

# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

MAY 23, 2024

VOLUME 8, NO. 10

## North Carolina 1: Tar Heel Target

By Jacob Rubashkin

North Carolina has been at the center of the House battlefield for much of the last decade, with the evenly divided state often hosting multiple competitive races.

Not so in 2024.

A Republican takeover of the state Supreme Court in 2022 cleared the way for the GOP-controlled state legislature to redraw the Tar Heel state's congressional map from one that produced a tied delegation to one that should result in at least three GOP pickups this fall.

The one remaining competitive seat is the 1st District, where Democrat Don Davis is in his first term. While the state legislature didn't dismantle his district, likely out of worry that the courts would step in to protect a Black-opportunity seat, the new map still makes his path to reelection more difficult.

And unlike in 2022, when he faced one of the most flawed GOP House candidates of the cycle, now Davis has to beat a top GOP recruit — in a district that could easily vote against President Joe Biden at the top of the ticket.

### The Lay of the Land

The 1st District sits in the northeast corner of the state, running along the Virginia border from the Outer Banks west to the Raleigh-Durham suburbs. The 1st also wraps a tendril south around Pitt County (Greenville), picking up Kinston and Goldsboro.

A rural district, roughly 51 percent of the 1st's voting-age population is white, while 40 percent is Black. The counties north of Greenville in the center of the district are predominantly Black, while the Raleigh suburbs are more diverse. Agriculture is still a main economic driver of the district; farmers grow tobacco, broiler chickens, soybeans and sweet potatoes.

The population skews older; with 26.5 percent of the citizen voting-age population over 65 years of age — 4 points higher than the state overall and 5 points higher than the national average. And the 1st is poor.

*Continued on page 5*

This issue brought  
to you by



## 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 (17D, 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)	TX 28 (Cuellar, D)*
MD 6 (Open; Trone, D)	VA 10 (Open; Wexton, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)	VA 8 (Schrier, D)
NH 2 (Open; Kuster, D)	
NV 1 (Titus, D)	
NV 3 (Lee, D)	
NV 4 (Horsford, D)	
NY 3 (Suozi, 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	174
Likely/Lean/Tilt	28	35
Total	216	209
Toss-up		10
Needed for majority		218

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

## Inside Elections Podcast

Check out Nathan, Jacob, and expert guests discussing the latest congressional and presidential campaign news in a nonpartisan, data-driven, and accessible way. It's available on all major podcast platforms and YouTube.

# Primary Results Bring Clarity to November, Next Congress

Primary voters cast their ballots in seven states over the last two weeks, clarifying key general election matchups and nominating a few likely new members of Congress in a key primary.

Even with Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, and West Virginia now in the rearview mirror (except for a Georgia runoff), less than half of the states have completed their primaries this cycle. So it's still going to be an eventful late spring and summer.

There's still more than five months before Election Day and yet 23 candidates effectively have their tickets punched for Capitol Hill. They are likely to be new members of Congress next year because they've already won primaries in districts or states that are either solidly Republican or solidly Democratic and the general election is more of a formality. State Rep. Maxine Dexter of Oregon is the latest addition to that list after winning the primary in a liberal, Portland-area seat.

Overall, 17 states have completed their primaries with 32 states hosting intraparty contests between now and Sept. 10. (Yes, that adds up to 49. Louisiana has its all-party primary on Nov. 5.)

## California.

**20th District Special. (Eastern Central Valley from the Bakersfield to Fresno areas) Vacant; Kevin McCarthy, R, resigned. Trump 61%.**

State Assemblyman Vince Fong won the special election to replace former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, defeating fellow Republican Mike Boudreaux, 60-40 percent. That brings Republicans current majority up to 218-213. (When all the seats are filled, it would be 221-214.)



Vince Fong

Courtesy Fong Campaign

## Georgia.

**3rd District (Southwestern Atlanta exurbs) Open; Drew Ferguson, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 62%. Runoff June 18. Former**

## 2024 Senate Ratings

### Toss-Up (2)

Tester (D-Mont.)      Brown (D-Ohio)

**Tilt Democratic (4)**      **Tilt Republican**

AZ Open (Sinema, I)  
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*

Trump White House political director Brian Jack finished well ahead of the GOP primary field but fell short of the 50 percent threshold to avoid a June 18 runoff. With 99 percent of the vote counted, Jack received 47 percent, while state Sen. Mike Dugan had 25 percent. Jack had an endorsement from Trump and starts the runoff favored. Solid Republican.

*Continued on page 3*

# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

810 7th Street NE, Washington, DC, 20002  
202-546-2822



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



**Jacob Rubashkin**  
Deputy Editor  
jacob@insideelections.com  
@jacobrubashkin



**Bradley Wascher**  
Contributing Analyst  
bradley@insideelections.com  
@bradwascher

**Will Taylor**  
Production Artist  
will@insideelections.com

**Stuart Rothenberg**  
Senior Editor  
stu@insideelections.com

@InsideElections    facebook.com/InsideElections    YouTube.com/@InsideElections

Copyright 2024, Inside Elections LLC. All rights reserved.

Continued from page 2

## Idaho.

**2nd District (Boise and Eastern Idaho) Mike Simpson, R, re-elected 64%. Trump 60%.** The congressman posted another underwhelming primary victory, 55-36 percent, over Scott Cleveland. Last cycle, Simpson faced a higher-profile primary challenge from Club for Growth-backed Bryan Smith, but the result was the same (Simpson received 55 percent). Solid Republican.

## Maryland.

**Senate. Open; Ben Cardin (D) not seeking re-election. Biden 65%.** Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks defeated Rep. David Trone 53-43 percent in the Democratic primary, with 90 percent of the estimated vote counted. Alsobrooks margin of victory is stunning considering Trone spent more than \$61 million of his own money on his bid. But Alsobrooks had a bevy of endorsements and a profile that matches what Democratic primary voters have been looking for in recent cycles. Now Alsobrooks and Democrats have work to do against popular former Gov. Larry Hogan in the general election. Alsobrooks doesn't have the personal wealth that Trone would have brought to the table, but she should be able to cultivate a national fundraising network. If elected, she and Delaware's Lisa Blunt Rochester would be the first two Black women to serve in the Senate at the same time. Likely Democratic.

**2nd District (Northern Baltimore suburbs) Open; Dutch Ruppersberger, D, not seeking re-election. Biden 59%.** Former state delegate/Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski easily won the Democratic primary and will be a member of Congress next year from a district Biden won by 20 points in 2020. Solid Democratic.

