

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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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, I)

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*

CALENDAR

June 11 Maine, Nevada, South Carolina Primaries

June 18 Oklahoma, Virginia Primaries

June 25 Colorado, New York, Utah Primaries

June 27 First Presidential Debate (CNN)

July 15-18 Republican National Convention (Milwaukee)

Aug. 19-22 Democratic National Convention (Chicago)

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New Mexico Senate: Domenici Digs Deep

By Jacob Rubashkin

New Mexico isn't on the Senate battlefield — yet. In a cycle dominated by Trump-state Democrats in Montana and Ohio and presidential battleground mainstays such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, the Land of Enchantment has flown under the radar.

For much of the cycle, Sen. Martin Heinrich appeared on a glide path to a third term. The low-key Democrat — probably most known outside of New Mexico for being a mainstay on *The Hill's* now-defunct “50 Most Beautiful People” list — faced only token opposition in a state that has trended toward Democrats over the past two decades.

But the entrance of Nella Domenici into the mix earlier this year has shaken things up in the desert. Domenici has a famous last name: her father, Pete, was the state's most recent Republican senator and served 36 years in Washington, DC. And she's got a personal fortune, as much as \$100 million, that she's amassed over a career at the world's largest hedge fund. In a cheap state, that kind of cash can pay for a lot of TV ads.

The Lay of the Land

New Mexico is one of the few majority-minority states in the union. Roughly half the state is Hispanic or Latino; that's an important distinction in the state, where many use “Hispanic” to refer to the communities that trace their presence back to colonial times in the northern part of the state, versus the newer “Latino” communities in the southern part of the state closer to the Mexican border. Just 35 percent of residents are white (“Anglo” in local parlance), and another 10 percent are Native American (largely concentrated in the northwest corner of the state, which overlaps with the Navajo Reservation, and in a group of Pueblos west of Albuquerque).

After decades of rapid population growth, the state barely grew between 2010 and 2020. Though vast, nearly half of the population is concentrated in just three neighboring counties: Bernalillo (home of Albuquerque and 32 percent of the state), Santa Fe (7 percent), and Sandoval (7 percent). Another 10 percent live in Doña Ana County (Las Cruces) on the US-Mexico border.

Democrats have been on a hot streak in New Mexico since the late 2000s. The last statewide contest won by the GOP, a state supreme court race, was in 2016. The last time a Republican won a row office was in 2014 when then-Gov. Susana Martinez won a landslide re-election and pulled several other Republicans across the finish line.

But Democrats' victories have rarely been overwhelming. In 2020, Joe Biden carried the state by 10 points, 54-44 percent, a slight improvement

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Key Primary Results from Iowa, Montana, New Jersey and New Mexico

By Jacob Rubashkin

Earlier in the cycle, June 4 looked like a must-watch primary night with marquee Senate primaries in New Jersey and Montana. But most of the drama dissipated long before voters went to the polls on Tuesday, and the remaining notable races played out as expected.

Voters in five states cast primary ballots including Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, and South Dakota. That means 22 states have completed their primaries up to this point with 27 remaining between now and Sept. 10. (Louisiana has its all-party primary on Nov. 5.)

With five months still before Election Day, 25 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. Troy Downing of Montana's 2nd District and Herb Conaway of New Jersey's 3rd District are the latest additions to that list.

Here's what happened in some key contests on Tuesday.

Iowa.

1st District (Southeastern Iowa) Marianne Miller-Meeks, R, re-elected 53%. Trump 50%. David Pautsch, who founded the Quad Cities Prayer Breakfast, gave Miller-Meeks a run for her money in the GOP primary despite barely raising any himself. Outspent \$1.4 million to \$30,000, Pautsch trails 56-44 percent. Miller-Meeks isn't out of the woods, either. She'll face former state Rep. Christina Bohannon in a rematch of 2022, though this time Bohannon will have more financial resources. Lean Republican.

3rd District (Des Moines and southwestern Iowa) Zach Nunn, R, elected 50%. Trump 49%. Army veteran Lanon Baccam, a former Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture in the Biden administration, easily won the Democratic primary over counselor Melissa Vine, 84-16 percent. He'll face Nunn in a race where both candidates will lean on their military backgrounds and Democrats will look to squeeze more votes out of Des Moines and its suburbs. Tilt Republican.

