

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

JUNE 16, 2023

VOLUME 7, NO. 12

2024 Senate Ratings

BATTLEGROUND

Democratic-Held (8)

MI Open (Stabenow, D)
Baldwin (D-Wis.)
Brown (D-Ohio)
Casey (D-Penn.)
Kaine (D-Va.)
Manchin (D-W.V.)
Rosen (D-Nev.)
Tester (D-Mont.)

Republican-Held (1)

Cruz (R-Texas)

Independent-Held (1)

Sinema (I-Ariz.)

Solid Democratic (14)

CA Open (Feinstein, D)
DE Open (Carper, D)
MD Open (Cardin, D)
Cantwell (D-Wa.)
Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)
Heinrich (D-N.M.)
Hirono (D-Hawaii)
King (I-Maine)
Klobuchar (DFL-Minn.)
Menendez (D-N.J.)
Murphy (D-Ct.)
Sanders (I-Vt.)
Warren (D-Mass.)
Whitehouse (D-R.I.)

Solid Republican (10)

IN Open (Braun, R)
Barrasso (R-Wy.)
Blackburn (R-Tenn.)
Cramer (R-N.D.)
Fischer (R-Neb.)
Hawley (R-Mo.)
Ricketts (R-Neb.)
Romney (R-Utah)
Scott (R-Fla.)
Wicker (R-Miss.)

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

CALENDAR

July 20	FIFA Women's World Cup starts
Aug. 8	Mississippi Governor Primary
Aug. 10	Louisiana Governor Filing Deadline
Aug. 29	Mississippi Governor Primary Runoff (if necessary)

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Pennsylvania Senate: GOP Searches for Key to Victory

By Erin Covey

After fumbling away an opportunity to win a competitive U.S. Senate race in Pennsylvania in 2022, Republicans have a second chance in 2024. But in many ways, unseating Democratic Sen. Bob Casey will be an even greater challenge.

Joe Biden barely won the Keystone State two years prior, and Republicans should have been in a decent position to hold the open seat left by retiring GOP Sen. Pat Toomey last cycle. But at the top of the ticket, Christian nationalist state Sen. Doug Mastriano didn't come close to winning the open governor's seat, dragging down every other Pennsylvania Republican on the ballot. The Senate race was more competitive, but daytime TV star and longtime New Jersey resident Dr. Mehmet Oz had his own baggage and lost to Lt. Gov. John Fetterman by 5 points. For the first time since the 1940s, Pennsylvania had two elected Democrats in the U.S. Senate.

With Pennsylvania's senior senator up for re-election this cycle, Republicans have a chance to redeem themselves. But even if Republicans can avoid the pitfalls of 2022, Casey remains a formidable opponent who will be difficult to topple.

The senator has been elected to statewide office six times over the past 26 years, and his father, Bob Casey Sr., was involved in Pennsylvania politics beginning in the 1960s. In 2018, his most recent re-election bid, Casey Jr. defeated his Republican opponent by 13 points — a greater margin than any other Senate Democrat running in a state that Trump had won in 2016.

Over the past several months Mastriano had publicly toyed with the idea of running for Senate, threatening to jeopardize Republicans' prospects for the second cycle in a row. When the state senator announced in May he wouldn't run against Casey, Republicans' relief was palpable.

GOP leaders believe they will have a strong challenger this cycle in David McCormick, a former Bush administration official and hedge fund CEO who narrowly lost the 2022 Republican Senate primary to Oz. McCormick has yet to announce a campaign but is widely expected to run — especially now that he has a clearer path to the Republican nomination.

The Lay of the Land

Pennsylvania, a longtime battleground state, has gone through significant political shifts over the past several years — while still remaining stubbornly purple.

Trump's 2016 campaign accelerated the state's political realignment, as historically Democratic regions in the southwest and the northeast

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Supreme Court's Decision Could Reshape House Battlefield

By Erin Covey and Jacob Rubashkin

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Alabama's congressional map violates the Voting Rights Act by diluting the political power of Black voters, and ordered the state to draw a new map — a stunning decision from a court that has weakened the law over the past decade.

Alabama's current congressional map has only one majority-Black district, the Birmingham-based 7th District, though more than a quarter of the state's voting-age population is Black. The 7th is also the only Alabama district represented by a Democrat, Rep. Terri Sewell. Last year, a panel of three judges (one appointed by President Bill Clinton and two appointed by President Donald Trump) had ordered the GOP-controlled state legislature to draw a map with a second district giving Black voters the ability to elect their own representative. The state appealed the ruling to the



Terri Sewell

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Supreme Court, which allowed the challenged map to be used for the 2022 elections while it assessed the case. The court was widely expected to overrule the three-judge panel's decision.

The court's ruling has crucial consequences in the battle for control of the U.S. House in 2024, and not only affects Alabama's map but also maps in Louisiana and Georgia where similar lawsuits have been pursued. Democrats could have the opportunity to pick up three seats across these states, depending on how quickly the legal processes play out. Because voting is so racially polarized — especially in the South — the creation of more majority-Black districts is highly likely to result in more Democratic-won seats.

In Louisiana, a federal district court judge ruled last year that the state's map discriminated against Black voters. Though the state's population is one-third Black, only one of Louisiana's six congressional districts is majority-Black. The U.S. Supreme Court put the case on hold until it ruled on the Alabama case. And in Georgia, three lawsuits allege that the state's congressional map violates the Voting Right Act.

Multiple cases in Texas challenge the Lone Star State's congressional

map on Voting Rights Act grounds as well. Unlike the other lawsuits, which allege the dilution of Black communities' voting power, the Texas cases primarily argue that the map dilutes the voting power of Latino communities. These cases aren't as far along as the cases in Georgia and Louisiana, and are less likely to be resolved ahead of 2024.

The decision adds another wrinkle to the redistricting landscape heading into the 2024 election cycle. In North Carolina, the GOP-controlled state legislature plans to redraw the map to be more favorable to Republicans, potentially targeting up to four Democratic incumbents. Today's decision may make it less likely they target Rep. Don Davis — among the four Democrats who represent potentially affected districts, his contains the largest proportion of Black voters. Currently, Democrats and Republicans evenly divide the congressional delegation, 7-7. The picture is slightly murkier but still not promising for Democrats in Ohio, where a new map will be drawn by a GOP-controlled state legislature that could further endanger three Democrats who currently represent competitive districts.