**3rd District (Baltimore suburbs in Howard and Anne Arundel counties) Open; John Sarbanes, D, not seeking re-election. Biden 62%.** State Sen. Sarah Elfreth finished ahead of former Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn in a very competitive and expensive Democratic primary. Dunn, who was at the Capitol during the Jan. 6 insurrection, used his national profile to raise millions of dollars, but Elfreth prevailed with help from pro-Israel group UDP. She'll likely be a member of Congress next year. Solid Democratic.

**6th District (Western Maryland and northwestern D.C. exurbs) Open; David Trone, D, running for Senate. Biden 54%.** April McClain-Delaney, a former Biden administration official and the wife of former 6th District Rep. John Delaney, won the Democratic primary and is the heavy favorite in November. She'll face former state Delegate Neil Parrott, who is the GOP nominee for the third consecutive cycle. He received 45 percent (2022) and 39 percent (2020) against Trone the last two times. Likely Democratic.

## Nebraska.

**Senate. Deb Fischer (R) elected 2012 (58%), 2018 (58%).** Fischer won the GOP primary easily with 80 percent and faces a potentially interesting general election. Democrats are not fielding a candidate, and may line up behind an independent contender, Dan Osborn (though they may also field a write-in candidate). Now a steamfitter, Osborn rose to national prominence as the leader of a strike at a Kellogg's factory in 2021 and was encouraged by labor unions in the state to challenge Fischer. Osborn is hoping to run an anti-establishment campaign that will peel off close to 20 percent of Trump supporters from the Republican. But

he'll have to contend with attacks that he's a secret Democrat (he's a former Democrat who voted for Biden and whose campaign team is largely Democratic operatives). Democrats are yet to successfully execute the strategy of running an independent in a red state — Greg Orman in Kansas, Al Gross in Alaska, and Evan McMullin in Utah have all fallen short over the last decade. Solid Republican.

**Senate Special. Pete Ricketts (R) appointed 2023.** Ricketts won the GOP primary, 79-15 percent, against John Glen Weaver, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who won 7 percent in the GOP primary for Nebraska's 1st District in 2022. Weaver had an endorsement from the Nebraska state GOP but didn't raise much money. Ricketts is a wealthy, former two-term governor who will defeat Democrat Preston Love, Jr., a professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha, in the general election. Solid Republican.

**2nd District (Greater Omaha area) Don Bacon, R, re-elected 52%. Biden 52%.** Bacon won the GOP primary, 62-38 percent, over financial salesman Dan Frei, who nearly knocked off then-Rep. Lee Terry in the 2014 GOP primary. Unlike the last three cycles, Democrats did not have a competitive primary and state Sen. Tony Vargas will be the nominee

Continued on page 4

# Likely New Members of the Next Congress

## Candidates Who Won Primaries in Solid or Likely Takeover Races

STATE	DISTRICT	NAME	PARTY
CA	29th	Luz Rivas	D
CA	30th	Laura Friedman	D
CA	31st	Gil Cisneros	D
IN	3rd	Marlin Stutzman	R
IN	6th	Jefferson Shreve	R
IN	8th	Mark Messmer	R
MD	2nd	Johnny Olszewski	D
MD	3rd	Sarah Elfreth	D
NC	6th	Addison McDowell	R
NC	8th	Mark Harris	R
NC	10th	Pat Harrigan	R
NC	13th	Brad Knott	R
NC	14th	Tim Moore	R
OH	2nd	David Taylor	R
OH	6th	Michael Rulli	R
OR	3rd	Maxine Dexter	D
TX	26th	Brandon Gill	R
TX	32nd	Julie Johnson	D
WV	2nd	Riley Moore	R
CA	Senate	Adam Schiff	D
DE	Senate	Lisa Blunt Rochester	D
IN	Senate	Jim Banks	R
NJ	Senate	Andy Kim	D
WV	Senate	Jim Justice	R

Continued from page 3

once again. He lost to Bacon by 2.6 points in 2022. The suburban district should get plenty of attention for the next five months with a competitive House race and a single Electoral College vote on the line. Tilt Republican.

**Oregon.**

**3rd District (Eastern Portland area) Open; Earl Blumenauer, D, not seeking re-election. Biden 73%.** State Rep. Maxine Dexter emerged victorious out of a three-way primary that turned very messy in its closing weeks.

With 64 percent of the estimated vote counted, Dexter leads former Multnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, 51-29 percent. Dexter received \$5.7 million in outside support from two groups: 314 Action, which



Maxine Dexter

Courtesy Dexter Campaign

supports candidates with a science background (Dexter is a physician) and Voters for Responsive Government, a new super PAC set up this month that won't have to report its donors for several more weeks. Jayapal and a third candidate, Eddy Morales, accused both groups of acting as fronts for Republican and pro-Israel donors to meddle in the primary. Solid Democratic.

**4th District (Southern Willamette Valley and southern coast) Val Hoyle, D, elected 51%. Biden 55%.** Republicans have high hopes for retired Air Force Colonel Monique DeSpain but she's leading perennial candidate Amy Ryan Courser by an underwhelming 59-41 percent in the GOP primary, with 79 percent of the estimated vote counted. Republicans believe allegations of misconduct by Hoyle during her time as state labor commissioner makes her uniquely vulnerable. It's an inexpensive district to advertise in the fall, but this primary shows Republicans have a lot of work to do. Likely Democratic.

**5th District (Southern Portland suburbs and central Oregon) Lori Chavez-DeRemer, R, elected 51%. Biden 53%.** National Democrats are likely breathing easier tonight as state Rep. Janelle Bynum demolished 2022 nominee Jamie McLeod-Skinner in the Democratic primary for this seat, 69-31 percent. McLeod-Skinner narrowly lost this district in 2022 and began this primary as the polling frontrunner but came under scrutiny after allegations that she'd abused a campaign staffer last cycle. Bynum had significant support from the DCCC, HMP and super PACs 314 Action and Mainstream Democrats, which spent a combined \$5.7 million on her behalf. Bynum has beaten Chavez-DeRemer twice before in state legislative races, but a nationally prominent House race is a different ballgame. Toss-up.

**6th District (Salem area, Dallas and southwestern Portland suburbs) Andrea Salinas, D, elected 50%. Biden 55%.** It's going to be a rematch between Salinas and Republican Mike Erickson, who hasn't dipped into his pocket this cycle like he did in 2022, when he spent \$2.7 million of his own money to run for this seat. So far, Erickson has raised just \$138,000 and seems more interested in winning his defamation lawsuit against Salinas over an ad she aired in 2022 than he does in beating her for this House seat. Likely Democratic.