Montana.

Senate. Jon Tester (D) elected 2006 (49%), 2012 (49%), 2018 (50%).

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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
MT	2nd	Troy Downing	R
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
NJ	3rd	Herb Conaway	D
OH	2nd	David Taylor	R
OH	6th	Michael Rulli	R
OR	3rd	Maxine Dexter	D
TX	12th	Craig Goldman	R
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

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The matchup for one of the two most crucial Senate races on the map is set for this fall, with Tester due to face wealthy former Navy SEAL Tim Sheehy, who cruised to a primary win on Tuesday. Neither Democrats nor Republicans have waited for the official general election to begin hitting their opponents on the airwaves — the two parties have already spent \$46 million on advertising in this race to date. Democrats are going to work hard to disqualify Sheehy for personal reasons, poking holes in his background and updating the playbook Tester used successfully in 2018. Republicans are reaching back further to Tester’s first win in 2006 against three-term Sen. Conrad Burns, but this time with the Democrat as the politician who overstayed his welcome. Control of the Senate could come down to which argument is more compelling. Toss-up.

1st District (Western Montana) Ryan Zinke, R, elected 49.6%. Trump 52%. Zinke turned in another relatively underwhelming primary performance, outpacing opponent Mary Todd, 74-26 percent, despite outspending her 50-to-1. That doesn’t mean Democrat Monica Tranel has an easy path ahead of her. Zinke’s unique vulnerabilities give her an opportunity but the partisan lean of the district is a challenge for any Democrat. Lean Republican.

2nd District. (Eastern Montana) Open; Matt Rosendale, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 62%. State Auditor Troy Downing looks likely to ride a big spending advantage and a late endorsement from former President Donald Trump to victory over a crowded field in this vast district. Downing leads former Rep. Denny Rehberg, 36-17 percent. Rehberg, who represented the whole state a decade ago, never saw his comeback bid take flight. Downing should have no trouble winning the general election this fall. Solid Republican.

New Jersey.

Senate. Bob Menendez (D) appointed 2006, elected 2006 (53%), 2012 (58%), 2018 (54%). Rep. Andy Kim easily topped a diminished Democratic field with 75 percent of the vote after his main opponent, First Lady Tammy Murphy, dropped out of the race at the end of March. Labor scholar Patricia Campos-Medina trailed with 16 percent. On the GOP side, hotelier Curtis Bashaw scored a mild upset over Mendham Borough Mayor Christine Serrano Glassner. She had an endorsement from Trump, but he had the support of more county lines. Bashaw will be an underdog against Kim, but there’s still potential for general election fireworks; Menendez has filed to run as an independent, and go through with a bid if he isn’t found guilty at his ongoing corruption trial. While Menendez’s presence on the ballot isn’t enough to make Kim sweat right now, it would add a wrinkle to an otherwise straightforward race. Solid Democratic.

3rd District (Outer Philadelphia suburbs) Open; Andy Kim, D, running for Senate. Biden 56%. State Assemblyman Herb Conaway easily beat back colleague Carol Murphy and is the likely new member from this South Jersey district. Solid Democratic.

7th District (Southwestern New York City suburbs and exurbs) Tom Kean Jr., R, elected 51%. Biden 51%. Former New Jersey Working Families Alliance director Sue Altman will take on Kean in a top-tier race that sits within the expensive New York City media market. While this contest has flown under the radar compared to flashier races in the Empire State, it could catch fire if Altman can leverage her populist appeal to match Kean’s fundraising chops. Tilt Republican.

8th District (Jersey City area) Rob Menendez, D, elected 74%. Biden 72%. A well-funded challenge from Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla faltered

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)

CO 3 (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)	WA 8 (Schrier, D)
NH 2 (Open; Kuster, D)	
NV 1 (Titus, D)	
NV 3 (Lee, D)	
NV 4 (Horsford, D)	
NY 3 (Suozzi, 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

in the closing weeks of the race as Menendez navigated the fallout surrounding his father’s corruption indictment and went on offense over Bhalla’s own alleged ethics lapses. Menendez also had help from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus’s BOLD PAC and the local political machine. Despite being outspent, \$2 million to \$1.6 million, Menendez outpaced Bhalla, 54-36 percent. Solid Democratic.

