

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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2026 Senate Overview: Open-minded about Outcomes

By Nathan L. Gonzales and Jacob Rubashkin

Nineteen months before Election Day, it's healthy to be open-minded about what could happen in next year's midterm elections.

Under normal political conditions, Republicans would hold and potentially expand their Senate majority in 2026. Partisanship is powerful and Republicans are defending just one seat (Maine) in a state where Kamala Harris finished ahead of Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election. Meanwhile Democrats are defending two states (Georgia and Michigan) where Trump finished ahead of Harris, and Democrats need to gain four seats overall for a majority.

But it's not clear what the political climate will be like next year. President Trump's aggressive initial few months and effort to maximize and extend the power of the executive branch have created a high level of domestic and international uncertainty as well as economic instability. In the spirit of openmindedness, it's possible that voters punish Republican candidates over Trump's overreach, making seats in typically GOP states more competitive than usual, and putting a Democratic majority within reach.

But, also in the spirit of openmindedness, it's possible that the initial tumult of Trump's policies evens out over the next year and a half, spurs economic growth and fosters voters' sense of security. If voters feel confident in the direction of the country, they aren't likely to punish the party in power.

It's hard to believe the final scenario will be in the middle, but it's possible.

For now, Democrats are working to get as many credible candidates to run in as many seats as possible, even in very red states, to take advantage of potential opportunities if the political mood shifts against Republicans. Republicans are confident in the size of their majority and a map with few initial Democratic takeover targets. They also believe there's still time for Trump's economic agenda to succeed, and plan to put Democrats on the defensive in states where they haven't been successful in years by building on the president's winning coalition.

Democratic retirements outnumber Republicans three (Gary Peters, Jeanne Shaheen, and Tina Smith) to one (Mitch McConnell), and that ratio could grow soon. But that's not necessarily an indication of Democrats in decline. With the prospect of a good political environment, Democratic incumbents can leave now with some peace of mind that it might be easier for their party to hold the seat.

Republicans continue to wrestle with the Trump factor as the president toys with getting involved in races to help friends and punish enemies. But he may not want to risk alienating a sitting senator by endorsing against him and then needing their vote on critical issues before he leaves office.

At this early stage, Republicans are still favored to hold the majority. But it's unnecessary and even unwise to rule out the unique set of circumstances required for Democrats to win a majority in the face of the challenging map.

2026 Senate Ratings

BATTLEGROUND

Democratic-Held (4)

Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.)

MI Open (Gary Peters, D)

NH Open (Jeanne Shaheen, D)

MN Open (Tina Smith, DFL)

Republican-Held (2)

Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thom Tillis (R-N.C.)

Solid Democratic (9)

John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)

Chris Coons (D-Del.)

Dick Durbin (D-Ill.)

Ed Markey (D-Mass.)

Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.)

Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.)

Jack Reed (D-R.I.)

Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Solid Republican (20)

Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.)

Dan Sullivan (R-Ak.)

Tom Cotton (R-Ark.)

Ashley Moody (R-Fla.)

Jim Risch (R-Idaho)

Joni Ernst (R-Iowa)

Roger Marshall (R-Kan.)

KY Open (McConnell, R)

Bill Cassidy (R-La.)

Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)

Steve Daines (R-Mont.)

Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.)

Jon Husted (R-Ohio)

Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.)

Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)

Mike Rounds (R-S.D.)

Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.)

John Cornyn (R-Texas)

Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.V.)

Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.)

CALENDAR

June 10 New Jersey Gubernatorial Primary

July 15 Arizona's 7th Special Election Democratic Primary

Nov. 4 Texas' 18th District Special Primary

Nov. 4 New Jersey & Virginia Gubernatorial Elections

Report Shorts

Arizona's 7th District. Sen. Mark Kelly and his wife, former Rep. Gabby Giffords endorsed Adelita Grijalva in the race to replace the late Democratic Rep. Raúl Grijalva, Adelita's father. Former state Rep. Daniel Hernandez, who helped save Giffords' life in the 2011 shooting that killed six people, is also running. The special Democratic primary is July 15. Solid Democratic.



Adelita Grijalva

Courtesy Adelita Grijalva for Congress

California's 22nd District. Democrat Randy Villegas is challenging GOP Rep. David Valadao in the San Joaquin Valley seat. Villegas is a Visalia school board trustee and associate professor of political science at College of the Sequoias. Valadao defeated Democrat Rudy Salas 53-47 percent in 2024 and 52-48 percent in 2022. Lean Republican.

California's 25th District. Hemet City Councilman and Marine Corps veteran Joe Males announced his challenge to Democratic Rep. Raul Ruiz. This was a potential sleeper race mentioned in the April 3 edition of Inside Elections. Likely Democratic.

Colorado Governor. Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet announced he's running for governor to replace term-limited Democrat Jared Polis. Bennet is not up for re-election until 2028, so he doesn't have to give up his current office in order to run. But if Bennet wins, he'll get to appoint his successor, who will then have to run for the full term in 2028. Bennet began his Senate career with an appointment in January 2009. Solid Democratic.