**West Virginia.**

**Governor. Open; Jim Justice (R) term-limited.** State Attorney General Patrick Morrisey won a crowded and competitive GOP primary with 33 percent and is the heavy favorite in November against Democrat Steve Williams, the mayor of Huntington. Morrisey topped former state Delegate Moore Capito, son of Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, at 28 percent, car dealership owner Chris Miller (Rep. Carol Miller's son) at 20 percent, and West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner at 16 percent. Morrisey lost to Sen. Joe Manchin by 3 points in the 2018 Senate race and lost a primary for Congress in New Jersey to Mike Ferguson in 2000. This race could get a bit more interesting if Manchin arranges for Democrats to substitute himself as their nominee instead of Williams, something the senator has hinted at in recent days. Solid Republican.

**Senate. Open; Joe Manchin (D) not seeking re-election.** Gov. Jim Justice won the GOP primary 62-27 percent over Rep. Alex Mooney and will likely be coming to Capitol Hill next year with Babydog. Justice will face Democrat Glenn Elliott, the mayor of Wheeling, in the general election, but this should be regarded as a pickup for Republicans, and enough to control the Senate if former President Donald Trump wins the White House once again. Solid Republican.

**1st District (Central and southern West Virginia) Carol Miller, R, re-elected 67% in 2022. Trump 70%.** Despite a challenger with a higher-than-usual profile and concerns that attacks on her son in the gubernatorial race were hurting her, Miller prevailed 62-38 percent in the GOP primary. She defeated former state Delegate Derrick Evans, who served time in prison for his involvement in the Jan. 6 insurrection. Miller shouldn't have any trouble in November. Solid Republican.

**2nd District (Eastern and northern West Virginia) Open; Alex Mooney, R, ran for Senate. Trump 68%.** State treasurer Riley Moore won the GOP primary by more than 20 points and will be a member of Congress next year. He's the nephew of GOP Sen. Shelley Moore Capito. Solid Republican. **IE**

**2024 Gubernatorial Ratings**

Toss-up (2)	
NC Open (Cooper, D)	NH Open (Sununu, R)
<b>Tilt Democratic</b>	<b>Tilt Republican</b>
<b>Lean Democratic</b>	<b>Lean Republican</b>
<b>Likely Democratic (1)</b>	<b>Likely Republican</b>
WA Open (Inslie, D)	
<b>Solid Democratic (1)</b>	<b>Solid Republican (7)</b>
DE Open (Carney, D)	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.)
<i>Takeovers in italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans</i>	

*Continued from page 1*

The previous version of the district had the 15th-lowest income of any in the country.

Politically, the district is racially polarized. Black voters make up 71 percent of registered Democrats while white voters make up just 21 percent, the lowest share for the party in any district in the state. Registered republicans are 89 percent white and just 4 percent Black.

In 2023, the state legislature redrew this district to make Davis more vulnerable, excising Democratic-leaning Greenville and replacing it with Republican-leaning areas just south of Virginia Beach. The old version of the seat, which Davis won in 2022, skewed Democratic: Biden would have carried it by 7 points in 2020.

Under the new lines, the district is evenly divided politically, but trending in Republicans' direction. Biden would have carried it by just 1 point, 50-49 percent, in 2020, after Hillary Clinton would have won it by 5 points, 51-46 percent, in 2016.

The 2022 elections were particularly dismal for Democrats. Under the new lines, all seven statewide Democratic candidates would have failed to carry the district, losing by margins of 6 to 10 points. Between 2016 and 2020, Democrats carried the district in 32 of 34 statewide contests, losing it by narrow margins in the other two cases.

Senate nominee Cheri Beasley would have lost the new 1st by 6 points, 52-46 percent, in 2022 despite only losing statewide by 3 points. In 2016, Democratic Senate candidate Deb Ross won the district by 4 points while losing statewide by 6 points, demonstrating how much the area has shifted politically since then.

## The Democratic Incumbent

Davis, 52, is in his first term as a member of Congress but has a long political history. Born in Snow Hill, which is in the southwestern portion of the district and where he later served 7 years as mayor, Davis also spent 12 years in the state Senate before his election to the House.

A 1994 graduate of the Air Force Academy, Davis served as a mortuary officer and supported

Air Force One at Andrews base in Maryland during his service until 2001. Davis received a Masters in Administration from Central Michigan University in 1997 and two degrees, a Masters in Sociology and an Ed.D., from East Carolina University in 2001 and 2007.

Elected to two terms as mayor, Davis defeated a GOP incumbent state senator in 2008, only to lose in a rematch two years later. In 2012, Davis won a redrawn district unopposed. In the state Senate, he amassed a moderate voting record, earning a 100 percent rating from the NFIB-North Carolina in 2020 and a 67 percent lifetime rating from the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce in 2021. His scores from the Club for Growth and American Conservative Union were among the highest of Democratic lawmakers.

When Rep. GK Butterfield announced he would not seek re-election in 2022, Davis launched his bid, first outpacing state Sen. Erica Smith, 63-31 percent, in the Democratic primary, and then beating Republican



Don Davis

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

nominee Sandy Smith, 52-47 percent, in the general election. National Republicans did not support Smith, who had a long history of domestic violence accusations against her.

In Congress, Davis serves on the Agriculture and Armed Services committees.

Davis's campaign team includes media consultant Scott Kozar of Sena Kozar Strategies and pollster Anna Greenberg of GQR. Mission Control does the direct mail.

## The Republican Challenger

Laurie Buckhout, 62, is a 26-year Army veteran who has worked for the past decade as a defense consultant and contractor. The Virginia-born Buckhout graduated James Madison University in 1984 and spent nearly three decades in the Army, developing a specialty in cyberspace and electronic warfare as well as counter-IED work. Buckhout, who ended her Army career as the chief of electronic warfare, also commanded a battalion in Iraq and retired as a colonel.

After leaving the Army, Buckhout spent 10 years in Virginia, where she founded a defense consultancy that she later sold for \$9 million. She moved to North Carolina in 2021.

This is Buckhout's first run for office. In the GOP primary, she defeated Sandy Smith, the flawed 2020/2022 nominee, by 7 points, 53-47 percent. Buckhout significantly outspent Smith on advertising, \$1 million to Smith's \$33,000, and had \$250,000 in support from the Congressional Leadership Fund. Buckhout loaned herself \$1.3 million through March 31.