New Mexico.

2nd District. (Southern New Mexico and western Albuquerque area) Gabe Vasquez, D, elected 50%. Biden 52%. If Biden’s problems with Hispanic voters weren’t causing enough headaches, new news stories about an arrest warrant from Vasquez’s teenage years and his alleged use of a racial slur have made this a rough week for the freshman. But GOP nominee Yvette Herrell has her own challenges — she’s run for this seat three times before, and won just once. Toss-up.



New York 19: Riley vs. Molinaro Rematch

By Jacob Rubashkin

At the confluence of New York's Hudson Valley, Southern Tier, and Capital Region, Democrats are hoping a rematch of one of 2022's closest House races is not just a replay of last cycle's outcome.

Armed with better fundraising and unburdened by the lack of a gubernatorial slugfest at the top of the ticket, Democrats' 2022 nominee for the 19th District, Josh Riley, is back for Round 2 against GOP Rep. Marc Molinaro. Molinaro beat Riley by just 4,495 votes in their first meeting.

Democrats need a net gain of four seats to reclaim the majority and are eager to get the job done in New York alone, where House Minority Leader and Brooklyn Rep. Hakeem Jeffries is looking to reclaim the four Empire State seats his party lost in the midterm elections.

The Lay of the Land

The 19th sits at the intersection of three distinct regions in New York State, where Upstate meets Downstate. Though the district's geographic center is Delaware County, it extends west to Tompkins County, north to just outside of Albany,

and south nearly to Poughkeepsie. The biggest city is Binghamton (population 47,000), and the district also includes Ithaca (home to Cornell University) and Oneonta.

The 19th includes pieces of five different media markets: New York City, Binghamton, Syracuse, Albany and Utica. The largest, Binghamton, covers just 37 percent of the district, with Albany (22 percent), New York City (18 percent) and Syracuse (15 percent) filling out much of the rest.

The 19th is predominantly white — roughly 80 percent of the voting age population — with the balance made up by similar numbers of Black, Hispanic and Asian residents. Just 34 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree, lower than the national average.

The district, which changed slightly following a 2024 court decision that allowed Democrats to redraw the state's congressional map, has a track record of voting for both Democrats and Republicans in statewide races. In 2016, it would have voted for Donald Trump by 2 points over Hillary Clinton but for Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer by 25 points. Two years later it voted for Democratic candidates for Senate, Comptroller, and Attorney General by 15, 17, and 4 points. But in the 2018 gubernatorial race, Democrat Andrew Cuomo would have actually lost the district, 50-44 percent, to the GOP nominee: Marc Molinaro.

In 2020, Biden would have carried the 19th by 4 points, 51-47 percent.

And in 2022, the district again rendered a split decision: Schumer and Comptroller Tom DiNapoli won it by 1 and 4 points, respectively, while Gov. Kathy Hochul lost it by 7 points, 53-46 percent. Inside Elections' Baseline shows Democrats with a 4-point advantage, 51-47 percent.

In the portion of the new 19th that overlaps with the old 19th District, Molinaro beat Riley by 1 point, 50.5-49.5 percent.



Josh Riley

Courtesy Riley Campaign

The Republican Incumbent

Molinaro, 48, is in his first term in Congress but has served in elected office for the last 30 years. The Yonkers-born Molinaro won his first election at 18, for a spot on the Tivoli Village Board of Trustees, and didn't look back, eschewing college to become the village's mayor a year later (making him the youngest mayor in America at the time and attracting national attention).

Re-elected as mayor five times, Molinaro also spent six years in the Dutchess County legislature before ousting an incumbent GOP state assemblyman in a contentious 2006 primary, 52-48 percent. After three terms in the state legislature, Molinaro ran for county executive, winning landslide victories in 2011 and 2015 (by 23 and 26 points, respectively). In 2018, he was the GOP's sacrificial lamb in the Empire State's gubernatorial race, losing to Democrat Andrew Cuomo, 60-36 percent.

Molinaro followed up another easy win as county executive in 2019 with two 2022 bids for Congress: one in a special election for the old 19th District, vacated by Democrat Antonio Delgado after he was appointed lieutenant governor, and also for the new, redrawn 19th.