Colorado's 8th District. Former Democratic Rep. Yadira Caraveo announced she's running for her old seat after losing to Republican Gabe Evans narrowly in 2024. State Rep. Manny Rutinel

2026 Governor Ratings

Battleground

Democratic-held (8D)

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

Republican-held (3R)

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

Solid Democratic (10D)

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

Solid Republican (15R)

- AL Open (Ivey, R)
- AK Open (Dunleavy, R)
- Sanders (R-Ark.)
- FL Open (DeSantis, R)
- Little (R-Idaho)
- Pillen (R-Neb.)
- Ayotte (R-N.H.)
- OH Open (DeWine, R)
- OK Open (Stitt, R)
- SC Open (McMaster, R)
- TN Open (Lee, R)
- Rhoden (R-S.D.)
- Abbott (R-Texas)
- Scott (R-Vt.)
- WY Open (Gordon, R)

2025 RACES

Tilt Democratic

- VA Open (Youngkin, R)

Lean Democratic

- NJ Open (Murphy, D)

is already in the race and raising money, setting up a potentially competitive primary. Caraveo has gone public about her recent mental health struggles after a lot of talk behind the scenes. Once again, this should be one of the most competitive races in the country. Toss-up.

Iowa Governor. GOP Gov. Kim Reynolds announced she will not seek re-election. A host of Republican candidates will likely take a look at the race to succeed her including Rep. Zach Nunn. (His 3rd District seat would be even more vulnerable for a Democratic takeover if he decides to run statewide.) 1st District Rep. Mariannette Miller-

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Meeks, who had a close re-election race in 2024, announced she won't run for governor. State Auditor Rob Sand was the most prominent name mentioned on the Democratic side but others could take a look now that there's not an incumbent. Battleground.

Michigan Governor. GOP Rep. John James and former state Attorney General Mike Cox both announced campaigns for governor. Even though he was just elected to the House in 2022, James' two previous runs for the U.S. Senate are evidence that he's always had his eye on bigger prizes. The race to replace term-limited Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer will be very competitive. Tudor Dixon could also join the race. And the race for James' 10th District should be competitive as well. Several Democrats are already running. Battleground.



John James

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

New Hampshire's 1st District. Democrat Stefany Shaheen is seriously considering a run for the open House seat being left behind by Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas, who is running for the open Senate seat being left behind by Democrat Jeanne Shaheen, Stefany's mother. Former Obama administration official Maura Sullivan, who finished second to Pappas in the 2018 Democratic primary, is already running this cycle. But other Democrats will likely look as well. Lean Democratic.

New Jersey's 1st District. Democratic Rep. Donald Norcross, 66, continues to be hospitalized and has been in intensive care after a gallbladder infection led to sepsis. Harris finished ahead of Trump by 19 points in the district in 2024, so the district is not competitive in a general election. Solid Democratic.

New York Governor. GOP Rep. Elise Stefanik is considering a run for governor, according to NBC News. She was originally supposed to be part of the Trump Administration as the country's ambassador to the United Nations, but that nomination was rescinded over concern that Speaker Mike Johnson didn't have enough votes on Capitol Hill to pass legislation and worry that Republicans might lose her Upstate New York district to Democrats in a special election. Her candidacy would complicate things for fellow Rep. Mike Lawler, who is actively exploring his own gubernatorial bid. If Stefanik runs with Trump's blessing, it would be hard for Lawler to win the primary. If he ends up staying in the House and running for re-election, that would dramatically improve Republicans' chances of holding his competitive seat. Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul is up for re-election and could face a primary of her own. Battleground.

Texas' 28th District. On Tuesday, former GOP Rep. Mayra Flores announced her challenge to Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar, who is under indictment. Hours later, her campaign announced that Flores had been hospitalized (she was later released). Flores won a June 2022 special election in Texas' 34th District, but lost subsequent races

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (3D, 7R)

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

Tilt Democratic (7D)

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

Tilt Republican (6R)

AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Lean Democratic (17D)

CA 21 (Costa, D)	NV 1 (Titus, D)
CA 27 (Whitesides, D)	NV 3 (Lee, D)
CA 49 (Levin, D)	NV 4 (Horsford, D)
CA 9 (Harder, D)	NY 19 (Riley, D)
FL 23 (Moskowitz, D)	NY 3 (Suozzi, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)	OR 5 (Bynum, D)
MN 2 (Craig, DFL)	TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)	VA 7 (Vindman, D)
NJ 9 (Pou, D)	

Lean Republican (5R)

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

Likely Democratic (7D)

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

Likely Republican (12R)

AK AL (Begich, R)	NY 21 (Stefanik, R)
AZ 2 (Crane, R)	PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
CA 3 (Kiley, R)	TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)
CO 5 (Crank, R)	VA 1 (Wittman, R)
FL 13 (Luna, R)	WI 1 (Steil, R)
IA 2 (Hinson, R)	
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)	

Pending New Map (3D)

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

	GOP	DEM
Solid	180	176
Likely/Lean/Tilt	23	31
Total	203	207
Toss-up		10
Ohio map TBD		15
Needed for majority		218

to Democratic Rep. Vicente Gonzalez in November 2022 and 2024 in a redrawn district. Lean Democratic.

