fall. Griffin, the GOP mega donor who helped Ciscomani in his 2022 primary, has already given \$1 million to the Congressional Leadership Fund earmarked for the freshman.

And the airwaves in Arizona will be incredibly saturated due to the top-tier presidential and Senate races, which will blunt any financial advantage Democrats may have by raising rates for outside groups.

The Bottom Line

The race for Arizona’s 6th District contains many of the biggest storylines of the 2024 election. It is among the most evenly divided seats in the nation, and will be one of a dozen rematches from close 2022 races. As a border district in Arizona, it sits at the intersection of two of the top issues at play this cycle, immigration and abortion.

While Democrats don’t need to flip the 6th to secure narrow control of the House, their success or failure in Tucson could indicate how well their night is going. A flip here would suggest not only that Biden is holding his own at the top of the ticket, but that House Democrats are likely to have a majority. **IE**

factor. On the Democratic side, former state Superintendent of Education Jennifer McCormick is the presumptive nominee; the former Republican served one term from 2017 to 2021 before switching parties. While a more credible candidate than 2020 nominee Woody Myers, McCormick is a serious underdog in a state that hasn’t elected a Democratic governor since Frank O’Bannon’s re-election in 2000. Solid Republican.

Missouri. Open; Mike Parson (R) term-limited. August 6 primary. State Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft starts out as the polling leader in the GOP primary, which also includes Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe and state Sen. Bill Eigel. But local and national strategists believe he’s a bit of a paper tiger whose advantage stems largely from his last name (his father John was governor, senator, and US Attorney General under George W. Bush). Kehoe, who is personally wealthy, had \$6.3 million

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

in the bank on March 31 between his campaign and an affiliated PAC, while Ashcroft had \$2.5 million and Eigel \$1.7 million — Kehoe also dominated fundraising over the first three months of the year, raising five times as much as Ashcroft, who is not well-liked by the state’s political class. Eigel, a former captain in the Air Force, has a reputation as a bomb-thrower and recently voted against any exceptions to Missouri’s restrictive abortion ban. He polls in third and is not seen as a credible threat for the nomination, especially because he angered Trump-world with his fundraising appeals that made liberal use of the former president and spurred a cease and desist from the Trump campaign’s lawyers. Kehoe is the only candidate to hit the airwaves so far and has been advertising on TV since mid-February.

On the Democratic side, state House Minority Leader Crystal Quade is the initial frontrunner due to her political connections in the state. But Mike Hamra, who owns 200 Wendy’s, Panera and Noodles & Company franchises, made a late entrance into the race and is putting some personal resources toward his effort — \$500,000 through the end of March. Quade may seek to disqualify Hamra from the primary ballot; Missouri law requires gubernatorial candidates to have lived in the state for at least 10 years, but Hamra has spent much of his time in Chicago, where he voted in 2020. A court will likely decide the matter, and either would be a significant underdog in a state that has trended rightward over the past decade. Solid Republican.

Montana. Greg Gianforte (R) elected 2020 (54%). June 4 primary. Gianforte faces a nominal primary challenge from state Rep. Tanner Smith, a construction company CEO who won his current seat running against recreational marijuana. But Smith had just \$19,000 in campaign funds on March 15, compared to Gianforte’s \$763,000 war chest (plus the incumbent’s hefty personal fortune). Democrats look set to nominate Ryan Busse, a former firearms manufacturer turned gun control advocate who most recently served as a senior adviser to gun control group Giffords. While Democrats held the governorship from 2004 to 2020, Republicans have consolidated power in Big Sky County. Gianforte looks like a safe bet for re-election, especially with Busse lagging in fundraising — he had just \$330,000 in the bank on March 15 — and contending with a brutally expensive media landscape thanks to the blockbuster Senate race also taking place in the state. Busse and his allies believe that Gianforte’s property tax hike gives them an opening, but the burden is on Democrats to make this race competitive. Solid Republican.

New Hampshire. Open; Chris Sununu (R) not seeking re-election. June 14 filing deadline. Sept. 10 primary. Sununu’s decision not to seek re-election gives Democrats their best shot at flipping a governor’s mansion this year — the popular scion of the state’s most prominent family consistently won over ticket-splitting voters even as Democrats have carried all other statewide races since 2016. Both parties are dealing with primaries that won’t be resolved for many more months. On the Republican side, former Sen. Kelly Ayotte faces former state Senate president Chuck Morse. On the Democratic side, former Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig faces Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington.