In the special election, Molinaro lost narrowly to Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan, 51-48 percent, in a race dominated by the Supreme Court's still-fresh reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

But in the general election in the newly drawn 19th, Molinaro eked out a 51-49 percent win over Riley.

In Congress, Molinaro sits on the Agriculture, Small Business, and Transportation and Infrastructure committees, and is a member of the Republican Main Street Partnership.

Molinaro's campaign team includes general consultant Mike Leavitt of Red Maverick Media (who is also doing the direct mail), media consultants Russ Schriefer and Ashley O'Connor of Strategic Partners & Media, and pollster Brock McCleary of Cygnal.

The Democratic Challenger

Riley, 42, launched his second bid for this seat just a few months after losing to Molinaro.

The Endicott, NY-born attorney graduated William & Mary in 2003 and Harvard Law School in 2007, and spent most of his legal career at the law firm Boies Schiller, first in Florida but mainly in Washington, DC. Riley also worked as counsel to Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Al Franken from 2011 to 2014. Most recently, Riley was a partner at Jenner & Block in DC until he launched his first bid for Congress.

Because of New York's convoluted redistricting process, Riley waged campaigns in three different congressional districts between 2021 and 2022. His initial plan was to run against GOP Rep. Claudia Tenney in the old 22nd District, a GOP-leaning district that stretched from Broome County north through Utica to Lake Ontario. After the state legislature redrew the maps, Riley opted to run in the new 22nd, a Syracuse-based seat occupied by retiring GOP Rep. John Katko. But that map was ultimately tossed out by a court and replaced with yet another set of lines, which pushed Riley to the 19th District in May 2022.

Once settled in the 19th, Riley dispatched farmer and business consultant Jamie Cheney in the primary, 64-36 percent, but went on to

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lose the general election narrowly to Molinaro.

Riley's campaign team includes media consultant Pia Carusone of SKDK and pollster Fred Yang of Garin-Hart-Yang. Mission Control is doing the direct mail.

How It Plays Out

Strategists from both parties believe that their candidates are better positioned than they were in 2022.

Molinaro's allies point to the special election in a slightly different district that occupied the Republican's attention until mid-August and cost \$1.2 million (of the \$2.2 million Molinaro raised overall).



Marc Molinaro

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Riley's allies make a similar argument about the redistricting uncertainty that bounced the Democrat around Upstate New York for months before letting him focus on the 19th, and the primary he had to spend nearly \$1 million to win.

Both candidates will be better resourced this time. Molinaro reported \$1.8 million in the bank on March 31, while Riley reported \$2.5 million on hand. Riley is on pace to significantly outraise Molinaro despite the latter being an incumbent; he pulled in more than twice as much as Molinaro over the first three months of the year.

The GOP playbook against Riley will look similar to 2022, when Molinaro and outside groups painted the Democrat as a wealthy DC

insider and tied him to the unpopular governor and policies such as bail reform.

Republicans are also eager to litigate new opposition research against Riley, focusing on his time working in crisis management at Boies Schiller, the firm run by Democratic superlawyer David Boies that has come under fire in recent years for its work on behalf of Harvey Weinstein. And they hope to leverage Riley's work on several immigration-related legal briefs from the Trump era to paint him as soft on the border.

Democratic strategists believe they will be able to portray Molinaro as anti-abortion thanks to a vote he took against reimbursing servicemembers for abortions, and comments he made recently about his opposition to abortion after 17 weeks. But Republican strategists say that Molinaro has positioned himself well on the issue by opposing a national ban and being the first Republican member to sign onto a Democratic-led bill enshrining access to in-vitro fertilization.