Buckhout's campaign team includes general consultants Jonathan Felts and Michael Luethy, media consultant Fred Davis III of Strategic Perceptions, and pollster Brian Tringali of the Tarrance Group. Tyler Foote of Arena is doing the direct mail.

## How It Plays Out

Both Democratic and Republican strategists agree that Buckhout is a better candidate than Smith, whose legal history made her toxic to outside groups and dominated the airwaves in the weeks leading up to the race. With no outside support, Smith was severely outspent by Davis and Democratic outside groups, \$6.5 million to \$318,000.

Democratic strategists uniformly would have preferred to run against Smith again, and one senior Democrat expressed frustration that Democratic groups did not do more to help Smith win her primary (last cycle, both the DCCC and House Majority PAC at various points spent money to boost candidates in Republican primaries they believed would be weaker general election opponents).

"She comes across as very reasonable, very no-nonsense," said one national Republican strategist, who also pointed to Buckhout's ability to contribute her own money to her campaign. She's "someone who instead is going to be super quiet and not do a lot, and appear to be a normie Republican," said a North Carolina Democrat.

This cycle, the NRCC and the Congressional Leadership Fund will be heavily invested in the contest. In its initial reservations, CLF included \$7 million across the Raleigh and Greenville markets (committees often add or subtract up until the week the actual ads air).

Democrats, too, have signaled significant financial support for Davis. HMP earmarked \$6 million for the district in its initial round of reservations, and an affiliated group is already airing \$832,000 in positive advertising on Davis.

Among the candidates themselves, Davis enters the general election

*Continued on page 6*

Continued from page 5

with a significant financial advantage. He reported \$1.8 million in the bank on March 31 compared to \$239,000 for Buckhout. National Democrats are pleased with Davis’s fundraising, after he raised just \$1.8 million overall for the 2022 cycle, but acknowledge that raising money is difficult in a poor district.

And one side effect of the redrawn district is an increase in the cost of advertising. While both the old and new districts are dominated by the already-expensive Raleigh media market (roughly 64 percent of the electorate lives there), the new lines include much more of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach market (20 percent), which it shares with the highly competitive race in Virginia’s 2nd District. That means both candidates and outside groups will have to run ads across three media markets to reach the whole district, rather than just two (Raleigh and Greenville).

Buckhout is wealthy — her personal financial disclosure lists a net worth of between \$10 and \$51 million — and has already contributed more than \$1.2 million to her campaign. But national strategists aren’t sure how much more she will contribute, and her allies say she will have to transition to raising more from other people. Her second-quarter report, due July 15, will indicate her fundraising chops and whether she can keep pace with Davis, who raised \$1.1 million in the first three months of the year.

Though they don’t get to face Smith again, Democrats will still work to disqualify Buckhout for character and personal reasons.

“There are character concerns with Buckhout,” said one Davis ally. “She’s better [than Smith] on paper but only because she didn’t punch her daughter in the face.” (That’s one of many accusations made against Smith by her daughter and ex-husbands; Smith denied all of them.)

In particular, Democrats are already telegraphing they intend to make an issue of Buckhout’s recent move to the state after 10 years in Virginia. Several Davis allies said it created a strong contrast with the Snow Hill-born Democrat who has represented the area for two

decades and developed relationships as a lay minister and a college professor. (Democrats may also litigate Buckhout’s DUI arrest from 2017.)

National and state Republicans say that Buckhout’s military service required her to move around for her entire life, but that it’s a positive,



Courtesy Buckhout Campaign

Laurie Buckhout

not a negative, that she chose to retire to Eastern North Carolina.

Buckhout will lean heavily on her military service to run as a competent, tough on the border, conservative fighter, as well as a job creator.

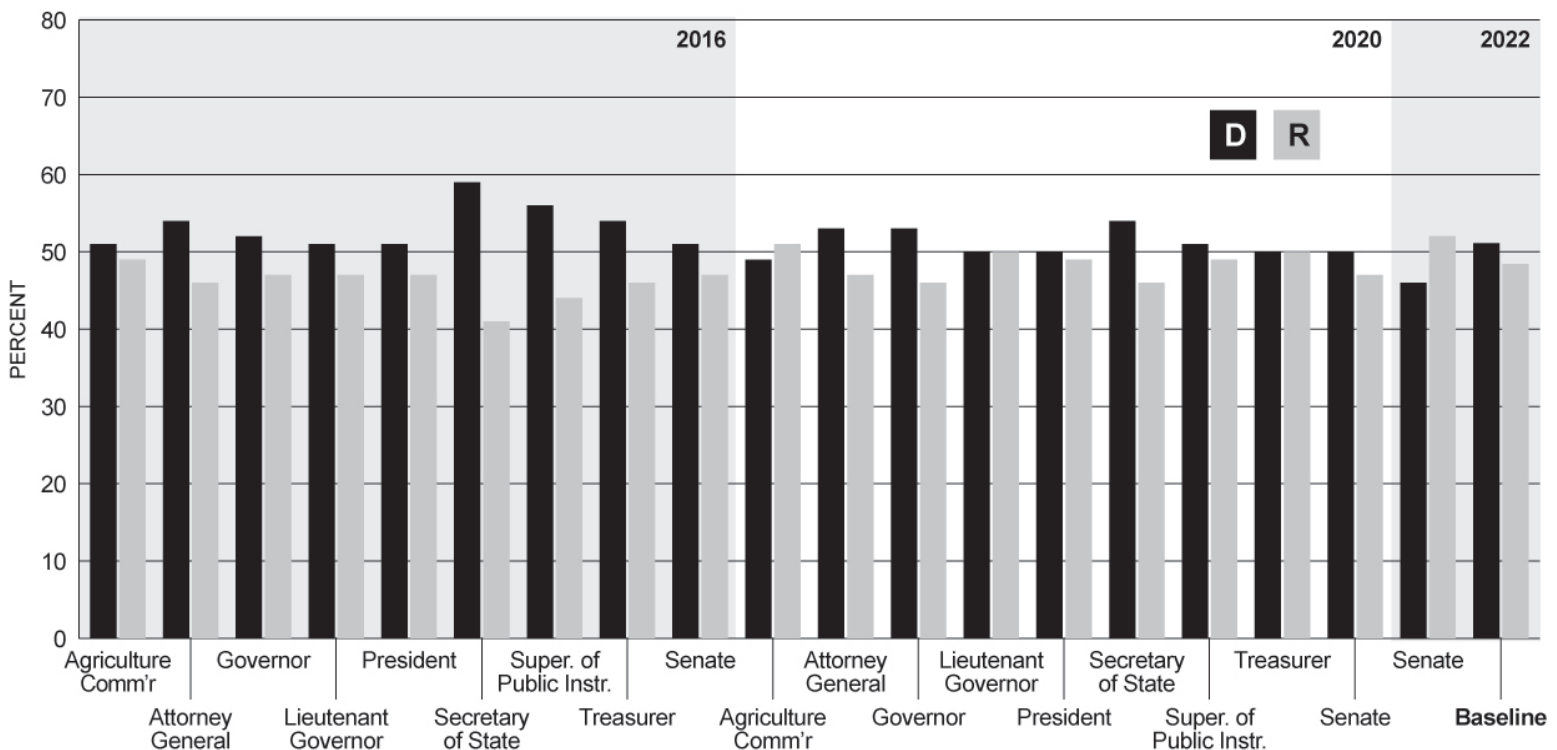
Davis’s positive messaging is also likely to skew local. In addition to focusing on his roots and his background as a mortuary officer in the Air Force — Davis’s allies believe he didn’t have the resources to fully tell his life story last cycle — Davis is also likely to talk about his work pushing back on the Biden administration’s plan to ban menthol cigarettes. That could be salient in this district with an older Black population and tobacco industry. And he’ll likely seize on a recent ranking that found he was the fifth-most bipartisan member of the House.