Washington Capitals Hockey. Alex Ovechkin became the National Hockey League's all-time leading scorer, surpassing Wayne Gretzky's previous record of 894 goals. Ovechkin scored his first goal on October 5, 2005, one mile from the White House at the beginning of President George W. Bush's second term.

Wisconsin's 3rd District. Democratic Eau Claire City Council President Emily Berge filed to run against GOP Rep. Derrick Van Orden. Democrat Rebecca Cooke, who lost in the 2022 primary and then the 2024 general election to Van Orden by 2.7 points, is already running, raising \$1 million in the first three months of the year and had \$960,000 in the bank on March 31. Tilt Republican.



Alabama. Tommy Tuberville (R), elected 2020 (60%). If the former Auburn football coach decides to run for governor rather than seek a second term, there could be a GOP free-for-all to succeed him in the Senate. But nobody is making serious moves until Tuberville tips his hand, and it looks like the coach is sticking around. Former ironworker Kyle Sweetser is running as a Democrat. Solid Republican.

Alaska. Dan Sullivan (R), elected 2014 (48%) and 2020 (54%). This race might turn on the choice of former Rep. Mary Peltola, as she weighs running for Senate, governor or her old seat in the House. Peltola would be the strongest candidate for Democrats in any of those races; the last Democrat before her to win statewide in Alaska was Mark Begich in 2008. If Peltola passes on a bid, former Lt. Gov. Valerie Davidson could be a compelling candidate. Alaska's unique ranked-choice voting system makes this race more difficult to handicap, especially if multiple credible Democrats jump in. Solid Republican.

Arkansas. Tom Cotton (R), elected 2014 (57%) and 2020 (67%). Passed over for a Trump administration spot, Cotton still has his eye on higher office. If Democrats field a candidate in Arkansas that would be an improvement. Solid Republican.

Colorado. John Hickenlooper (D), elected 2020 (54%). While Colorado Republicans clawed back some territory in 2024 at the congressional level, the party is still in the wilderness when it comes to statewide races; the last Republican to win statewide was Heidi Ganahl for CU Board of Regents in 2016, and she was later trounced by incumbent Democrat Jared Polis in 2022 race for governor. Cory Gardner is the only Colorado Republican to win a Senate race in the last 20 years and he lost re-election in 2020 and is now chairman of Senate Leadership Fund, the go-to GOP outside group in charge of winning and holding the majority.

The real drama in the Centennial State is who Sen. Michael Bennet would appoint to replace himself if he wins the Democratic primary and general election for governor next year. Solid Democratic.

Delaware. Chris Coons (D), elected 2010 (57%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (59%). It's all quiet on the Delaware shore as Coons looks likely to sail to a fourth term. Solid Democratic.

Florida. Ashley Moody (R), appointed 2025. Moody has consolidated support from the Trump and DeSantis wings of the Florida GOP. Earlier in the year, Rep. Cory Mills said you could "probably guarantee" that he would run for Senate. But now that the congressman is facing dual investigations over a potential domestic violence incident and a breach of House ethics rules, he's downgraded his status to "eyeballing" the seat. Rep. Kat Cammack had also expressed interest in running at the beginning of the year but GOP sources say that appears less likely now. Florida Democrats haven't regained their footing after a brutal decade, and the party's bench features few standouts. Solid Republican.

Georgia. Jon Ossoff (D), elected 2020 (51%). Republicans are waiting on Gov. Brian Kemp to make a decision on whether to run for Senate or keep his powder dry ahead of a potential presidential bid in 2028. Kemp has frozen the field for the time being, but Reps. Buddy Carter, Rich McCormick, Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Mike Collins have

all expressed openness to running, as have state insurance commissioner John King and agriculture commissioner Tyler Harper. And there's a chance that a wealthy candidate from the Atlanta business community could emerge as well. Republican strategists believe Ossoff will be vulnerable no matter who their nominee is given the Republican lean of the state. But the Democrat is taking full advantage of his head start against the delayed GOP field; he reported raising \$11 million over the first three months of the year. Battleground.

Idaho. Jim Risch (R), elected 2008 (58%), 2014 (65%), and 2020 (63%). Risch, who will be 83 on Election Day, recently announced he is running for a fourth term and secured an endorsement from Trump. Solid Republican.