On the opposite side of the ledger, Democrats are hopeful that new liberal majorities on the top courts in Wisconsin and New York will result in the creation of more favorable maps in both of those states. Lawsuits in both cases are still pending.

South Carolina's congressional map is also facing a legal challenge, but not based on the Voting Right Act — a panel of federal judges ruled earlier this year that the state's 1st District (held by Republican Rep. Nancy Mace) was racially gerrymandered and violated the 14th Amendment. Republicans in the state appealed the case to the Supreme Court, which will hear arguments for the case this fall.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, called the Supreme Court's Alabama ruling "a victory for democracy and a reaffirmation that the voices of Black voters matter."

"This decision will affect redistricting cases across the country and help deliver a House of Representatives that better reflects the diversity of our nation," DelBene said in the statement, alluding to the ripple effects this ruling will have on states like Louisiana and Georgia.

The National Republican Congressional Committee's spokesperson accused Democrats of attempting "to rig the game." In a statement, NRCC communications director Jack Pandol said that "Republicans will grow our majority in spite of Democrats' legal end-runs around the voters who rejected their policies last November."



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New York 4: South Shore Standoff

By Jacob Rubashkin

Democrats' path back to the House majority runs squarely through New York. Six districts in the Empire State voted for Joe Biden for president in 2020 but a Republican for Congress in 2022, an embarrassing set of defeats for a party that otherwise exceeded electoral expectations.

Nowhere was that defeat more cutting than in New York's 4th District, where a surprise retirement kicked off an election that ended in Democrats losing a seat that its statewide and congressional candidates routinely carried by double-digit margins.

The 4th is now at the top of national Democrats' target list, and is must-win territory for the party and its new leader, New York's own Hakeem Jeffries.

The race could be headed for a rematch, in which the political environment would make all the difference.

The Lay of the Land

New York's 4th District is a Long Island-based seat located directly east of Queens. It spans the southern half of Nassau County and is largely coterminous with the Town of Hempstead.

The district is suburban and wealthy, with a median household income of \$120,000 (the national median is \$70,000). Just under 45 percent of the district's residents 25 and older have a bachelor's degree, 8 percent higher than the national average.

The 4th is racially diverse. Half of the population is white, 22 percent is Hispanic, 19 percent is Black, and 8 percent is Asian. However, the district's citizen voting-age population is slightly whiter (60 percent) and less Hispanic (15 percent). The Black and Hispanic populations are concentrated in the center of the district, in the villages of Hempstead and Freeport.

Politically, the district is the most Democratic-leaning of the four seats on Long Island. It would have voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, 55-42 percent, and for Biden in 2020 by a similar margin, 57-42 percent. Sen Chuck Schumer would have won it, 67-31 percent, in the 2016 Senate race, and Gov. Andrew Cuomo would have carried it handily, 60-39 percent, in 2018.

But in 2022, Democrats collapsed all across Long Island. As Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul limped to a 6-point victory statewide, she *lost* the 4th District by 6 points, 53-47 percent. Schumer, who faced an unknown, unfunded opponent, eked out just a 1-point victory in the 4th, 50-49 percent.

And Anthony D'Esposito, the Republican nominee for Congress narrowly won his race, 52-48 percent.

The Democratic Candidates

Two Democrats have filed to run against D'Esposito: former Hempstead Town Supervisor Laura Gillen, and attorney and Olympian Sarah Hughes.

Gillen, 54, was the Democratic nominee for this seat in 2022. Previously, she served one term as Hempstead town supervisor from 2018 to 2020.

An attorney, Gillen graduated from Georgetown (1991) and New York University law school (2000) and worked in commercial litigation on Long Island. Her first run for office came in 2013, when she challenged

incumbent Republican Nassau County Clerk Maureen O'Connor and lost 57-43 percent.

Four years later, Gillen won an upset victory in the race for town supervisor of Hempstead (pop. 770,000), becoming the first Democrat to win the office in over 100 years when she defeated incumbent Anthony Santino, 51-49 percent. However, just two years later, Gillen lost re-election to Republican Don Clavin by a similarly narrow margin, 50-49 percent.

When Gillen ran to succeed retiring Democratic Rep. Kathleen



Courtesy Sarah Hughes

Sarah Hughes

Rice in 2022, she faced a competitive Democratic primary against Malverne Mayor Keith Corbett and Nassau County legislator Carrié Solages. Gillen won by a substantial margin, 63-24 percent, but spent significantly to get there. While

D'Esposito had no primary and was able to begin spending on the general election quickly, Gillen had to take a month to replenish her coffers. Ultimately, Gillen lost narrowly, as late intervention from outside groups couldn't stop the GOP onslaught on Long Island.

Gillen's campaign team includes media consultant Meredith Kelly of Declaration Media, pollster Jeff Liszt of Impact Research, and direct mail consultant Isaac Goldberg of BerlinRosen. Kelly is new to the team, replacing media consultant John Del Cecato of AKPD, who has retired; Liszt and Goldberg are holdovers from last cycle.

Hughes, 38, is best known for winning the gold medal in singles figure skating at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. The Great Neck-born Hughes graduated from Yale in 2009 and received a law degree from University of Pennsylvania in 2018; she is currently pursuing an MBA at Stanford.

After retiring from skating, Hughes was involved in a number of Olympic and athletic organizations including the Womens' Sports Foundation, and was part of the development group that unsuccessfully tried to convert a Bronx armory into a skating center. More recently, she was an associate at Proskauer Rose and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Hughes' campaign team includes media consultants at GMMB, pollster Mike Bocian of GBAO, and direct mail by Max Kramer of Threshold Group, who worked for Gillen last cycle.

The Democratic Primary

Local Democratic sources say that Gillen, as the nominee from last year, begins the primary as the favorite over Hughes, whose moment on the national stage came over two decades ago and has never run for office.