Abortion, too, will play a role here. Republicans in the state legislature passed a 12-week abortion ban last year.

Republicans, meanwhile, may have to get creative when targeting the Democrat. “Davis is a difficult incumbent to beat,” said one national strategist. “He doesn’t have skeletons, and his voting record is

Continued on page 7

## Statewide Election Results for North Carolina's 1 District



Continued from page 6

moderate.” Republicans tested out a rare local hit, on a vote Davis took in the state Senate to sustain a veto of a budget that included money for a local university several years ago, but it’s not clear that will stick.

National issues such as immigration, inflation and drug trafficking are more likely to be front and center in Republican messaging, as will the argument that Davis is a career politician. And Buckhout and her allies will work hard to tie Davis to Biden, who is unpopular in the district. “Davis is the representative of Joe Biden in North Carolina,” said one Buckhout ally.

While that might be a bit of a stretch — according to FiveThirtyEight, Davis voted with Biden’s position just 61 percent of the time, the third-lowest of any Democrat in Congress — it’s difficult for any member of Congress to outrun the presidential result in their district by too much, especially a freshman member such as Davis.

### Voter Turnout

The new district lines undoubtedly make life more difficult for Davis, who may have to outrun the top of the ticket in order to clinch another term. While Biden carried the seat narrowly in 2020, the larger trend does not look good for Democrats as the party continues to bleed rural white voters, and there’s a real chance Donald Trump wins the seat this year.

Neither party believes that the district will behave quite like it did in 2022, when African-American voter turnout collapsed. Just 42 percent of Black North Carolina voters turned out in 2022, the lowest mark for a midterm election since 2010, while white voter turnout actually increased from 2018 to 2022.

And Black voter turnout dropped disproportionately from the 2020 presidential election (from 68 percent to 42 percent) compared to white turnout (from 79 percent to 58 percent).

Democratic strategists are hopeful, however, that twin efforts from the Biden presidential campaign and a well-funded gubernatorial effort from state Attorney General Josh Stein will boost Democratic turnout across the board, including among Black voters. In particular, Democrats are hopeful Stein can weaponize a history of controversial and offensive remarks from his opponent, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, to win over independents and even some skeptical Republicans and provide some coattails for other Democrats in the state.

In North Carolina, however, the governor’s race actually appears lower on the ballot than all federal offices, including US House.

Robinson, who shares consultants with Buckhout, hopes his story of a meteoric rise from a factory floor to statewide office will be relatable to white and Black working class voters in the state.

Continued on page 8

## 2024 House Open Seats

District	Outgoing Member	2022 Result	2020 Presidential Result	Rating
AL-02	Barry Moore (R)	New	Biden 56%	Likely Democratic
AZ-03	Ruben Gallego (D)	77%	Biden 75%	Solid Democratic
AZ-08	Debbie Lesko (R)	96%	Trump 56%	Solid Republican
CA-12	Barbara Lee (D)	91%	Biden 89%	Solid Democratic
CA-16	Anna Eshoo (D)	58%	Biden 75%	Solid Democratic
CA-29	Tony Cardenas (D)	59%	Biden 75%	Solid Democratic
CA-30	Adam Schiff (D)	71%	Biden 72%	Solid Democratic
CA-31	Grace Napolitano (D)	60%	Biden 65%	Solid Democratic
CA-47	Katie Porter (D)	52%	Biden 55%	Tilt Democratic
CO-03	Lauren Boebert (R)	50%	Trump 53%	Lean Republican
CO-04	Ken Buck (R)	61%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
CO-05	Doug Lamborn (R)	56%	Trump 53%	Solid Republican
DE-AL	Lisa Blunt Rochester (D)	56%	Biden 59%	Solid Democratic
FL-08	Bill Posey (R)	65%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
GA-03	Drew Ferguson (R)	69%	Trump 64%	Sold Republican
IN-03	Jim Banks (R)	65%	Trump 64%	Solid Republican
IN-06	Greg Pence (R)	68%	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
IN-08	Larry Buschon (R)	66%	Trump 66%	Solid Republican
KS-02	Jake LaTurner	58%	Trump 57%	Solid Republican
MD-02	Dutch Ruppersberger (D)	57%	Biden 59%	Solid Democratic
MD-03	John Sarbanes (D)	60%	Biden 62%	Solid Democratic
MD-06	David Trone (D)	55%	Biden 54%	Likely Democratic
MI-07	Elissa Slotkin (D)	52%	Biden 49.4%	Toss-up
MI-08	Dan Kildee (D)	53%	Biden 50.3%	Tilt Democratic