Illinois. Dick Durbin (D), elected 1996 (56%), 2002 (60%), 2008 (68%), 2014 (54%), and 2020 (55%). Several Democrats are already



Courtesy, Office of Lieutenant Governor

Juliana Stratton

gearing up to run if Durbin calls it quits after five terms. Reps. Lauren Underwood, Raja Krishnamoorthi, and Robin Kelly are all interested in running. So is Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, who would have the backing of wealthy Gov. J.B. Pritzker. State

Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias was the 2010 Democratic nominee and could run again as well. A poll from 314 Action, which supports Underwood, found her leading against Stratton, Krishnamoorthi, and Kelly. But Krishnamoorthi had \$19 million stockpiled in his campaign account, and Stratton could benefit from heavy spending by Pritzker, who has plowed hundreds of millions of dollars into his own races for governor in 2018 and 2022. Solid Democratic.

Iowa. Joni Ernst (R), elected 2014 (51%) and 2020 (52%). A month ago, few if any Democrats were willing publicly to entertain running against Ernst. The tumultuous rollout of the Trump administration's tariff policies has changed that.

Marine veteran and executive director of the Knoxville, Iowa Chamber of Commerce Nathan Sage was the first candidate to toss his hat in the ring. State Sen. Zach Wahls and state Reps. Josh Turek and J.D. Scholten have all publicly expressed interest in running over the past two weeks. State Rep. Ross Wilburn is another potential candidate. Wahls rose to prominence for defending LGBTQ rights in an impassioned, viral speech 14 years ago. Turek is a decorated Paralympian; he won two gold medals and one bronze in wheelchair basketball. Scholten nearly won a high-profile race against embattled GOP Rep. Steve King in 2018 in Iowa's deeply Republican 4th District. Wilburn is a former state party chairman. Jackie Norris, who worked as Michelle Obama's chief of staff from 2009 to 2011 and now runs a market research firm in Des Moines, is another potential candidate.

Iowa's reliance on agriculture makes it vulnerable in a trade war, but the burden of proof is still on Democrats to show they can compete in a state where they haven't won a Senate race since Tom Harkin's re-election in 2008. Solid Republican.

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Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2020 (53%). Democrats invested heavily in the 2020 race only to see state Sen. Barbara Bollier fall short by double digits. While there's some interest in making this race competitive (mostly because Democrats have so few opportunities elsewhere) there's not much of a Democratic bench in the state. Rep. Sharice Davids would have to give up a congressional district that she's worked to lock down, and term-limited Gov. Laura Kelly is 75 years old. Solid Republican.

Kentucky. Open; Mitch McConnell (R), not seeking re-election.

McConnell's decision not to seek re-election sets up a contentious GOP primary that could turn on Trump's endorsement. Former state Attorney General Daniel Cameron was the first to launch his bid; the former McConnell protege and 2023 gubernatorial nominee has already had to distance himself from his unpopular former boss as McConnell becomes more openly anti-Trump in his final term.



Andy Barr

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Rep. Andy Barr appears likely to run after losing a bid for the Financial Services Committee gavel. Nate Morris, a Lexington-area businessman with ties to Donald Trump, Jr. and Vice President J.D. Vance looks like he's running, too, and has brought on Trump pollster Tony Fabrizio. All three are making a play for Trump's endorsement, which could reshape the race.

For now, Cameron's three statewide bids and high profile make him the early polling frontrunner, but there are questions as to whether he can raise the money necessary for this big of a race. (He had \$455,000 on hand at the end of March.) Barr raised a whopping \$1.8 million in the first three months of the year and had \$5.4 million in his campaign account on March 31, and could have help from a friendly super PAC financed by Kelly Craft, who lost to Cameron in the 2023 gubernatorial primary. But Barr has detractors including the Club for Growth Action, which met just the potential of a Barr candidacy with attack ads earlier this year.

On the Democratic side, state House Minority Leader Pam Stevenson is in the race; she was the 2023 nominee for state Attorney General. Former state House Majority Leader Rocky Adkins is another potential candidate but appears more interested in running for governor in 2027. Gov. Andy Beshear is not running. Solid Republican.

Louisiana. Bill Cassidy (R), elected 2014 (56%) and 2020 (59%). A change in Louisiana's election system puts Cassidy in serious danger of losing a GOP primary. State Treasurer John Fleming, who served four terms in Congress before working in the Trump administration, is running against Cassidy, and loaned his campaign \$2 million in the first quarter. State Sen. Blake Miguez and public service commissioner Eric Skrmetta are also musing bids. Rep. Clay Higgins took himself out of the running last month. A February poll commissioned by Fleming

found him running ahead of Cassidy by 13 points, 40-27 percent.

Cassidy raised \$1.4 million in the first quarter of the year and finished March with a considerable \$7.5 million in the bank, but the senator's big problem is that he needs to get right with Trump after voting to convict him in 2021. Cassidy has been voting for all of Trump's nominees and probably saved HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. from rejection, but the relationship is still in a precarious position. Even though he's an incumbent, outside national groups are less likely to support Cassidy financially if he's not on Trump's good side. Even with the potential Republican drama, the seat is unlikely to fall into Democratic hands. Solid Republican.