Hughes has not officially launched her bid. Her May 17 filing with the FEC was covered extensively by national media outlets, but other than

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putting up a sparse website and donation page, she hasn't engaged in public campaigning and isn't expected to formally launch until later this summer. Until mid-June she was in California finishing her first year of business school.

Nevertheless, Gillen's allies are preparing to be outraged by Hughes, who they see as having a potentially lucrative network due to her Olympian status and Ivy League pedigree. But "money only gets you so far" in the brutally expensive New York media market, said one pro-Gillen strategist. Another Gillen ally argued that once both candidates surpassed a "threshold level" of fundraising needed to run direct mail and field programs, the difference between the two candidates' hauls mattered less unless Hughes outraises Gillen by several multiples.

But at least one national Democrat unaligned with either campaign expressed skepticism that Hughes would report a large fundraising quarter in mid-July, given her low-key approach to campaigning thus far.

One pro-Gillen strategist estimated Gillen would need to raise \$1 million for the primary, and another \$3 to \$4 million for the general election, but stressed that figure depended on how much Hughes raises.

In 2022, Gillen faced headwinds in the primary when state party chairman Jay Jacobs, who is also the head of the Nassau County party, backed Corbett and suggested Gillen would be unable to win a general election. One Democratic source says that Gillen's relationship with Jacobs is much better this year — but notably, Jacobs gave a quote to the *New York Post* praising Hughes when she filed to run.

Hughes' theory of the case is based on her personal profile as a hometown hero who has special resonance among the older voters that will dominate the electorate, especially because her Olympic win came as an upset and so soon after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Her allies will likely argue that her post-Olympic career as a lawyer, including pro bono work on voting rights and reproductive health, will help her make a case beyond her celebrity.

Hughes is hoping that Democrats' recent woes on Long Island will leave primary voters looking to try something new, creating a lane for a previously non-political figure against a past officeholder. A Democratic source involved in the race also argued that Hughes' lack of a political record was an advantage, given how effectively Republicans have tied local lawmakers to unpopular policies in the city and Albany.

National Democratic strategists are divided on Hughes' prospects. One operative told *Inside Elections* that "Sarah Hughes can tell a dynamic story for sure," but another hedged more, saying, "I think she could be a wonderful candidate some day, but I don't think that it's this year."

Hughes may have to overcome a geographic disadvantage. Her hometown of Great Neck is on Long Island's North Shore, and she's never lived in the 4th District (she says she is looking to move there). Gillen, meanwhile, began her primary campaign with a direct nod to



Laura Gillen

Courtesy: Gillen Campaign

her own local roots: "I grew up in the district, as did my husband, and now I'm raising my four children here," she says in her launch video. One pro-Gillen strategist was more blunt, telling *Inside Elections* that "being a figure skater from Great Neck doesn't play in the cop and firefighter communities or the Black and Brown communities on the South Shore."

Another Democratic operative pushed back on that notion, saying "When you talk to people, they're from Long Island, that's their primary identification. I don't think people will associate themselves with a congressional district."

Some local and national Democratic strategists posit that Hughes' bid for the 4th District is a result of the messy situation unfolding in the neighboring 3rd District, where she grew up (a viewpoint echoed in Long Island local paper *Newsday*). Democratic operatives almost universally anticipate a special election to replace Rep. George Santos, who has been indicted on federal charges. And they expect local party leaders to tap former Rep. Tom Suozzi as their standard-bearer in that race (in New York, there are no primaries in special elections). That expectation has not stopped a number of Democrats from launching campaigns in the 3rd District. But it offers a compelling reason for why Hughes, who, unlike many of the 3rd District hopefuls isn't a current or former elected official, would find the less complicated 4th District a more attractive opportunity.

The Republican Incumbent

D'Esposito, 41, has the distinction of representing the most Democratic-leaning district of any Republican in Congress, measured by the 2020 presidential election results.

The Hofstra University (2004) graduate was an officer in the New York City Police Department from 2006 to 2020, rising to the rank of detective, and was also the chief of the Island Park Volunteer Fire Department.

D'Esposito comes from a family enmeshed in the politics of Hempstead, and was appointed to the town council in 2016 to represent a district that included Island Park and East Rockaway. He won a full term in 2017, 57-42 percent, and won re-election in 2021, 66-34 percent.

In 2022, D'Esposito was the only candidate to run in the GOP primary for this district and had the full support of the Nassau County GOP, which viewed him as a rising star. He leveraged his profile as a Hispanic and Italian tough-on-crime police officer to pull off an upset win in the general election, aided by the GOP's resurgence on Long Island.

In Congress, D'Esposito sits on the Transportation, Homeland Security, and House Administration committees. He is a member of the Republican Governance Group (formerly known as the Tuesday Group) and the Main Street Partnership, two caucuses that serve as less stridently conservative counterweights to the House Freedom Caucus.

D'Esposito was the first Republican member of Congress to call on Santos to resign, and his office has taken over some of the constituent services for residents of Santos's district.

His campaign team includes general consultant Tom Dunham of Brabender Cox, which also does the campaign's TV ads and direct mail, and pollster John McLaughlin.

How It Plays Out

The 2022 results in New York were embarrassing for Democrats — the party's losses in six Biden-won seats arguably cost them the House

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majority — and Jeffries has made clear that the path back to control runs squarely through his backyard.

Inside Elections wrote last year that “as a non-incumbent with average fundraising, Gillen was not a particularly attractive target for outside support. And even when it became clear in October that New York was a trouble spot for Democrats, Gillen was competing for attention with five other New York districts, all of which looked like more urgent concerns given their partisan leans.”

This cycle, New York is not just a major battleground, but along with California it is the primary battleground; major Democratic outside group House Majority PAC has already embarked on a \$45 million mission to recapture the majority through New York. And other groups such as EMILY’s List are sure to pay attention here as well, given that both potential Democratic nominees are women.

That outside support could be critical for the eventual nominee, especially if the primary develops into an expensive contest that prevents either candidate

from turning their sights on D’Esposito until later in the cycle, after the incumbent has already begun paid media. House Majority Forward, the issue-advocacy group affiliated with House Majority PAC, has already run \$86,000 in digital ads against D’Esposito.