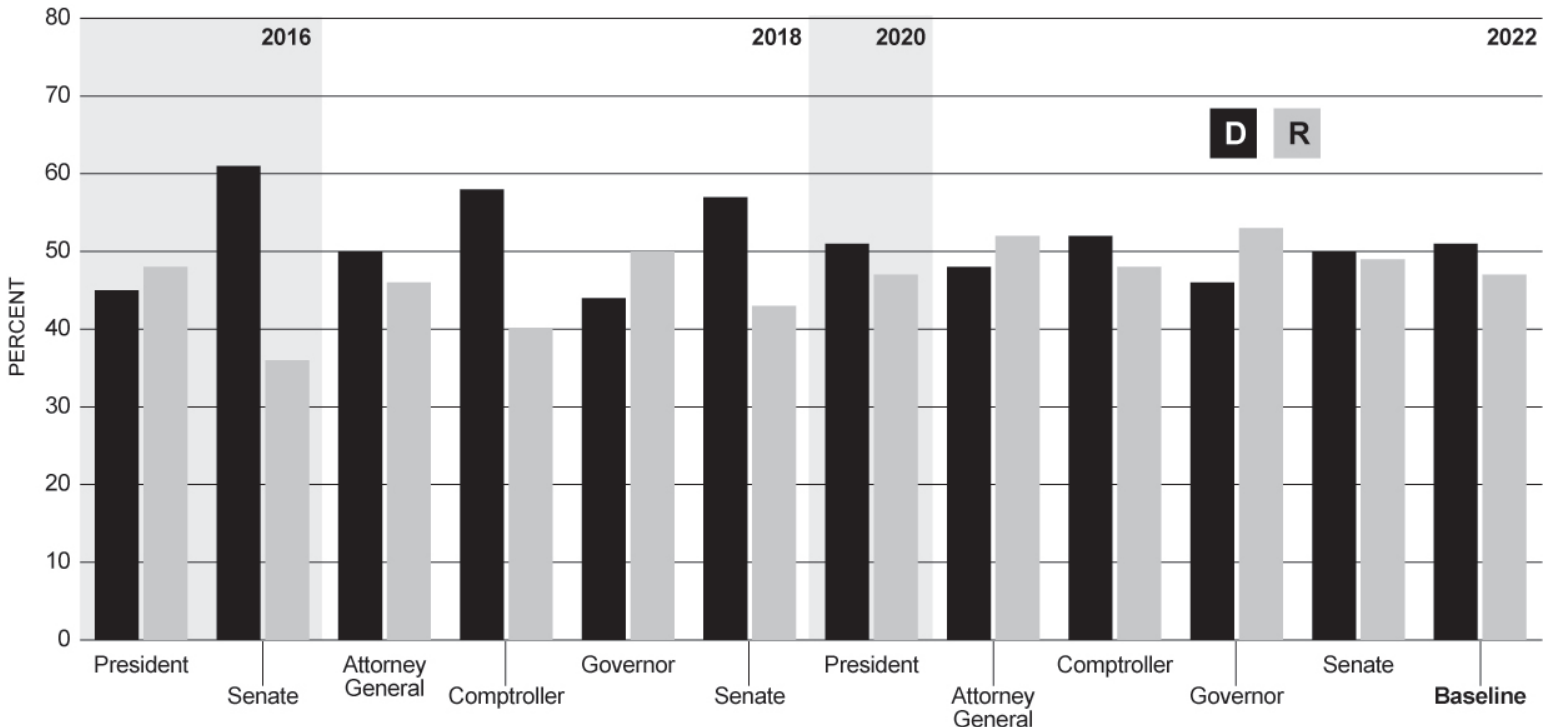
Riley may also run against Molinaro as a career politician, as he did in 2022. But the Republican's allies say they're itching for that fight, as they want to contrast Molinaro's time in office with Riley's lucrative legal work in Washington, DC.

Riley's positive messaging has taken on a populist bent and focuses on economic development in Upstate New York. The Democrat often talks about his family's history working at the E-J Shoe Factory and IBM, and last cycle even went as far as to label Molinaro a "Downstate Politician" because he lives in Dutchess County, which is outside the district.

For his part, Molinaro has highlighted his work on mental health and addiction recovery, as well as his signature issue of supporting those with disabilities (one of his children has autism). All are areas his allies believe help differentiate him from the national Republican brand. And

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Statewide Election Results for New York's 19 District



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a recent report from the Lugar Center that named Molinaro the second-most bipartisan member of Congress is likely to make an appearance in GOP ads this fall as well.

The Top of the Ticket

Ultimately the shape of this election may turn on how the presidential election plays out. Democratic strategists believe Trump will be a drag on Molinaro and that Biden has proven more resilient in Upstate New York than he is elsewhere in the state and around the country. “The more Trump we see, the better,” said one Democrat.

