

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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2020 Senate Ratings

Toss-Up

Gardner (R-Colo.)

McSally (R-Ariz.)

Tilt Democratic

Tilt Republican

Collins (R-Maine)

Tillis (R-N.C.)

Lean Democratic

Lean Republican

Jones (D-Ala.)

Perdue (R-Ga.)

Likely Democratic

Likely Republican

Peters (D-Mich.)

Ernst (R-Iowa)

Shaheen (D-N.H.)

Smith (D-Minn.)

Solid Democratic

Solid Republican

NM Open (Udall, D)

KS Open (Roberts, R)

Booker (D-N.J.)

TN Open (Alexander, R)

Coons (D-Del.)

WY Open (Enzi, R)

Durbin (D-Ill.)

Cassidy (R-La.)

Markey (D-Mass.)

Capito (R-W.Va.)

Merkley (D-Ore.)

Cornyn (R-Texas)

Reed (D-R.I.)

Cotton (R-Ark.)

Warner (D-Va.)

Daines (R-Mont.)

Graham (R-S.C.)

Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)

Inhofe (R-Okla.)

McConnell (R-Ky.)

Risch (R-Idaho)

Rounds (R-S.D.)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	53	47
Not up this cycle	31	35
Currently Solid	16	8
Competitive	6	4

Sasse (R-Neb.)

Sullivan (R-Alaska)

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

Texas Senate: Do Democrats Have A Lone, Star Candidate?

By Leah Askarinam

With Democrats targeting six seats, Texas starts at the center of the conversation about the House majority in 2020. But the Lone Star State is still on the periphery of the presidential and Senate battlefields.

On one hand, despite the national headwinds that should have helped the Democratic nominee sail to victory during the midterms, Beto O'Rourke still failed to reach 50 percent in 2018. On the other hand, GOP Sen. Ted Cruz's narrow margin of victory gave Democrats a glimmer of hope that the decade-long prediction of a purple Texas could finally be coming to fruition.

In order to win the four seats necessary for a majority in the Senate, Democrats will need to win at least a couple seats in traditionally Republican states that Donald Trump carried in 2016 but that show signs of trending in Democrats' direction.

Defeating the only two Republican senators up for re-election in states Hillary Clinton carried — Susan Collins (Maine) and Cory Gardner (Colorado) — will not be enough. Democrats could win one additional seat in a Trump state and have enough votes for control, in the event that Democrats win the presidential race and the vice president serves as a tie-breaker. But that scenario only stands if every Democratic incumbent wins re-election, including Doug Jones in Alabama.

So Democrats likely need to win two more GOP seats. At the top of the list of vulnerable Republican Senators in Trump states is Martha McSally in Arizona. And in North Carolina, Democrats are looking for a repeat of 2008, when they won the gubernatorial, Senate, and presidential races. Democrats are watching three House seats in Iowa, where GOP Sen. Joni Ernst could be vulnerable. And after Stacey Abrams' performance in Georgia in 2018, GOP Sen. David Perdue will be a Democratic target.

Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas is further down the list at this point. But in the event that the state enters the presidential battleground— and it's possible a Texan ends up on the ticket — the state could end up on the Senate map as well. And, for the most part, Republicans are preparing for a competitive race.

The Lay Of The Land

In the grand scheme of things, 2018 was a good year for Democrats in Texas, despite a narrow Senate loss and a bigger gubernatorial one. After the 2016 elections, the Democratic Baseline was 38 percent, but two years later it ticked up to 41 percent. Two Republican congressmen were defeated in 2018 and six won re-election by 5 points or less. In the state House, Democrats flipped 12 seats, though Republicans maintain a majority (83-67). In the state Senate, Republicans lost two seats and are at

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By Nathan L. Gonzales
- Oval Office Obsessions From a Crew With Little Experience, Much Ambition
By Stuart Rothenberg
- What Can We Learn From the North Carolina Redo Election?
By Nathan L. Gonzales

Anatomy of an Ad: Greg Murphy (North Carolina's 3rd)

By Nathan L. Gonzales

State Rep. Greg Murphy finished first in the GOP primary in North Carolina's 3rd District, but his subsequent television ad shouldn't inspire confidence in his status as the frontrunner for the Republican nomination.

Murphy, a urologist, finished ahead of pediatrician Joan Perry 23-15 percent in a field of 17 candidates in the initial race on April 30.

The two candidates will face off in a July 9 runoff in a solidly Republican district along the Atlantic coast.

The special election will determine who will replace the late GOP Rep. Walter Jones. Given that Donald Trump carried the 3rd District with 61 percent in 2016, the seat is not at risk of a Democratic takeover, which makes the GOP nomination particularly valuable.

Murphy's initial runoff ad gives us a glimpse into his campaign, which is more valuable than the handicapping of the race, and is a good example of what not to do when making a television campaign commercial. It began airing in the Greenville media market over Memorial Day weekend, according to Kantar/CMAG. And there's lots to discuss:

Gone in 60 Seconds. Minute-long broadcast television ads are rare for House campaigns, particularly those that aren't extremely well-funded. With \$114,000 in the bank on April 10, the Murphy campaign isn't exactly flush with cash, but the district's media market is one of the cheapest in the country. If a campaign had a plethora of resources, it would likely pay to air a single 30-second ad more frequently, or produce two 30-second ads that reinforce different messages and boost the candidate's name ID. Murphy's minute-long ad was a lot of time to invest in the idea that 3rd District voters know Rep. Mark Meadows and value his endorsement.