Ayotte outpaced Morse in fundraising through December of last year, reporting \$2.4 million on hand at the beginning of December compared to just \$850,000 for Morse. Craig (\$1 million on hand) and Warmington (\$650,000) were more evenly matched financially. There hasn’t been any recent public polling of the Democratic primary, but a January survey

of the GOP field from University of Massachusetts Lowell found Ayotte with a healthy lead over Morse.

Given the paucity of competitive gubernatorial races this cycle, both parties will be engaged in New Hampshire come the fall. And outside groups probably won’t wait for the primary to be resolved in mid-September before getting involved. Given the priciness of the Boston media market and the handful of competitive House and presidential contests taking place nearby, outside spending could begin as early as June or July. Toss-up.

North Carolina. Open; Roy Cooper (D) term-limited. This race was always going to be the main event of the 2024 gubernatorial cycle, and has not disappointed so far. Since 1992, Republicans have won seven of eight presidential elections in the Tar Heel State, but lost seven of eight



Office of Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson

Mark Robinson

gubernatorial races taking place at the same time. Both parties are looking to buck trends this cycle, but Democrats are feeling more confident about their chances in the governor’s race than at the presidential level. That’s largely a factor of candidate

quality. The Democratic nominee, state Attorney General Josh Stein, has been prepping for a gubernatorial bid since he first won statewide office in 2016, and had amassed a \$12.7 million war chest by mid-February. He’s a protege of Cooper, who outran the top of the ticket in both his 2016 and 2020 gubernatorial runs (as did Stein, on the ballot both times too).

Republicans have nominated Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson as their nominee, a former factory worker whose meteoric rise in politics over the last four years has made him one of the most prominent Black politicians in his party. Robinson has a long history of provocative and offensive remarks about women, LGBTQ people, and Jews, and during his 2020 campaign he advocated for a complete ban on abortion with no exceptions (he now says he supports a ban but with exceptions for rape, incest and life of the mother). Several high profile Republicans, including the two men Robinson beat in the GOP primary, attorney Bill Graham and state Treasurer Bill Folwell, say they won’t support Robinson in the general election, and neither will Sen. Thom Tillis.

But strategists from both parties still expect Robinson to be a highly competitive general election candidate, because the state is so polarized that any Republican can capture at least 48 percent of the vote. Unlike in Pennsylvania, where controversial state Sen. Doug Mastriano dashed Republican hopes at flipping the governor’s mansion in 2022, Republican strategists say Robinson is running a real, well-funded campaign, and is likely to receive outside support, making this a much more competitive race despite some superficial similarities. Toss-up.

North Dakota. Open; Doug Burgum (R) not seeking re-election. June 11 primary. With Burgum bowing out, the GOP primary is the all-important contest in the Peace Garden State. At-Large Rep. Kelly Armstrong and Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller are vying for the nomination and the right to demolish state Sen. Merrill Piepkorn in the general election

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

(Piepkorn is a credible candidate and is well-liked among the state's political class, but the votes just aren't there for a Democrat). Armstrong, who has endorsements from both of the state's senators and three recent statewide election wins under his belt, began the race as the candidate to beat. Miller is personally wealthy but has never actually stood for election before, as she was appointed to her current spot by Burgum, who has endorsed her. Both candidates are advertising on TV, with Miller pressing her financial advantage to introduce herself to voters. She has spent \$1.5 million to Armstrong's \$1 million, but there's a sense among local sources that she hasn't gained much traction. The race is chippy; Armstrong has taken to calling Miller "Tall Tale Tammy" and accusing her of being a moderate and a poseur, while Miller is portraying Armstrong as a Washington swamp creature. Solid Republican.

Utah. Spencer Cox (R) elected 2020 (63%). April 27 nominating convention. June 25 primary. Cox has made some enemies within the Utah GOP, and faces two notable primary challengers on his right flank: state Rep. Phil Lyman, who is best known for being convicted of unlawful protest over federal land management policies and was later pardoned by President Donald Trump; and former state GOP chairman Carson Jorgensen, who is focusing on fiscal responsibility. Cox has already qualified for the primary ballot via signatures, but Lyman and Jorgensen will attempt to secure ballot access at the April 27 convention. Cox has the opportunity to shut them both out then, but the more ideological delegates could rally around one anti-Cox candidate and advance him to a primary, where Cox would be a heavy favorite. A January poll by Dan Jones & Associates for the *Deseret News* found Cox with a 45 point lead. Democratic presumptive nominee Brian King, a state representative, is a more serious candidate for his party than they've had in a decade, but won't win. Solid Republican.