While Molinaro said during the primary that he’d support Trump as the nominee, he’s generally kept the former president at arm’s length (unlike Long Island Reps. Nick LaLota and Anthony D’Esposito, who have formally endorsed him). Even Molinaro’s strongly worded statement on Trump’s felony convictions did not mention the former president by name, though some Democratic strategists believe that Molinaro’s decision to speak out against the verdict at all shows he’s warming up to the former president.

Riley’s path gets more difficult if Trump is able to carry the district. It’s rare for an incumbent to lose re-election while their party’s presidential nominee is winning at the top of the ticket.

Media Market Madness

The district’s broad geographic reach, which includes the uber-liberal enclave of Ithaca, the city of Binghamton, wealthy Hudson Valley suburbs, and more rural blue collar areas in between, mean that both candidates have to appeal to a disparate group of voters.

For Democrats, a strong performance in Tompkins County is crucial. It’s where Riley now lives, and it’s the one county where he did not underperform Biden’s margin in 2022, but he’ll have to navigate lingering frustrations among some progressives about Democrats’ handling of the conflict in Gaza.

Riley’s allies will also look to improve in the New York City media market, particularly Sullivan County, the southernmost part of the district where Molinaro outperformed a typical Republican by more than in any other county. He carried Sullivan by 20 points while a typical Republican would carry it by 6 points, according to *Inside Elections* Baseline.

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over Hillary Clinton’s 8-point victory in 2016. But the same year, Democrat Ben Ray Lujan won an open Senate seat by just 6 points, 52-46 percent.

Michelle Lujan Grisham won her first gubernatorial election by 14 points in 2018, a banner year for Democrats, but only won re-election in 2022, 52-46 percent.

Democrats have also seen their once-massive voter registration advantage slowly erode over the past three decades. In 1990, 59 percent of registered voters were Democrats compared to 35 percent Republicans. In 2000, Democrats made up 53 percent to Republicans’ 33 percent, and in 2010, Democrats clocked in at 50 percent to Republicans’ 32 percent. By 2020, Democrats had dropped to 45 percent to the GOP’s 30 percent. Currently, Democrats have a 12-point advantage, 43-31 percent.

The New York City media market was a bloodbath for Democrats in 2022, with crime dominating the airwaves thanks to local news coverage and to an aggressive eight-figure ad campaign by Zeldin and his allies. And while that spending is not likely to be replicated in the absence of the governor’s race, the market will be no less crowded on TV, with voters in that area seeing ads for candidates as far afield as Connecticut’s Jahana Hayes, Long Island’s Nick LaLota, and New Jersey’s Tom Kean Jr. “Something we’re really focused on right now is how to communicate that share of the district without heavily relying on broadcast,” said one Democratic strategist, who pointed to digital and cable advertising as alternatives.

Ultimately, Broome County may emerge as the battleground portion of the district. It casts by far the most votes of any county, and has served as a bellwether for the district as a whole in recent statewide contests, often voting within a point or two of the overall district. (Riley often highlights he would be the first Broome County native in Congress in decades.)

Major outside groups have already signaled their interest in this race. Democrats’ House Majority PAC made initial TV reservations of \$1.2 million and \$880,000 in Albany and Binghamton earmarked for this race. Some portion of the group’s \$16.2 million New York City reservation will go toward this seat, and another \$2.8 million in Syracuse is intended for the 22nd District but could be repurposed.

The GOP-aligned Congressional Leadership Fund has reserved \$2.4 million in Albany and \$2.2 million in Binghamton, plus \$3.2 million in Syracuse and \$20 million in New York.

The Bottom Line

While Democrats need a net gain of just four seats to flip the House, they are on defense in half of the 10 toss-up districts on the map. That means the party likely needs to extend its reach into territory that currently favors Republicans, such as this district (rated Tilt Republican).

Riley’s strong fundraising is a key step along that journey. But his allies will need to sharpen their attacks on Molinaro in the coming months as the Republican looks to burnish his bipartisan bona fides and hopes for a Trump bump that makes this district even at the presidential level.

If Democrats are on track to flip this seat, they likely have clawed back much of the ground they lost in 2022 in New York, and are well on their way to reclaiming the majority. **IE**

The Democratic Incumbent

Heinrich, 52, is in his second term in the Senate, and previously represented Albuquerque in the House for four years. The Nevada-born Democrat got his start in politics on the Albuquerque City Council in 2004, where he served one term before running for Congress in 2008.