For D’Esposito, a focus on his individual profile will be paramount to overcoming the partisan lean of the district. He earned a reputation as a relentless retail politician who attends every local event and treats his congressional runs “as if he were a running for town supervisor,” said one national GOP strategist.

Messaging on crime and immigration will continue to be central to his campaign. Republican strategists believe that even without a crime-dominated gubernatorial race setting the agenda, D’Esposito will be able to leverage Nassau County voters’ concerns about crime in New York City as an advantage, especially from his perch on the Homeland Security committee. And while Democrats understand they have to be more proactive in responding to attacks that they are soft on crime — often by pointing to GOP efforts to defund the FBI or the Jan. 6 attacks — one Democratic strategist acknowledged that “it makes it more complicated” to lob those attacks against a retired detective, whose “elect an expert” ads last cycle highlighted his law enforcement bona fides.

Now that D’Esposito is an incumbent, Democrats will work to tie him to the Republican House majority (and not just to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy but more polarizing figures such as Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene), using the specter of full GOP control of the federal government to make a partisan case.

Democrats specifically say that D’Esposito’s vote on the first debt ceiling bill, a GOP-led effort that would have slashed spending significantly across the board, will be an effective cudgel (D’Esposito eventually voted for the bipartisan bill negotiated by Biden and McCarthy). And Democrats will look to make abortion a top issue again by leveraging D’Esposito’s vote on the “born alive” bill and comments



Anthony D’Esposito

Courtesy D’Esposito Campaign

he made supporting an abortion ban late in the 2022 election.

And party operatives hint that they may try to introduce hits on D’Esposito they chose not to litigate in paid media last time, mainly accusations of self-dealing and nepotism on the Hempstead Town Council, but there’s disagreement on how effective that may be. One strategist suggested that, rather than focus on the specifics, that line of messaging could be used to associate D’Esposito with former President Donald Trump, who is facing federal and New York criminal charges.

Democrats are hopeful that the increased turnout of a presidential year will be a big boost to their prospects. It is a common refrain among Democratic strategists that 2022 saw Republicans turnout at presidential year levels in the state while Democrats turned out at midterm levels. In Nassau County, Republicans turned out at a rate of 65 percent, while Democrats saw just 51 percent turnout. That helped D’Esposito counteract a 14-point voter registration disadvantage in the district, where registered Democrats make up 43 percent while Republicans comprise 29 percent. Democratic strategists are happy that their candidates will not be sharing a ticket with Hochul, whose campaign earned low marks on its response to attacks on public safety and was seen as dragging the entire ticket down.

Democrats’ turnout woes were especially evident within the district’s Black and Hispanic communities. The state assembly district that cast the fewest votes in the entire state was a Village of Hempstead-area seat that is home to more than 40 percent of the 4th District’s Black and Hispanic populations.

Unlike in 2022, when Zeldin was winning the district by a comfortable margin, D’Esposito will have to outrun the top of the ticket to win re-election. In 2020, only seven victorious congressional candidates outran the presidential margin in their district by double digits, which will be D’Esposito’s task.

Redistricting Rumbles

Democrats are suing to disqualify the current New York congressional map, which was drawn by a court-appointed special master last year after an initial Democratic gerrymander was struck down.

The case is likely to end up at the New York Court of Appeals, the state’s highest court, which has undergone an ideological shift since last year when it ruled against the Democratic gerrymander.

Regardless of how the litigation resolves, it’s not clear if the boundaries of the 4th District will change substantially. The district remained largely unchanged from its 2010s iteration in both the initial legislature-drawn map and the special master-drawn map. Hempstead, with its compact borders and population nearly equivalent to a congressional district, remains an attractive building block for mapmakers.

The Bottom Line

With or without changes, New York’s 4th District will be one of the most competitive House races in the country and likely necessary for Democrats to win in order for the party to get back to the majority. The 4th is one of the lowest hanging fruits for the Democrats.

If a new map makes the district even slightly more Democratic, it could move it out of reach for Republicans, given their minimal margin for error. But if D’Esposito wins re-election, because of the local or national political environment or incumbent strength, and Republicans are holding onto other vulnerable seats in New York, then the GOP is likely to remain in the House majority.



Michigan 7: Behind the Scenes of the Race to Replace Slotkin

By Erin Covey

Democratic Rep. Elissa Slotkin announced her campaign to succeed retiring Sen. Debbie Stabenow in February, leaving open one of the most competitive congressional districts in the country. But more than three months later, no one on either side of the aisle has stepped up to the plate.

The clock is ticking for both parties. Michigan's 7th is at the top of the list of districts Democrats need to hold onto as they attempt to pick up the five seats necessary to take back control of the U.S. House in 2024. This district was already one of the most evenly-divided in the country — Joe Biden won the seat by just half a point in 2020 — and now Republicans won't have to go through one of the Democratic Party's most formidable incumbents.

In the weeks following Slotkin's Senate announcement, half a dozen Democratic politicians in the district were floated as prospective candidates. Lansing Mayor Andy Schor announced an



Elissa Slotkin

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

exploratory committee, and Barb Byrum, the Ingham County Clerk and the daughter of a former state house minority leader, expressed interest in running for the seat. Former state Sen. Curtis Hertel, state Sen. Sarah Anthony, and state Reps. Angela Witwer and Julie Brixie rounded out the list of potential candidates.

But since then, Byrum and Schor have announced they've decided not to run. And behind the scenes, Democrats have largely consolidated behind Hertel, who has served as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's legislative director since the beginning of the year.

Though this race has developed at a relatively slow pace, Democratic strategists aren't particularly anxious about the timing — the party was much more concerned about the prospect of a contentious primary battle that could divide the party and drain valuable resources.

It's been similarly quiet on the GOP side. Since the beginning of the cycle, Republicans have widely expected Slotkin's 2022 opponent, former state Sen. Tom Barrett, to run again for the seat. Shortly after Slotkin's Senate announcement, Barrett's top campaign adviser made it clear that the former state senator planned to run again.

Barrett has yet to make an announcement. But Republican sources who spoke with *Inside Elections* still expect Barrett to launch a campaign later this summer, and see him as their best option in the district.