Maine. Susan Collins (R), elected 1996 (49%), 2002 (58%), 2008 (61%) 2014 (69%), and 2020 (51%). The race for the only GOP-held Senate seat in a state Kamala Harris won last year remains underdeveloped. Even though Collins, 72, hasn't publicly talked about her pursuit for a sixth term since saying last November that she planned to run again, GOP strategists are confident that she is full-steam ahead. Republicans don't have a logical backup plan if Collins ultimately decides that she's done with her time in Washington.

Democrats don't have an obvious candidate to take on Collins, who won an upset victory in 2020 against Sara Gideon. Some Democratic operatives believe that 2nd District Rep. Jared Golden and outgoing Gov. Janet Mills (who had a public clash with Trump at a White House event) would be the two strongest candidates, but both are keeping their cards close to the vest and have good reasons not to run for the Senate. Golden is a former Collins staffer who declined to endorse Gideon in 2020 and is also considering a run for governor or remaining in the U.S. House. If Mills ran and won she would be 79 when she took office — 4 years older than the oldest freshman senator in American history. Another potential candidate is Jordan Wood, a Democratic political operative and Lewiston, Maine native who worked as California Rep. Katie Porter's chief of staff and now runs a super PAC. And one of the many Democrats circling the governor's race, such as former state Sen. Troy Jackson or current and former state House Speakers Ryan Fecteau and Hannah Pingree, could shift their focus to the Senate.

Collins is vulnerable because of the nature of the state, and this will be the first time she's up for re-election in the midterm of a Republican president since 2002, but Democrats will need a quality candidate. Battleground.

Massachusetts. Ed Markey (D) elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (66%). State Rep. Michael Soter is the only Republican expressing an interest in taking on Markey, who is running for a third full term at 78. Solid Democratic.

Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election. A crowded Democratic primary is brewing in Michigan to succeed Peters. State Sen. Mallory McMorrow, who rose to national prominence following a viral speech in 2022, was the first candidate to jump in. Former Wayne County health department director Abdul El-Sayed, who ran for governor in 2018, was the second to announce, and he quickly secured an endorsement from Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. Rep. Haley Stevens, who flipped a GOP-held seat in the Detroit suburbs in 2018, is moving toward a bid as well. And former state House Speaker Joe Tate has put together a campaign team and

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met with the DSCC as he considers a run. Reps. Kirsten McDonald Rivet and Hillary Scholten will not run, and neither will former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was the top choice of Senate Democratic leadership but made clear she is not going to run either.

On the GOP side, former Rep. Mike Rogers made his second Senate bid official. He lost last year's race by a fraction of a percent to Elissa Slotkin, and Republican strategists are hopeful that this year he'll have a less expensive path to the nomination and more outside resources to support him in the general election. While 4th District Rep. Bill Huizenga could also run, Rogers has already secured endorsements from Senate Majority Leader John Thune and NRSC Chairman Tim Scott. Tudor Dixon, the former conservative media host who lost the 2022 GOP gubernatorial run, is also mulling a Senate bid, though she could run for governor again. Battleground.

Minnesota. Open; Tina Smith (DFL), not seeking re-election. Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan wasted no time jumping into the open Democratic primary after Smith bowed out, but she doesn't have the field to herself. Former state Senate Minority Leader Melissa Lopez-Franzen is also running, and Rep. Angie Craig could run as well. Flanagan has deep relationships with the more progressive and activist wings of the party, but Craig has proven herself in tough general election fights and is a strong fundraiser.

National Republicans would like to make Minnesota a headache for Democrats after Harris carried the state by just 4 points, but that means preventing former NBA player and conspiracy theorist Royce White from capturing the nomination again. Former Navy SEAL Adam Schwarze is also in the race, and former NBA player Willie Burton is another potential candidate. Burton played for the University of Minnesota but lived in Michigan following his NBA career and was reportedly on the shortlist to be 2022 Michigan GOP gubernatorial nominee Tudor Dixon's running mate. He's currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Minnesota.

The list of potential GOP candidates also includes state Sen. Julia Coleman (former U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman's daughter-in-law), Baird Vice Chairman John Taft (great-grandson of former President William Howard Taft), former Rep. Michele Bachmann (who has \$1.1 million left in a campaign account and has been making calls to former donors and supporters), and former NFL reporter Michelle Tafoya (who seems less likely run after initial chatter earlier this year). Battleground.

Mississippi. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R), appointed 2018, elected 2018 special (54%) and 2020 (54%). Ty Pinkins, the Army veteran and attorney who lost races for Secretary of State in 2023 and for the state's other Senate seat in 2024, is running against Hyde-Smith. But Democrats aren't in a position to be competitive in Mississippi right now. Trump finished ahead of Harris by 23 points in 2024, so something big would have to change for Republicans to lose. Solid Republican.