District	Outgoing Member	2022 Result	2020 Presidential Result	Rating
MN-03	Dean Phillips (DFL)	60%	Biden 60%	Solid Democratic
MO-03	Blaine Luetkemeyer (R)	65%	Trump 62%	Solid Republican
MT-02	Matt Rosendale (R)	57%	Trump 62%	Solid Republican
NC-06	Kathy Manning (D)	New	Trump 57%	Likely Republican
NC-08	Dan Bishop (R)	New	Trump 57%	Solid Republican
NC-10	Patrick McHenry (R)	New	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
NC-13	Wiley Nickel (D)	New	Trump 55%	Likely Republican
NC-14	Jeff Jackson (D)	New	Trump 57%	Likely Republican
ND-AL	Kelly Armstrong	62%	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
NH-02	Annie Kuster (D)	56%	Biden 54%	Likely Democratic
NJ-03	Andy Kim (D)	56%	Biden 56%	Solid Democratic
OH-02	Brad Wenstrup (R)	75%	Trump 72%	Solid Republican
OR-03	Earl Blumenauer (D)	70%	Biden 73%	Solid Democratic
SC-03	Jeff Duncan (R)	98%	Trump 68%	Solid Republican
TX-12	Kay Granger (R)	64%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
TX-26	Michael Burgess (R)	69%	Trump 59%	Solid Republican
TX-32	Colin Allred (D)	65%	Biden 66%	Solid Democratic
UT-03	John Curtis (R)	64%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
VA-07	Abigail Spanberger (D)	52%	Biden 53%	Tilt Democratic
VA-10	Jennifer Wexton (D)	53%	Biden 58%	Likely Democratic
WA-05	Cathy McMoris Rodgers (R)	60%	Trump 53%	Solid Republican
WA-06	Derek Kilmer (D)	60%	Biden 57%	Solid Democratic
WV-02	Alex Mooney (R)	66%	Trump 68%	Solid Republican

New = Newly-drawn district

Continued from page 7

## The Bottom Line

Davis won't be an easy out for Republicans. His relatively moderate voting record and personal story, and lack of personal baggage limit the vulnerabilities. But he may ultimately be at the mercy of the larger dynamics of the election, with the presidential and gubernatorial races determining the shape of the electorate and the mood of voters.

Democrats need a net gain of four seats in order to win back the

majority, but with three other seats in North Carolina certain to flip to Republicans, they cannot afford many more losses of their own. Districts such as the 1st, which are trending away from the party, may develop into greater concerns than other marginal districts where Democrats have been on the rise.

With an early poll closing time of 7:30pm ET, the results of the 1st District could also be a strong indicator of how the night is going for each party. An early call for Davis would let Democrats breathe easier, and keep their majority hopes alive. **IE**

# 2024 Presidential Battlegrounds: Pennsylvania

By Bradley Wascher

Pennsylvania was long a part of Democrats' "blue wall" strategy in the Electoral College, but Donald Trump's narrow win in 2016 forced both parties to revamp their playbooks.

Trump flipped Pennsylvania in 2016 by appealing to the state's many white working-class voters, as Hillary Clinton failed to make sufficient gains among college-educated suburbanites. But Joe Biden won back the Keystone State in 2020 with stronger support across the state, particularly in his native northeast — which he will hope to replicate this November.

## Pennsylvania in Recent Elections

Although Pennsylvania has long been a battleground state, Democrats carried it in every presidential election between 1992 and 2012. Barack Obama won Pennsylvania by 10 points in 2008 and 5 points in 2012, with the state voting to the left of the nation in both cycles. But in 2016, Trump won by just under a point, 48.2-47.5 percent, or 44,000 votes; the driving force was his strength among white voters without a college degree. Elsewhere on the ballot, Republican Sen. Pat Toomey earned a second term while Democrats held all three other statewide offices.

In 2020, Biden, who was born in Scranton, made Pennsylvania his campaign headquarters — and ultimately managed to win the state by 82,000 votes. In fact, upon being called for Biden, Pennsylvania's 20 Electoral College votes were the ones to push him beyond 270 overall (although the state's mail-ballot reporting did cause confusion and drama in the surrounding days and weeks). Meanwhile, Republicans won the races for auditor and treasurer, and Democrat Josh Shapiro smoothly won a second term as attorney general.

Recent midterm cycles have been more consistently favorable for Democrats. In 2018, Gov. Tom Wolf and Sen. Bob Casey, Jr. won re-election by 17 points and 13 points respectively. Democrats also flipped five congressional districts that year (following mid-cycle, court-ordered redistricting) as well as five seats in the state Senate and 11 seats in the state House. In 2022, Shapiro rocked Republican Doug Mastriano by 15 points to win the governorship, and Democratic Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman defeated celebrity surgeon Mehmet Oz by 5 points to take the open Senate seat. In somewhat of a surprise, Democrats also gained back control of the state House for the first time since 2010.

According to Baseline, the typical statewide Democrat is expected to earn 50.7 percent against the typical Republican's 46.6 percent. Democrats have maintained a steady edge of 3–6 points in Pennsylvania over the past decade.

## Presidential Battleground Series

Michigan	April 11 issue
Georgia	April 26 issue
Nevada	May 9 issue
Pennsylvania	May 23 issue
<i>More to Come</i>	

## Philadelphia and Its Suburbs

Philadelphia is the heart of the Democratic base in Pennsylvania. It is the largest county by population and has voted for the Democrat in every presidential election since 1932. According to ACS estimates from the Census Bureau, Philadelphia County is 39 percent Black, 33 percent white, 16 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 8 percent Asian. Approximately 36 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree, close to the state and national averages.

Turnout in recent elections has been steady — but a good showing here is not enough by itself to guarantee a win statewide. Clinton earned 584,025 votes in Philadelphia in 2016, roughly on par with Obama's 588,806 votes in 2012. In 2016, Trump outperformed Romney slightly (108,748 votes to 96,467 votes), mostly due to Trump's strength with white working-class voters in northeast Philadelphia. Trump performed better still in 2020, amounting to 132,740 votes against 603,790 for Biden, with modest gains among Black and Hispanic voters. Democrats need to win Philadelphia County by around 68 points in order to carry the state.

The suburbs surrounding Philadelphia are another major source of Democratic votes. Collectively, Philadelphia's four collar counties (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery) cast nearly three times as many votes as Philadelphia itself. Bucks, Delaware, and Montgomery counties were traditionally Republican before voting for Bill Clinton in 1992, while Chester County remained in the GOP column until voting for Obama in 2008. In 2020, Biden carried these four counties by a combined margin of 290,000 votes, or almost 20 points — more than any other modern Democrat, according to the *Almanac of American Politics*.