Succeeding Slotkin

Slotkin has developed a reputation as one of her party's strongest fundraisers over the past three cycles, setting a high bar for any Democrat who hopes to succeed her. "You'll need to walk and talk and have the same aura of success [as Slotkin]," as one Democratic strategist put it.

But Democrats don't anticipate that their eventual nominee will be able to raise the \$10 million that Slotkin brought in last cycle. Another strategist said the expectation would be closer to \$5 million.

Democrats believe that Hertel has the political chops necessary to

follow in the congresswoman's footsteps. He's represented parts of the 7th District for the past 15 years, as the Ingham County Register of Deeds from 2009 to 2014 and then as a state senator from 2015 to 2022.

Hertel's name is well known in the region — his father, Curtis Hertel Sr., was the speaker of the state House in the 1990s, and his uncle Dennis Hertel served in Congress from 1981 to 1993. Hertel Jr.'s brother, Kevin Hertel, currently serves in the state Senate.

Hertel also has close ties to Whitmer, who had previously held his state Senate seat. For the past five months, he's served as the governor's legislative director, lobbying for her policy priorities in a state legislature now controlled by Democrats, and his relationship to the popular governor (who just won re-election by double-digits) will be a boon to him. "Curtis is an experienced Whitmer hand who can win by running on her record," one Democratic consultant in Michigan told *Inside Elections*.

A few potential candidates, including Anthony and Brixie, have yet to rule out campaigns. But Democratic sources are skeptical that they'll run, leaving Hertel as the clear frontrunner for the Democratic nomination.

Waiting on Barrett

Barrett was seen as a top recruit last cycle — he had a military background and had unseated a Democratic state legislator in 2014. The Iraq War veteran served in the state House for four years before he was elected to the state Senate in 2018.

Though Barrett struggled with fundraising for his congressional campaign, raising \$2.8 million to Slotkin's \$10 million, Republicans are hopeful he'll raise more this time around. And it's highly unlikely that the fundraising gap will be as dramatic as it was in 2022.

If Barrett doesn't run, "there is a long line of potential talent who could run," according to one Republican who spoke with *Inside Elections*. But party strategists are still operating under the assumption that Barrett will announce a campaign this summer.

One potential alternative to Barrett would be former state House Speaker Tom Leonard, according to one Republican strategist.

The race for Michigan's 7th District is critically important in the battle for control of the House in 2024, and both parties' candidates will be expected to hit the ground running once they announce campaigns. **IE**

2024 Open House Seats

District	Outgoing Member	2022 Result	2020 Presidential Result	Rating
AZ-03	Ruben Gallego (D)	77%	Biden 75%	Solid Democratic
CA-12	Barbara Lee (D)	91%	Biden 89%	Solid Democratic
CA-30	Adam Schiff (D)	71%	Biden 72%	Solid Democratic
CA-47	Katie Porter (D)	52%	Biden 55%	Tilt Democratic
IN-03	Jim Banks (R)	65%	Trump 64%	Solid Republican
IN-05	Victoria Spartz (R)	61%	Trump 57%	Solid Republican
MD-06	David Trone (D)	55%	Biden 54%	Likely Democratic
MI-07	Elissa Slotkin (D)	52%	Biden 49.4%	Toss-up
TX-32	Colin Allred (D)	65%	Biden 66%	Solid Democratic
WV-02	Alex Mooney (R)	66%	Trump 68%	Solid Republican

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turned red while the Philadelphia suburbs became increasingly blue.

Since the last time Casey was on the ballot, those trends have continued. Republican-leaning counties in western Pennsylvania that 2018 GOP nominee Lou Barletta won by single-digits have become a darker shade of red, and rural counties in central Pennsylvania have continued to trend in Republicans' favor.

At the same time, the suburban counties that surround Philadelphia have become reliably Democratic, and Allegheny County has turned a deeper shade of blue. Democrats are making inroads in the suburbs of Harrisburg as well.

Though Democrats running statewide outperformed expectations in 2022, the presidential race is guaranteed to be competitive in Pennsylvania in 2024. Biden only won the state by 1.2 points in 2020, and a Morning Consult survey from the first quarter of 2023 showed his approval rating in the commonwealth at 41 percent.

Casey has had the benefit of running in friendly political environments; 2006 and 2018 were great years for Democrats, and President Barack Obama won the state by 5 points in 2012. The 2024 cycle won't likely be so favorable.

The Incumbent

Casey's identity is deeply intertwined with the Keystone State. The oldest son of a popular governor, he has a last name worth political gold, and his own political career stretches back to the mid-1990s.

"The Casey brand is very much associated with Pennsylvania," one Democratic strategist from the Keystone State told *Inside Elections*. "It's kind of hard to 'other' him."

The elder Casey served as the governor from 1987 to 1995 and was known for his staunch pro-life stance rooted in his Catholic faith — his battle with Planned Parenthood over Pennsylvania's abortion laws resulted in the landmark 1994



Bob Casey

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Supreme Court decision that bears his name.

Casey Jr., 63, first ran for office in 1996, when he won the election for state auditor. After serving for two terms in the position, the Scranton native won the race for state treasurer in 2004.

Ahead of the 2006 midterm cycle, Casey was recruited to run against Sen. Rick Santorum, and he defeated the Republican incumbent in a landslide, 18-point victory. He became the first Democrat since 1962 elected to a full Senate term in the commonwealth.

His next two re-election bids were closer; in 2012, he defeated wealthy Tea Party activist Tom Smith by 9 points, and in 2018, he defeated Barletta by 13 points.

Though Casey's name is well-known in the commonwealth, he's maintained a low profile in the Senate and has mostly avoided the national spotlight. As the top Democrat on the Senate Aging Committee, he's advocated for expanding funding for home care for senior adults and people with disabilities, and as the chairman of the Senate HELP Committee's subcommittee on Children and Families he's pushed for increasing federal pre-K funding.

He's intentionally leaned into a Mr. Rogers-esque brand, filming a series of videos over the past two election cycles that feature him methodically breaking down election results in front of a homemade map of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. He brought the map back out for his 2024 campaign announcement, telling Pennsylvanians that "it's time to run" as he zipped up his pullover sweater.