Montana. Steve Daines (R), elected 2014 (58%) and 2020 (55%). Former state Rep. Reilly Neil is the highest-profile Democrat running against Daines; she served one term in the state House a decade ago. This race looks very different from the 2020 battle royale between Daines and then-Gov. Steve Bullock, which attracted more than \$100 million in outside spending and resulted in Daines winning by 10 points. Short of

another run by Bullock or former Sen. Jon Tester, or a massive shift in the political environment, this race will be sleepy. Solid Republican.

Nebraska. Pete Ricketts (R), appointed 2023, elected 2024 special (63%). Union leader Dan Osborn, whose independent campaign against Sen. Deb Fischer caught fire and forced national Republicans to spend in the Republican state, launched an exploratory committee to take on Ricketts. But the 2026 matchup will likely be different for a number of reasons. Outside Democratic groups poured millions into the 2024 race to boost Osborn but he's not as likely to receive that level of support this cycle. Fischer was seen by GOP strategists as asleep at the wheel at the beginning of the race, but Republicans are now aware of Osborn and his strategy. And most importantly, Nebraska Democrats may not play ball with Osborn this year after clearing the field for him to run against Fischer one-on-one in 2024; Nebraska has no signature requirement to file to run for Senate, so anyone who pays the \$1,470 filing fee can run as a Democrat and complicate Osborn's path to consolidating the anti-Ricketts vote. Solid Republican.

New Hampshire. Open; Jeanne Shaheen (D), not seeking re-election. Democrat Chris Pappas was the first to jump into the



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Chris Pappas

open primary after Shaheen announced she wouldn't seek re-election. But Rep. Maggie Goodlander could run as well, setting up a grueling primary that wouldn't conclude until September 2026. Former Gov. Chris Sununu took himself

out of the running for the GOP nomination early this cycle after stringing Republicans along in 2022. That leaves former Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown as the highest-profile contender, though there is no shortage of state-level Republicans who could still run.

Even though Brown has lost Senate races in two different states (2012 in Massachusetts to Elizabeth Warren and 2014 in New Hampshire to Shaheen), GOP strategists see him as a credible candidate and potential good, known investment for donors. Even though New Hampshire doesn't get as much attention as swing states like Georgia, Pennsylvania or Arizona, Democrats only have a narrow advantage under normal circumstances. Battleground.

New Jersey. Cory Booker (D), elected 2013 special (55%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Former Tabernacle Mayor Justin Murphy is planning to challenge Booker as a Republican; he lost GOP primaries for the 3rd District in 2008 and 2010 and the Senate primary in 2024. If Republicans pull off an upset in the 2025 gubernatorial election, the GOP might be able to recruit more credible candidates into the race. For a moment, Booker's rising star looked like it had hit a plateau following an unremarkable 2020 presidential bid. All it took was a record-breaking 25-hour Senate floor speech to put him right back into the conversation about the next face of the Democratic Party. Solid Democratic.

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New Mexico. Ben Ray Luján (D), elected 2020 (51%). 2024 GOP Senate nominee Nella Domenici ruled out another Senate bid and no other Republicans are making noises about running. The open governor's race might be a more attractive opportunity. Solid Democratic.

North Carolina. Thom Tillis (R), elected 2014 (49%) and 2020 (49%). All eyes are on former Gov. Roy Cooper, who one Democratic source described as "Plans A through Z" for the party. But Cooper is finishing a fellowship at Harvard this spring and doesn't seem to be in a rush to re-enter the political fray just yet. Former Rep. Wiley Nickel isn't waiting for Cooper and launched his campaign earlier this month, but isn't likely to remain in the race if Cooper passes. If Cooper passes, Lt. Gov. Rachel Hunt, former EPA Administrator Michael Regan, former CDC Director Mandy Cohen, and 2018 9th District nominee Dan McCready could all take a look at running.

On the GOP side, Tillis will be on primary watch until the filing deadline. While former Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson said he would not run for the Senate next year, 2024 superintendent of public instruction nominee Michele Morrow says she's considering it. The general election should be very competitive next year. Battleground.

Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. Husted looks likely to avoid any issues in the GOP primary, especially after Trump endorsed him earlier this year. Democrats would love to put Ohio back in play but have a thin bench. Former Sen. Sherrod Brown remains the top prospect even after losing a hard-fought race in 2024 but he is also considering a run for governor. Former Rep. Tim Ryan, who was the nominee for Senate in 2022, has expressed interest in running as well; he currently works as a natural gas lobbyist. A new congressional map drawn by the GOP-controlled state legislature could push Akron Rep. Emilia Sykes or Cincinnati Rep. Greg Landsman into the race by making their House seats unwinnable. Solid Republican.