His 2008 and 2010 races were both highly competitive in the Albuquerque-based 1st District once held by Republican Heather Wilson. In 2008, Heinrich defeated state Secretary of State Rebecca Vigil-Giron and future Gov. Lujan Grisham in the primary before winning the open seat in the general election, 56-44 percent, and in 2010 he eked out a 52-48 percent win in the general election.

In 2012, Heinrich ran for Senate, winning the primary 59-41 percent and then defeating Wilson, his predecessor in the House, in the general election, 51-46 percent.

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In 2018, Heinrich's re-election was made easier by a split field; he won 54 percent of the vote, but GOP opponent Mick Rich and former Gov. Gary Johnson, running as a Libertarian, split the remaining vote, taking 30 and 15 percent, respectively.

In the Senate, Heinrich sits on the Appropriations, Armed Services, Natural Resources, and Intelligence committees. If Democrats maintain control of the Senate, he will likely become the next chairman of the Natural Resources committee.

Heinrich's campaign team includes media consultant Brandon Hall of Left Hook Strategy, pollster Mike Bocian of GBAO, and direct mail consultant Adnaan Muslim of Deliver Strategies.



Martin Heinrich

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

The Republican Challenger

Domenici, 63, is one of nine children of the late Sen. Pete Domenici, who represented New Mexico from 1973 to 2009.

After attending Georgetown University for undergraduate (1982) and law school (1987) and receiving an MBA from Harvard in 1993, Domenici embarked on a long career in finance and management consulting that included brief stints at a parade of venerable Wall Street firms such as Drexel Burham, Kidder Peabody, Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, and Credit Suisse. She also had a short tenure at Citadel (run by GOP mega-donor Ken Griffin), and spent most of the 2010s at Bridgewater Associates, the Ray Dalio-led hedge fund, where she rose to the rank of CFO. She also briefly worked as CFO at AI company Dataminr.

Domenici has owned a home in Santa Fe since 2006 and donates to charitable causes in the state but has spent much of her life in Washington, DC, Connecticut and New York.

In 2019, Domenici briefly floated a run for Senate to succeed retiring Sen. Tom Udall, but passed on a bid. One of her brothers, Pete Domenici, Jr., previously ran for the GOP nomination for governor in 2010 but placed fourth in the primary.

Domenici is personally wealthy; her financial disclosures listed between \$21 million and \$94 million in assets (large reporting categories make it difficult to be more precise). She has loaned her campaign \$510,000 so far.

Domenici's campaign team includes general consultant Kristin Davison of Axiom Strategies, media consultant Tim Garon of Prime Media, and pollster Chip Englader of 1892.

How It Plays Out

The burden of proof is still on Republicans to make this into a real race, and for now national strategists are much more focused on easier pickup opportunities in Montana and Ohio as the clearest path to the majority.

But the playbook for Domenici is straightforward: use her ample financial resources to define herself early in the contest, building on the goodwill that remains toward her father by emphasizing her own

business background, and steer clear of national hot-button issues such as abortion.

That's what she can hope to control. What's out of her control is the national environment and the presidential race. For Domenici to have a shot against Heinrich, Biden cannot be winning the state by a similar margin to 2020. Winning crossover voters is a heavy lift for any Senate candidate in an era of declining ticket splitting, but it is especially so against an incumbent — that's happened just twice since 2000, and both were special circumstances (Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens' legal issues in 2008 and Missouri Sen. John Ashcroft's loss to deceased Gov. Mel Carnahan in 2000).

And while Heinrich's low profile means the incumbent will have to work to re-introduce himself to voters (especially after having an easy race in 2018), it also makes him relatively inoffensive. Domenici's allies haven't zeroed in on specific attacks on the Democrat, preferring to point to the state's ongoing struggles with crime and drug abuse, as well as the influx of migrants on the border. The most direct attack Republicans levy against Heinrich is on his environmentalist streak and fossil fuels, a major industry in the state that helps fund much of the budget. Heinrich was a cosponsor of the Green New Deal and has spoken about the need to end fossil fuel usage, but he also voted against a national fracking ban.