The moderate Democrat, who once identified as pro-life and opposed gun control, has gradually moved to the left on social issues over the past several years. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, Casey began supporting federal gun control measures to expand background checks and ban assault weapons. And after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year, he backed the Women's Health Protection Act. Just four years earlier, he had broken with his party to vote for legislation that would have banned abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

In 2018, Casey's centrist reputation helped him win back some territory that Democrats lost in 2016, particularly in the northeastern region of the state that he hails from. He won Lackawanna County (Scranton) by 23 points after Clinton only won it by 3.5 points, and lost Luzerne County (Wilkes-Barre) by 8 points after Clinton lost it by 19 points. In southwest Pennsylvania, the senator won Beaver County by 4 points, after Trump won it by 18 points in 2016.

"Are we going to win the Scranton media market? I don't know. But we will do better than a lot of Democrats here," one Democratic consultant based in Pennsylvania told *Inside Elections*.

The Potential Republican Field

Republican leaders in D.C. and Pennsylvania are making a concerted effort to avoid a repeat of the 2022 GOP primary and unite around a strong candidate: McCormick (hopefully).

The former hedge fund CEO and Army veteran is taking concrete steps toward another Senate campaign, and Republican leaders, including NRSC Chairman Steve Daines and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, have made it clear that McCormick is their preferred nominee.

Republican strategists who spoke with *Inside Elections* were confident that McCormick was close to announcing a campaign. "McCormick's going to get in when he wants to get in," one Republican source said.

Though McCormick, 57, first ran for political office in 2022, he has deep ties to the Republican establishment. Former President George W. Bush nominated him to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security in 2005, a role he served in for two years before becoming Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs for the final two years of Bush's administration. He became president of Ray Dalio's Bridgewater Associates in 2009 and went on to become CEO of the hedge fund in 2020.

During the Trump administration, McCormick was offered the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense position but declined, and his wife Dina Powell served as a deputy national security adviser. He was also considered as a potential successor to former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis. Those Trumpworld ties enabled him to secure the support of former administration officials including Hope Hicks and Stephen Miller in 2022.

After spending much of the past two decades in Connecticut and Washington D.C., McCormick faced accusations of carpetbagging during his 2022 run, though unlike Oz, McCormick is from Pennsylvania originally. He was born in western Pennsylvania and grew up on a Christmas tree farm in Bloomsburg (which McCormick and Powell still own). He left the state to attend West Point, and after graduating he served in the Army for five years, deploying to Iraq in the early stages of the Gulf

Continued on page 8

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War. After earning a Ph.D. from Princeton, he returned to the Keystone State where he worked as a consultant for the next several years.

McCormick's substantial personal wealth — he listed assets worth between \$116 million and \$290 million on his personal financial disclosure statement last cycle — makes him a particularly attractive candidate. He loaned his campaign more than \$14 million last cycle.

And since he's less dependent on outside donors, McCormick doesn't face the same pressure to announce a campaign early.

If McCormick runs, he'd start his campaign as the clear frontrunner in the Republican primary, now that Mastriano has ruled out a campaign. But he isn't guaranteed a clear path to the nomination.

State Treasurer Stacy Garrity and former U.S. Ambassador to Denmark Carla Sands (the fourth place finisher in the 2022 GOP primary) haven't ruled out campaigns, and former Rep. Keith Rothfus told *Politico* he was considering running.

Republicans who spoke with *Inside Elections* were skeptical that these potential candidates would get in the race, unless McCormick didn't run. Garrity is up for re-election next November, making her less likely to risk giving up her current seat. And Rothfus wouldn't be able to raise the money to compete with McCormick in the primary.

Kathy Barnette, the conservative activist who came in third place in last year's Senate primary with 25 percent of the vote, is on Vivek Ramaswamy's payroll as the national grassroots director for his presidential campaign, and has ruled out running in 2024.

How It Plays Out

This has the potential to be Casey's most competitive race yet, largely because the national political environment isn't likely to skew in Democrats' favor.

Some Republican strategists are hoping that McCormick can replicate then-Sen. Toomey's path to victory in 2016, the last time a Pennsylvania Republican won a Senate race. Toomey spent the entire campaign cycle attempting to distance himself from Trump, and would not even say that he voted for him up until Election Day.

That tactic enabled the Republican senator to run several points ahead of Trump in Philadelphia's suburban collar counties (Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Bucks). But those counties have only turned bluer since over the past seven years. In 2016, Democratic Senate nominee Katie McGinty won the four counties overall by 4 points, 51-47 percent, while in 2022 Fetterman won them by 21 points, 59-38 percent.

"They still gave [Trump] the benefit of the doubt [in 2016]," one GOP operative more skeptical of replicating the Toomey playbook said. "Then we saw for four years an erosion among those voters."

Toomey ultimately won by just 1.5 points, just slightly better than Trump's 0.7 point victory. Even if McCormick is able to walk the Toomey tightrope, the Republican presidential nominee will need to win the state or lose by a narrow margin for that strategy to be successful.

Republican strategists are uncertain about how having Trump at the top of the ticket would impact the Senate race; though he's clearly a drag on Republicans running in the suburbs, his ability to turn out white working class voters in more rural areas could offset that loss.

Trump's chief rival for the presidential nomination has made a concerted effort to burnish his Rust Belt bonafides. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis spoke at the conservative Pennsylvania Leadership Conference in April, and has talked about his father's roots in western Pennsylvania.

On the other side of the aisle, most Democrats aren't particularly

concerned about Biden dragging down Casey. One Democratic strategist said that despite the president's unpopularity, "he's still a comfortable figure in Pennsylvania." Biden and Casey, who were both born in Scranton, are personally close, and the senator was an early supporter of Biden's presidential campaign.

Democratic strategists don't expect that to change. They're also confident in Casey's ability to outrun Biden. According to *Inside Elections'* Vote Above Replacement metric, Casey performed nearly 4 points better than an average Democrat in his 2018 re-election. The last time Casey was on the ballot in a presidential cycle, he ran two points ahead of the



Courtesy McCormick Campaign

David McCormick

top of the ticket; Casey won re-election with 54 percent of the vote while Obama won the state by 52 percent.