Oklahoma. Markwayne Mullin (R), elected 2022 special (62%). In a great environment Democrats might make a play for the Sooner State's gubernatorial mansion, but Mullin is safe as he finishes out the remainder of his abbreviated term and runs for a full six years. Solid Republican.

Oregon. Jeff Merkley (D), elected 2008 (49%), 2014 (56%), and 2020 (57%). Merkley, 68, certainly isn't the oldest member of the Senate, but he hasn't announced his intentions. "Jeff is 100% focused on defeating Trump's agenda," a campaign spokesperson told Willamette Week this week in a statement. "As usual, Jeff and Mary [his wife] will make a formal campaign announcement regarding 2026 sometime this quarter." That's not a definitive yes, at least not yet.

Whether or not Merkley runs for a fourth term, Democrats shouldn't have a problem holding the seat and there won't be a shortage of interest in a state dominated by Democrats. Even though Harris underperformed Biden in many states and suffered a disappointing loss nationwide, the vice president came within about a point of Biden in the Beaver State. At least one of the five Democratic women in the congressional delegation, including 5th District Rep. Andrea Salinas, would likely run for an open seat, but other elected officials in the state including Attorney General Dan Rayfield could run too.

Even if Merkley runs again, Oregon is close to some generational

change with Ron Wyden, 75, up for re-election in 2028. Even when Republicans are dreaming about reaching for takeover targets, they aren't talking about winning in Oregon. Solid Democratic.

Rhode Island. Jack Reed (D), elected 1996 (63%), 2002 (78%), 2008 (73%), 2014 (71%), and 2020 (67%). Reed, 75, confirmed to *Punchbowl News* that he is running for re-election, and Republicans likely won't mount a serious challenge to him. Harris finished ahead of Trump by 14 points in 2024. Solid Democratic.

South Carolina. Lindsey Graham (R), elected 2002 (54%), 2008 (58%), 2014 (55%), and 2020 (54%). Greenville appliance store owner Mark Lynch is challenging Graham in the GOP primary, arguing the four-term incumbent is insufficiently conservative. Lynch made a splash by loaning his campaign \$5 million, but Graham still has a head start with \$16 million in cash on hand on March 31. And Graham has a crucial endorsement from Trump, which should help ward off any serious issues in the Republican primary. Democratic author Katherine Fleming Bruce, who was the runner-up in the 2022 Democratic Senate primary, is running again. Solid Republican.

South Dakota. Mike Rounds (R), elected 2014 (50%) and 2020 (66%). Former state trooper Julian Beaudion, now the executive director of the South Dakota African American History Museum, is running as a Democrat. But Rounds doesn't have much to be concerned about as the state has become inhospitable to Democrats. Solid Republican.

Tennessee. Bill Hagerty (R), elected 2020 (62%). Tennessee will probably have a new senator in 2027 but it won't be in Hagerty's seat. With Sen. Marsha Blackburn favored to win the governor's mansion next year, she'll be able to appoint her successor. Solid Republican.

Texas. John Cornyn (R), elected 2002 (55%), 2008 (65%), 2014 (62%), and 2020 (55%). State Attorney General Ken Paxton is challenging Cornyn in the GOP primary and the clash between the two could grow



Ken Paxton

nasty and expensive. Cornyn has already gone after Paxton's alleged infidelity and the accusations that prompted the state House to impeach him. Rep. Wesley Hunt is also circling the race — an allied group aired statewide TV ads praising

his work in Congress. Cornyn will have backing from Senate GOP leadership but probably begins the primary trailing Paxton. Ultimately, the race may come down to who Trump endorses. So far, he's praised both men but steered clear of giving either his full support.

The prospect of a bruising GOP primary, and the chance to run against the controversial Paxton rather than the battle-tested Cornyn, might entice more Democrats to take a look at the race. Top of the list is former Dallas Rep. Colin Allred, who lost to Sen. Ted Cruz by 9 points in 2024 after spending \$94 million. Allred would have a significant name ID

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and fundraising advantage over any other Democrat should he run and could likely clear the field of serious competition. But he's not the only one poking around. State Sen. Nathan Johnson, also from Dallas, has begun assembling a campaign team ahead of a potential run. Astronaut Terry Virts, a retired Air Force colonel and former International Space Station commander, is another potential candidate, and San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg might run if Allred does not. State Rep. James Talarico looks more likely to run for governor.

Democrats haven't won a U.S. Senate race in Texas since Lloyd Bentsen's re-election in 1988 and Republicans have only looked stronger in recent cycles after years of talk about Texas becoming a swing state. But a combination of a flawed candidate (Paxton) and anti-Republican political environment could give Democrats a chance. Solid Republican.

Virginia. Mark Warner (D), elected 2008 (65%), 2014 (49%), and 2020 (56%). Warner raised \$3 million in the first three months of 2025, a hefty sum that should dispel any speculation about retirement. Gov. Glenn Youngkin hasn't shown any interest in running for Senate, and the GOP bench is otherwise thin in Old Dominion. An upset win in this year's gubernatorial race could coax Republicans to take a closer look at Warner but he's not currently a priority. Solid Democratic.