Chester County, where the population grew by 7 percent between 2010 and 2020, has proven particularly pivotal for Democrats. In 2016, it was the only county in Pennsylvania that Clinton flipped from Romney, after she improved on Obama's margin by 10 points. Then in 2020, it swung toward Biden by an additional 7 points, more than any other county in the state. This shift can be explained by Democrats' strength with college-educated voters: 57 percent of adults in Chester County have a bachelor's degree,

*Continued on page 9*



Continued from page 8

the highest statewide, compared to 53 percent in Montgomery County, 44 percent in Delaware County, and 42 percent in Bucks County. Overall, in elections since 2016, Democrats have an average advantage of 23 points in Montgomery County, 23 points in Delaware County, 10 points in Chester County, and 4 points in Bucks County.

At the other end of the state is Allegheny County, which includes Pittsburgh and its surrounding suburbs. This is Pennsylvania's second largest county by population and another Democratic stronghold: the typical Democrat is expected to earn 60.9 percent against 36.2 percent for a typical Republican. Forty-five percent of adults in Allegheny County have a bachelor's degree, enabling Democrats to notch strong performances in affluent, highly educated suburbs such as Mt. Bethel, Upper St. Clair, and Bethel Park. In 2020, Biden earned 61,000 more votes than Clinton four years earlier, while Trump gained 23,000 votes. Strong turnout — more votes in the city, higher margins in the suburbs — will again be key this November.

### Republican Strongholds

Republicans have many bright spots of their own. The western region of the state, home to many white working-class voters, has trended away from Democrats in recent elections. Particularly, four southwestern counties surrounding Allegheny — Beaver, Fayette, Greene, and Washington — all supported Trump by at least 18 points in both 2016 and 2020. In 2020, he improved in Greene and Fayette counties by 3 points, despite running behind in many other parts of the state. Twenty-one percent of adults in both counties have a bachelor's degree. The typical Republican candidate has an advantage of 14.5 points in Fayette County and 21.5 points in Greene County; in 2020, Trump carried Fayette by 33 points and Greene by 43 points.

The many rural counties that make up the middle of the state —

often described as resembling the letter "T" — are also Trump territory. According to an analysis from the *Washington Post*, in 2016 Trump won 120,000 more votes here than Mitt Romney four years earlier. Biden ran slightly ahead of Clinton, but apart from Centre County (which prefers Democrats by about 5.5 points on average) these are still Pennsylvania's deepest red counties.

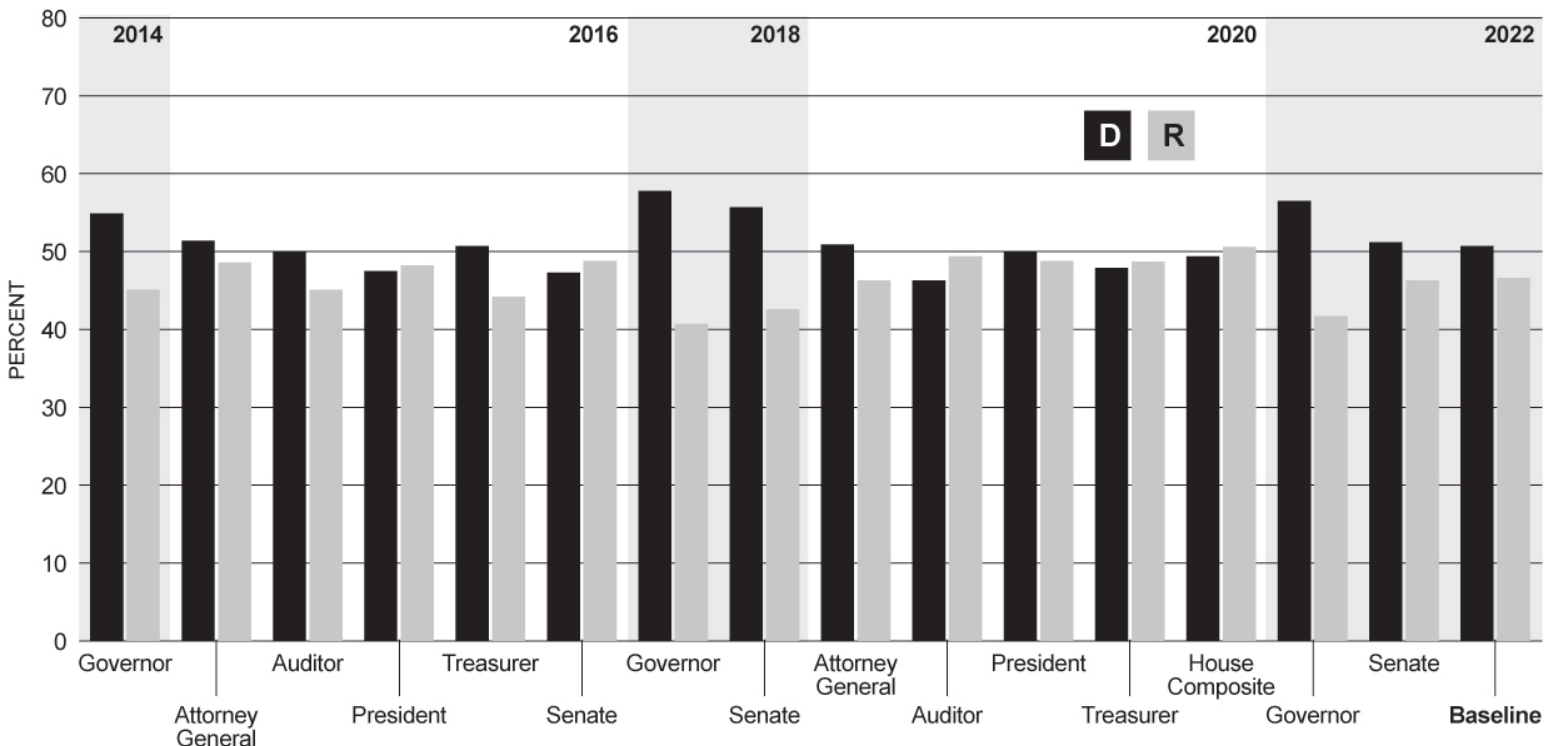
The final key region is northeast Pennsylvania. Filled with blue-collar towns that were once reliably Democratic, Trump made his most significant gains here in 2016 — and Biden reclaimed some in 2020. Obama would have won these 11 counties by 36,000 votes in 2012. Four years later, Trump carried them by 86,000 votes, flipping Luzerne and Northampton counties in the process. Trump still carried these counties in 2020, but his margin was kept to just 60,500 votes.