Another unknown factor is how much the fallout from the Supreme Court's ruling on *Dobbs* will hinder Republicans' prospects in 2024.

Exit polls showed that abortion was the most important issue for Pennsylvania voters in the midterms, and Democratic gubernatorial nominee Josh Shapiro and Fetterman both made the issue central to their campaigns. Mastriano was unabashedly against abortion, without any exceptions, and though Oz attempted to moderate his position after the GOP primary, he had previously called abortion "murder."

Abortion is legal in Pennsylvania up until the 24th week of pregnancy. But the issue remains in the spotlight, as Republicans in the state Legislature are attempting to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot next year which would affirm that the state constitution does not protect abortion rights.

McCormick identifies as staunchly pro-life, and during a primary debate he said he opposed abortion in all cases, except to protect the life of the mother.

Another issue guaranteed to come up in the race is the candidates' positions on China. In 2022, McCormick was attacked relentlessly for embracing free trade and globalization during the Bush era and overseeing investments in China worth billions of dollars at Bridgewater. Anticipating this line of attack from Democrats next year, Republicans are going on offense — earlier this year the NRSC released a digital ad hitting Casey for investing state worker pensions into a firm linked to the Chinese government when he was state treasurer.

The Bottom Line

Casey's Democratic colleagues in West Virginia, Montana, and Ohio remain the most vulnerable senators up for re-election in 2024 because of the nature of their states.

But Pennsylvania is still a priority for Republicans. National Republican strategists are calling the state their fourth-best pick-up opportunity (particularly as the GOP lacks strong candidates in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Arizona), and early polls from nonpartisan and Republican firms show Casey leading McCormick by anywhere from 5 to 12 points.

Though Mastriano's decision puts Republicans in a better position to avoid a nasty primary, and focus their resources on defeating Casey, the senator still has a clear edge in 2024.

Report Shorts

California Senate. Silicon Valley executive Lexi Reese, most recently the COO of payroll processor Gusto, launched an exploratory bid as a Democrat. While Reese has assembled a credible team and has the capacity to self-fund, it's not clear she'll be able to break into the top tier of candidates that already includes Reps. Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee. But she could make it less likely two Democrats make it to the general election by further splitting the Democratic vote in the primary. Solid Democratic.

California's 47th District. EMILY's List, the Democratic group that backs pro-choice women, endorsed attorney Joanna Weiss, giving her a boost against Democratic state Sen. Dave Min. Min had a clear shot at a spot in the general election until he was arrested for driving under the influence. Former state Rep. Scott Baugh is the likely GOP standard-bearer in this Orange County district. The seat is open because Democratic Rep. Katie Porter is running for the Senate. Tilt Democratic.

Maryland's 6th District. State Del. Lesley Lopez launched her campaign to succeed Rep. David Trone, joining a field that now includes fellow state Del. Joe Vogel and 2020 1st District nominee Mia Mason. More entrants are expected in this Western Maryland seat, including former Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner and Biden official April McClain-Delaney, the wife of former Rep. John Delaney. Likely Democratic.

Oregon's 5th District. Metro President Lynn Peterson announced her challenge to GOP Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer in one of the most competitive districts in the country. Peterson will likely face 2022 Democratic nominee Jamie McLeod-Skinner and potentially state Rep. Janelle Bynum in the Democratic primary. Chavez-DeRemer won narrowly with 51 percent in 2022 and is one of just 18 Republicans in a district Joe Biden carried in 2022. The 5th stretches from some Portland suburbs and the Willamette Valley south to Bend and Redmond in Central Oregon. Toss-up.

Rhode Island's 1st District Special. Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos released a poll showing her leading the crowded Democratic primary field vying to replace former Rep. David Cicilline. Matos had 22 percent, followed by state Rep. Aaron Regunberg with 9 percent. The survey was conducted by Expedition Strategies (June 5-8, 600 LVs), and included 11 candidates. The all-important primary will be Sept. 5. Solid Democratic.

West Virginia's 2nd District. Speaker Kevin McCarthy endorsed state Treasurer Riley Moore in the open seat race to replace GOP Rep. Alex Mooney, who is running for the Senate. Moore is the nephew of GOP Sen. Shelley Moore Capito. Considering President Donald Trump won the district, which includes the eastern and northern parts of the state, with 68 percent in 2020, the Republican primary is the most important race. Solid Republican.

Wisconsin Senate. National Republicans lost out on a top Senate recruit when Rep. Mike Gallagher ruled out a bid against Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin. Republicans still don't have any candidates here. Controversial former Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke is teasing a run, while

2012 Senate candidate Eric Hovde, Rep. Tom Tiffany, and staffing executive Scott Mayer are also considering bids. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell doesn't mention Wisconsin as a top takeover target but it's one of the most competitive states in the country. Battleground. **IE**

2024 House Ratings

Toss-Up (4D, 8R)

CA 13 (Duarte, R)	NY 3 (Santos, R)
CA 27 (Garcia, R)	NY 4 (D'Esposito, R)
CO 8 (Caraveo, D)	NY 17 (Lawler, R)
MI 7 (Open; Slotkin, D)	NY 22 (Williams, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)	OR 5 (DeRemer, R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)	WA 3 (Perez, D)

Tilt Democratic (3D)

CA 47 (Open; Porter, D)
PA 7 (Wild, D)
PA 8 (Cartwright, D)

Tilt Republican (7R)

AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)
CA 22 (Valadao, R)
IA 3 (Nunn, R)
MI 10 (James, R)
NY 19 (Molinaro, R)
VA 2 (Kiggans, R)

Lean Democratic (14D)

AK AL (Peltola, D)
CT 5 (Hayes, D)
IL 17 (Sorensen, D)
ME 2 (Golden, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)
MN 2 (Craig, DFL)
NV 1 (Titus, D)
NV 3 (Lee, D)
NH 1 (Pappas, D)
NY 18 (Ryan, D)
OR 6 (Salinas, D)
PA 17 (Deluzio, D)
VA 7 (Spanberger, D)
WA 8 (Schrier, D)