West Virginia. Shelley Moore Capito (R), elected 2014 (62%) and 2020 (70%). Former state Rep. Derrick Evans, who stormed the Capitol on January 6 and served three months in prison, is challenging Capito in the GOP primary. Evans, who was pardoned along with 1,600 others for his role in the 2021 insurrection, lost a GOP primary for the 1st District in 2024. Capito should be able to dispatch him easily and won't face a competitive general election. Solid Republican.



Shelley Moore Capito

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Wyoming. Cynthia Lummis (R), elected 2020 (73%). Lummis has already secured an endorsement from Trump, which should prevent any drama in the GOP primary. And the general election is largely a formality in one of the most Republican states in the union. Solid Republican. **IE**

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

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Episode 43: House Special Election analysis w/ Erin Covey of The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter

Episode 42: House Race Ratings w/ James Downs of National Journal's Hotline

2026 Senate Fundraising

Totals in key races through March 31, 2025

STATE	CANDIDATE	RAISED (INCLUDING PERSONAL MONEY)	CASH ON HAND
AK	Dan Sullivan, R	\$798,569	\$2,795,553
AL	Tommy Tuberville, R	\$381,739	\$628,327
AR	Tom Cotton, R	\$1,269,900	\$8,378,554
CO	John Hickenlooper, D	\$1,074,772	\$2,243,874
DE	Chris Coons, D	\$569,926	\$2,612,201
FL	Ashley Moody, R	\$417,680	\$409,879
GA	Jon Ossoff, D	\$11,179,270	\$11,082,209
IA	Joni Ernst, R	\$1,067,135	\$3,028,810
IA	Jim Carlin, R	\$39,501	\$1,547
ID	Jim Risch, R	\$290,402	\$2,517,039
IL	Dick Durbin, D	\$42,695	\$1,632,419
IL	Robin Kelly, D	\$186,219	\$2,006,394
IL	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D	\$3,076,776	\$19,427,217
IL	Lauren Underwood, D	\$392,828	\$1,111,787
KS	Roger Marshall, R	\$573,919	\$2,243,198
KY	Daniel Cameron, R	\$507,656	\$455,396
KY	Andy Barr, R	\$1,853,013	\$5,350,839
KY	Pam Stevenson, D	\$70,146	\$32,318
LA	John Fleming, R	\$2,263,194	\$2,200,529
LA	Bill Cassidy, R	\$1,047,571	\$7,484,668
MA	Ed Markey, D	\$685,750	\$2,291,677
ME	Susan Collins, R	\$842,367	\$3,214,918
MN	Peggy Flanagan, DFL	\$451,604	\$366,659
MN	Melissa Lopez-Franzen, DFL	\$260,116	\$251,602
MN	Angie Craig, DFL	\$1,201,408	\$1,066,272
MN	Royce White, R	\$204,023	\$182,553
MN	Adam Schwarze, R	\$140,648	\$109,281
MS	Cindy Hyde-Smith, R	\$325,881	\$703,248
MS	Ty Pinkins, D	\$20,550	\$4,012
MT	Steve Daines, R	\$962,940	\$2,434,605
MT	Reilly Neil, D	\$57,050	\$16,001
NC	Thom Tillis, R	\$2,260,765	\$4,037,104
NC	Wiley Nickel, D	\$20,848	\$521,848
NE	Pete Ricketts, R	\$510,852	\$827,097
NH	Chris Pappas, D	\$655,503	\$857,296
NH	Maggie Goodlander, D	\$524,071	\$446,031
NJ	Cory Booker, D	\$1,651,651	\$12,405,655
NM	Ben Ray Lujan, D	\$1,040,922	\$2,075,699
OH	Jon Husted, R	\$1,061,114	\$948,389
OK	Markwayne Mullin, R	\$497,863	\$532,224
OR	Jeff Merkley, D	\$377,365	\$4,491,474
RI	Jack Reed, D	\$601,238	\$2,076,225
SC	Mark Lynch, R	\$5,086,891	\$5,077,122
SC	Lindsey Graham, R	\$1,131,308	\$15,911,355
SD	Mike Rounds, R	\$356,754	\$2,182,079
TN	Bill Hagerty, R	\$934,415	\$2,527,666
TX	John Cornyn, R	\$1,585,752	\$5,587,455
VA	Mark Warner, D	\$3,000,254	\$7,874,176
VA	Kim Farington, R	\$43,908	\$38,490
WV	Shelley Moore Capito, R	\$423,702	\$2,689,695
WV	Derrick Evans, R	\$243,106	\$78,369
WY	Cynthia Lummis, R	\$380,622	\$940,279

Source: National Journal's Hotline