Vermont. Phil Scott (R) elected 2016 (53%), re-elected 2018 (55%), 2020 (73%) and 2022 (71%). May 30 filing deadline. August 13 primary. Scott notoriously waits until the last minute to make his re-election plans public, and probably won't announce one way or the other until late May. If he runs again, he'll romp to victory despite the Green Mountain State's decided Democratic bent. If he doesn't run, Republicans have little chance of holding onto the state. A large Democratic primary could quickly form to succeed Scott — former Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger has expressed interest in running. Esther Charlestin, a co-chair of the Vermont Commission on Women (a nonpartisan government agency) and former Middlebury selectman, is already in the race, and several others could join, including current Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman (the party's 2020 nominee) and former Lt. Gov. Molly Gray. Solid Republican.

Washington. Open; Jay Inslee (D) not seeking re-election. May 24 filing deadline. August 6 primary. Four candidates are vying in the all-party primary to succeed Inslee; the top two finishers in August will advance to the general election regardless of party. State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat, and former Rep. Dave Reichert, a Republican, are the two most likely candidates to advance to the general election; they lead in fundraising and endorsements from party luminaries. But state Sen. Mark Mullet is also running on the Democratic side, and former Richland School Board member Semi Bird is running as a Republican.

Bird has little money but grassroots support, evidenced by his big win at the state GOP's nominating convention — the gathering turned

raucous amid reports that Bird had failed to disclose a financial crime he committed in the 1990s. He would be a much weaker general election nominee than Reichert.

While Washington is a solidly Democratic state at the federal level, it often plays host to close gubernatorial contests. In 2012, when Inslee won his first term, he carried the state by just 3 points even as Barack Obama was winning at the top of the ticket by 15 points. Early polling shows a general election between Ferguson and Reichert would be competitive, but even Republican strategists are careful not to get too optimistic about the Evergreen State, especially after GOP high hopes were dashed in the 2022 Senate race. Reichert's criminal justice background — the former King County sheriff made a name catching a notorious serial killer — makes him a compelling candidate at a time when crime issues are front of mind in the Pacific Northwest. And he's won Democratic-leaning territory before as a congressman. But a highly polarized environment and a focus on abortion rights will complicate his path. Likely Democratic.

West Virginia. Open; Jim Justice (R) term-limited. May 14 primary. State Attorney General Patrick Morrisey is the polling frontrunner, but state Del. Moore Capito and auto dealership owner Chris Miller are both nipping at his heels.

Morrisey has benefitted from several statewide runs (three successful bids for attorney general and one unsuccessful Senate run) that have raised his name ID in the state, and the anti-tax Club for Growth has spent \$6.7 million on pro-Morrisey advertising. Morrisey is also the fundraising leader and reported \$1.7 million in the bank on March 31. Miller, whose mother Carol represents the state's 1st District in Congress, is personally wealthy and has spent \$3 million of his own money on his campaign; he is the campaign's top spender on TV. Miller has been the focus of much of the Club's negative advertising so far. Capito, whose mother Shelley Moore Capito is the state's junior senator and grandfather Arch Moore was governor, has less financial firepower but an allied super PAC is running positive advertising on his behalf. In a sign of his potential strength, the Club recently began advertising negatively against him as well, and Justice recently endorsed him.

Much of the paid media in recent weeks has surrounded trans issues, with each candidate attempting to paint their main opponent as too radical. A fourth Republican, state Secretary of State Mac Warner, has failed to gain traction. On the Democratic side, Huntington Mayor Steve Williams is the likely nominee but will not win the general election. Solid Republican. **IE**

INSIDE ELECTIONS PODCAST



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Podcast Episode 21

Nathan, Jacob and Pamela Wood of the Baltimore Banner discuss the Democratic primary for the Senate in Maryland and a look ahead to the general election against Republican former Gov. Larry Hogan, as well as the Democratic primary in the 3rd District featuring a former Capitol police officer who was at the capitol on Jan. 6.