Lean Republican (6R)

CA 41 (Calvert, R)
CA 45 (Steel, R)
CO 3 (Boebert, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NY 1 (LaLota, R)
TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	172	168
Likely/Lean/Tilt	25	29
Total	197	197
Toss-up		12
Ohio/North Carolina		29
Needed for majority		218

Likely Democratic (12D)

CA 49 (Levin, D)
FL 9 (Soto, D)
FL 23 (Moskowitz, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
KS 3 (Davids, D)
MD 6 (Open; Trone, D)
MI 8 (Kildee, D)
NV 4 (Horsford, D)
NH 2 (Kuster, D)
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
VA 10 (Wexton, D)

Likely Republican (12R)

CA 3 (Kiley, R)
CA 40 (Kim, R)
FL 13 (Luna, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)
IA 2 (Hinson, R)
MT 1 (Zinke, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
SC 1 (Mace, R)
WI 1 (Steil, R)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Ohio and North Carolina ratings are being withheld pending new maps.

North Dakota Governor: Burgum Bows Out?

By Jacob Rubashkin

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum's decision to launch a long-shot bid for the GOP presidential nomination raises the possibility that the billionaire businessman will not seek a third term as the state's governor.

That means the Peace Garden State could see an open seat gubernatorial election for just the second time since 2000, and the first since 2016, when Burgum scored a major upset over then-Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem in the primary.

There's also the distinct possibility that Burgum could end his presidential campaign and seek a third term himself. The filing deadline isn't until April of next year, after the early presidential contests as well as Super Tuesday. "If he doesn't take off, he would absolutely come back and run for governor," one Republican strategist with extensive North Dakota experience told *Inside Elections*. Another longtime strategist plugged into the state concurred, saying "Burgum is the one to watch. All indications are that he would indeed run for a third term should the presidential race turn south for him."

If Burgum doesn't run, the Republican primary will be the most important contest in a state where Democrats haven't won a statewide election since 2012 or a gubernatorial race since 1988.

At the top of the list of gubernatorial hopefuls are Rep. Kelly Armstrong, Sen. Kevin Cramer, and Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller.

Cramer, who grew up in Kindred, is up for re-election to the Senate this year, so he would have to give up a guaranteed second term to pursue the governorship. Prior to his first election to the Senate in 2018 over Democratic incumbent Heidi Heitkamp, Cramer was the state's at-large House member. He had sought that position three times unsuccessfully before finally winning in 2012, with backing from the anti-tax Club for Growth and the Tea Party-aligned FreedomWorks. In Congress, Cramer has been a close ally of former President Donald Trump, who he endorsed early among his peers in the 2016 GOP primary. In the Senate, he sits on the Armed Services, Environment, Veterans' Affairs, and Banking committees.

Armstrong, who comes from the fast-growing oil town of Dickinson, is in his third term as the state's at-large congressman. Before he was elected to Congress in 2018, he was a state senator and the chairman of



Kelly Armstrong

the North Dakota GOP. In Congress, Armstrong sits on the Judiciary and Oversight committees, and is a member of the Republican Governance Group (formerly known as the Tuesday Group), which is a less conservative faction of the House GOP conference. Armstrong was one of 64 Republicans who voted to certify the 2020 Electoral College results in Arizona and Pennsylvania on Jan. 6, 2021, and also voted along with a small number of his GOP colleagues to codify same-sex marriage protections in 2022. However, he also has an 85 percent lifetime rating from Club for Growth (in the top third of Republicans) and received 100 percent ratings from the NRA and National Right to Life in 2022, as well as high scores from Americans for

Prosperity and the American Conservative Union.

Miller, a native of Bocket (pop. 34) has only been Burgum's deputy for a few months; she was appointed by the governor to replace Brent Sanford, with whom Burgum ran on a ticket in 2016 and 2020. Miller was previously the chief operating officer of Burgum's gubernatorial office



Courtesy Office of Tammy Miller

Tammy Miller

from 2020 to 2022, and before that had a long career in business at electrical distributor Border States, where she was CEO for 14 years. As lieutenant governor, Miller is the chair of the state investment board, which oversees \$20 billion in assets. While

this is her first public office, Miller was recruited to run for Senate in 2018 against Heitkamp, though she passed on a bid.

State Attorney General Drew Wrigley is another potential candidate. Wrigley was twice the U.S. Attorney for North Dakota, for eight years under President George W. Bush and two years under Trump. He was also the state's lieutenant governor for six years, serving alongside Gov. Jack Dalrymple, who appointed Wrigley to the role in 2010 upon his own ascension to the governor's mansion. Wrigley was appointed by Burgum as attorney general following Stenehjem's death in 2022, and won a full term later that year. Wrigley was seen as a top contender for the governorship in 2016 but declined to run after admitting to an extramarital affair.

State Secretary of State Michael Howe could also run, though at just 36 he is younger and has less political experience than the others. Elected statewide in 2022 to succeed 30-year incumbent Al Jaeger, Howe previously served in the state House from 2016 to 2022, and he managed Armstrong's 2018 congressional campaign.

And former state Rep. Rick Becker, a self-described "ultraconservative" who often clashed with Burgum and GOP leadership in the state legislature, could run. The plastic surgeon and radio host ran for governor in 2016 but dropped out at the state party convention. In 2022, he first challenged Sen. John Hoeven at the convention (where he nearly won the party's endorsement) and then ran as an independent in the general election, winning 19 percent of the vote.

North Dakota employs a convention-primary system to select a nominee. Party delegates meet at a convention to endorse a candidate, but that endorsement does not guarantee ballot access. Some candidates choose to drop out if they fail to secure an endorsement, as did Armstrong's 2018 opponent, Tom Campbell. Other convention losers, such as Burgum himself, have gone on to compete in and win the primary despite their earlier showing. And some candidates don't even bother to compete at the convention, like Cramer in his 2012 election.

If either Cramer or Armstrong runs, they would create another open statewide seat that would also attract significant attention, and could draw away potential challengers from the gubernatorial race.

But, said the longtime Republican strategist, "nobody is going to do anything until they see if Burgum catches any fire in the presidential race." **IE**