Lackawanna County, which contains Biden's hometown of Scranton, swung swiftly away from Democrats in 2016 yet crept back toward them in 2020. Obama won the county by 27 points in 2012, then Clinton carried it by just 3 points before Biden improved to 8 points. Lackawanna County is older and whiter compared to the state overall, and incomes are lower. Thirty-one percent of adults have a bachelor's degree. Lackawanna is also one of the fastest-growing Hispanic counties in the nation: 62 percent of the population of Hazelton, the county's second largest city, is Hispanic. According to Baseline, the typical Democrat has an advantage of 19 points.

Southwest of Lackawanna is Luzerne County, which flipped 24 points from Obama to Trump in 2016 and stayed red in 2020. Home to the city of Wilkes-Barre, this is another ancestral coal mining county with a large population of blue-collar whites. Only 25 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree. According to reporting by the *New York Times*, voters were attracted to Trump's positions on trade and immigration, as the county has languished from a loss of well-paid manufacturing jobs.

Continued on page 10

## Statewide Election Results for Pennsylvania



Continued from page 9

While Trump carried Luzerne County by 19 points in 2016, his margin in 2020 dipped slightly to 14 points. According to Baseline, the typical statewide Republican is expected to earn 50.8 percent against the typical Democrat’s 46.2 percent.

Two other counties, Erie (in the northwest corner of the state) and Northampton (in the east), flipped toward Trump in 2016 before voting for Biden in 2020. Erie (Baseline margin: Democratic+2) and Northampton (Democratic+7) are among the most evenly divided in Pennsylvania. So the results here can be somewhat of a bellwether for the state, with Erie County picking the winner in 23 of the 25 statewide elections since 2008. Still, Erie and Northampton are small, casting around 4 percent of total statewide votes. According to the Census Bureau, the population of Erie County actually shrank between 2010 and 2020.

### Early Polls

In early Pennsylvania polls, Trump is leading by approximately 2 points. The 538 average shows Trump+1.6, while the RealClearPolitics average suggests Trump+2.1 and the Decision Desk HQ/The Hill average is Trump+2. Since mid-April, Morning Consult/Bloomberg has found Trump up 2 points, whereas *The New York Times*/Siena College/*The Philadelphia Inquirer* saw Trump+4, and Emerson College/*The Hill* reported Trump ahead by 2 points.

### The Bottom Line

Pennsylvania lost one Electoral College vote following the 2020 census, but with 19 votes it remains the largest major battleground. As such, the Keystone State is a crucial part of both parties’ Electoral College calculus.

One of Trump’s most likely paths to 270 electoral votes runs through Pennsylvania — just as in 2016, he’ll need to break through Democrats’ “blue wall.” He has already made inroads among working-class voters: white voters without a college degree make up about 52 percent of the state’s electorate according to Daily Kos Elections, and Trump won this group, 80-19 percent, per 2020 exit polls. The former president will hope for strong turnout throughout the central “T” region, as well as in the GOP-friendly counties outside of Pittsburgh.

But as the reigning presidential loser in Pennsylvania, Trump also must extend his reach. In 2020, he slightly improved among Black and Hispanic voters in Philadelphia, and some enclaves in the city’s northeast corner seem persuadable too. But maybe most crucially, Trump will need to minimize his losses in the Philly suburbs. The former president has consistently failed to win over these more affluent, highly educated voters. In fact, Nikki Haley’s three strongest counties in the 2024 Pennsylvania GOP presidential primary were Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery — all in the Philadelphia suburbs.

This is welcome news to Biden, who ran ahead of Clinton by an average of 5 points across those same three counties. For his part, the president should obviously hope for a strong showing in the major cities: Democratic turnout in Philadelphia has stayed steady in recent cycles, but consistent doesn’t mean guaranteed. (Statewide turnout rose 13 percent from 2016 to 2020.) Biden also benefits from being a native son to the state. Although in 2016 Clinton underperformed Obama by 5 points in central Pennsylvania and by double digits in the northeast, Biden managed to recover some support in both places.

So once again, it could all come down to northeast Pennsylvania.

This area swung hard for Trump in 2016 and was a top focus for Biden ahead of 2020. In 2024, both candidates will again look toward the eclectic electorates of Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, and they might also hope to claim victory in flippy Northampton County. Importantly, many of these counties also form the highly competitive 7th and 8th congressional districts, two Democratic-held seats that could help determine the House majority. So with the Keystone State also hosting a top Senate race this November, it is an incredibly consequential battleground at every level.



## 2024 Presidential Ratings (Electoral Votes)

Toss-Up (77)			
Arizona (11)	Georgia (16)	Michigan (15)	Nevada (6)
Pennsylvania (19)		Wisconsin (10)	
Tilt Democratic (0)		Tilt Republican (16)	
		North Carolina (16)	
Lean Democratic (15)		Lean Republican (31)	
Minnesota (10)	Nebraska 2nd (1)	Florida (30)	
New Hampshire (4)		Maine 2nd (1)	
Likely Democratic (15)		Likely Republican (63)	
Maine Statewide (2)		Iowa (6)	Texas (40)
Virginia (13)		Ohio (17)	
Solid Democratic (196)		Solid Republican (125)	
California (54)	New York (28)	Alabama (9)	Nebraska 1st (1)
Colorado (10)	Oregon (8)	Alaska (3)	Nebraska 3rd (1)
Connecticut (7)	Rhode Island (4)	Arkansas (6)	North Dakota (3)
Delaware (3)	Vermont (3)	Idaho (4)	Oklahoma (7)
District of Columbia (3)	Washington (12)	Indiana (11)	South Carolina (9)
Hawaii (4)		Kansas (6)	South Dakota (3)
Illinois (19)		Kentucky (8)	Tennessee (11)
Maine 1st (1)		Louisiana (8)	Utah (6)
Maryland (10)		Mississippi (6)	West Virginia (4)
Massachusetts (11)		Missouri (10)	Wyoming (3)
New Jersey (14)		Montana (4)	
New Mexico (5)		Nebraska Statewide (2)	
		<b>GOP</b>	<b>DEM</b>
		2020 Results	232 306
		<b>2024 Ratings</b>	235 226
		Toss-up	77
		Needed to Win	270

## CALENDAR

<b>May 28</b>	Texas Primary Runoff
<b>June 4</b>	Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, South Dakota Primaries
<b>July 16-18</b>	Republican National Convention (Milwaukee)
<b>Aug. 19-22</b>	Democratic National Convention (Chicago)