Making a change argument can be compelling, especially when combined with the nostalgia intrinsic to Domenici's campaign. But without a Heinrich scandal or misstep to pinpoint, Domenici will need a boost from the national environment. Republicans are hopeful that polling showing Biden losing support among Hispanic and Latino



Nella Domenici

Courtesy Domenici Campaign

voters nationwide will presage a similar and outsize shift in New Mexico given its majority-minority population.

Domenici began advertising at the end of May, kicking off a new phase of the contest. Her initial commercial leans

heavily into her pedigree and childhood, and attempts to get ahead of the narrative that she's spent most of her life outside New Mexico.

How well the political newcomer can communicate with voters directly remains to be seen. One Democratic strategist noted the candidate herself only briefly contributed to the ad, and only in voice-over. "I thought her ad was very, very good," said the strategist, "but the best part was until she got on the ad."

Domenici's ad is airing on broadcast, cable, satellite, and streaming channels, and is backed by \$575,000 over two weeks, according to AdImpact, but the Republican is likely to extend it.

Of all the states hosting potentially competitive Senate races this cycle, New Mexico is by far the cheapest to advertise in. Nearly the whole state is covered by the Albuquerque media market, where the candidate rate for advertising right now is just \$100 per gross ratings point. Every other Senate state either spans a half-dozen or more media markets, or is dominated by one or two pricy markets such as Phoenix (\$400 per GRP currently), Las Vegas (\$225 per GRP) or Washington, DC (\$500 per GRP).

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That means Domenici, should she dip into her personal funds, can blanket the airwaves relatively inexpensively throughout the summer. But she hasn't indicated how much of her own money she's willing to spend, and is also raising money from others.

If Domenici fully invests in the race, she could easily become the top spender in New Mexico Senate history, surpassing Lujan in the 2020 race (\$9.8 million). That would grab national Democrats' full attention. Heinrich reported \$4.4 million in campaign funds on May 15 and raised \$2.1 million in the first four and a half months of the year.

Democrats are already telegraphing their attacks against Domenici, who operatives acknowledge is more of a blank slate politically — which makes her harder to hit on the policy issues that dominate other Senate races. "There isn't a lot to get her on the record outside of the hedge fund career," said one national strategist.

So far Heinrich's allies are focusing on her time at Bridgewater much as they have with her former colleague Dave McCormick, the GOP nominee for Senate in Pennsylvania who served as the firm's CEO. Outsourcing, deals with Chinese companies and the Saudis, and a sexual harassment scandal that roiled the fund in 2016 and 2017 may all come up. And Democrats already take every opportunity to talk up the time Domenici has spent living in New York and Connecticut.

As in most races around the country, Democrats will also try to pin Domenici down on abortion, though the Republican's allies believe her stance that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare" will shield her from those attacks.

But it doesn't look like there's much outside investment on the horizon for Heinrich. While national Democrats are keeping track of the race and especially of Domenici's spending and might re-evaluate in the fall, the party is already spread thin across eight other vulnerable states.

That's cause for some concern for one longtime New Mexico Democratic strategist, who cautioned that Heinrich and his allies shouldn't wait to litigate Domenici's negatives in paid media.

"I wouldn't wait until September to frame a Domenici in New Mexico," they said. "What I would hope right now is that the allies are thinking about how to come in — \$2 million will get you a summer of media."

Another Heinrich ally agreed. "I'm surprised that there's not more interest," said that Democratic operative, chiding national strategists for focusing more on Maryland's Senate race than New Mexico's despite the former's significant Democratic lean.

The race may be approaching an inflection point in the coming weeks. Both campaigns and outside groups are likely to poll the race following Domenici's initial ad blitz to gauge how much her unanswered positive messaging moves the needle, and use those findings to inform their summer spending decisions.

The Bottom Line

If New Mexico is in serious jeopardy for Democrats by the fall, the majority is likely long gone. That makes it a much lower priority for both parties than a dozen other Senate races.

But the state's unique demographic makeup and the particular circumstances surrounding Domenici's wealth and family name make this race worth watching. Local New Mexico strategists are vocal that the state is not as Democratic as its outcomes make it seem, and caution that outside investment might be necessary at some point.

For now, both parties are in wait-and-see mode. If one or more outside groups begins to invest over the summer, that's a sign this race has risen into the ranks of the more competitive contests this cycle.



Statewide Election Results for New Mexico