Screenshot of Murphy for Congress campaign ad

Courtesy Kantar/CMAG

Candidate Confusion. The ad begins with a full-screen shot of the 11th District congressman, who is superimposed over the image the Constitution, which is then superimposed over an American flag. All the while, "Congressman Mark Meadows & the House Freedom Caucus Proudly Endorse Dr. Greg Murphy for Congress" is emblazoned across the lower third of the screen. By the time the ad reaches a 35-second on-camera Meadows interview, it doesn't exactly feel like it's promoting Murphy. The 3rd District candidate's name isn't even uttered until 43 seconds into the ad. That isn't likely to help boost the name recognition of a candidate who received less than a quarter of the vote in the initial primary.

Questionable Shot Selection. Toward the end of the ad (at the 45-second mark), the candidate finally makes an appearance. As Murphy snakes around the corner to shake hands with Meadows, apparently in a hallway, Murphy looks short and diminutive compared to the congressman. Typically, there would be more flattering angles and shots of the candidate.

Production Value. From the graphics to the camera shots and quality, this Murphy ad did not have the same movie production quality that campaign ads have come to be characterized by. The ad was produced in-house by the campaign manager, who admitted to *Roll Call* that



Screenshot of Murphy for Congress campaign ad

Courtesy Kantar/CMAG

it was "low tech" and the length was extraordinary, but that it was important to have the full context of Meadows' remarks.

The Murphy campaign will have more traditional ads in the weeks leading up to the runoff. And thus far, he's had the airwaves to himself. Perry had professional campaign ads in the initial race but has yet to air an ad on broadcast TV in the runoff. Murphy can still win the nomination, and thus the seat, but it will be in spite of this Meadows ad and not because of it.

IE

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



Leah Askarinam
Reporter & Analyst
leah@insideelections.com
@leahaskarinam

Stuart Rothenberg
Senior Editor
stu@insideelections.com

Ryan Matsumoto
Contributing Analyst
ryan@insideelections.com

Robert Yoon
Contributing Reporter & Analyst
robert@insideelections.com

Kyle Trygstad
Contributing Editor

Will Taylor
Production Artist
will@insideelections.com

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

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California 48: A Rouda Awakening

By Leah Askarinam

There's no shortage of viral videos featuring Democratic freshmen grilling members of the Trump administration, leading political rallies, or dancing (sometimes on their own). Democratic Rep. Katie Porter of California's 45th District released a video of her questioning HUD Secretary Ben Carson that's been retweeted 40,000 times. But just west of Porter's district, another new Democratic Member of Congress is more quietly aiming to win re-election.

Rep. Harley Rouda, who represents one of the four Orange County seats that Democrats flipped in 2018, is running in a district that was historically Republican before 2016. According to conventional wisdom last cycle, the 48th was the toughest Orange County district for Democrats to flip in terms of its political lean — but it became one of the most attainable because of the strength of the Democratic challenger.

For Republicans, it didn't help that the incumbent, Dana Rohrabacher, went out of his way to tie himself to President Donald Trump, even after Hillary Clinton carried the district in 2016. For Democrats, it didn't hurt that their candidate, a real estate executive and former Republican, was open to using personal funds to secure the seat.

Ahead of 2020, the question is whether Republicans' loss in the 48th was more about a weak incumbent or a backlash against Trump. If Rohrabacher was the problem, the GOP's job of finding a candidate who is less toxic seems doable, even likely. But if the district is experiencing a bigger shift — with urban and suburban voters fully rejecting the Republican Party after Trump's election — then Republicans have an uphill climb regardless of the nominee.

The Lay Of The Land

After the 2018 midterms, Democrats represent all seven congressional districts that cover Orange County. The 48th District is also one of 22 districts that Clinton carried in 2016 that Democrats flipped from Republican control in 2018.

The Southern California district is entirely within Orange County, including Huntington Beach, Costa Mesa, Laguna Beach and Newport Beach. More than half the district's population is non-Hispanic white. About a fifth of the district is Asian-American, and another fifth is Hispanic. The largest Vietmaese population in the country resides in Orange County, and part of the district is known as Little Saigon.

After John McCain received 51 percent in 2008 and Mitt Romney received 55 percent in 2012, Trump narrowly lost the 48th Congressional District, 48-46 percent, according to Daily Kos Elections. CityLab classifies the district as an urban-suburban mix. It ranks 45th (out of 435) nationally in terms of share of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher. And the median household income is \$87,413, the 33rd highest in the country.

Rouda defeated 15-term Rep. Rohrabacher 54-46 percent. After years of national obscurity, Rohrabacher was covered by national media

outlets for his close ties with the Kremlin and Julian Assange, especially after Trump took office. The day before the 2018 midterms, Trump Tweeted his support of Rohrabacher.

The Democratic Incumbent

Rouda, who lives in Laguna Beach, received his MBA in 2000 from Ohio State Univ., having already received a JD from Capital Univ. Law School in 1986 and a bachelor's degree from Univ. of Kentucky in 1984. He practiced law at Porter, Wright, Morris and Arthur, where he focused on intellectual property and real estate, before his career in real estate. He worked with his dad, a former president of the National Association of Realtors and major political donor who founded HER Real Estate. Rouda co-founded Real Living and led Trident Holdings, the parent company of HER, as CEO.

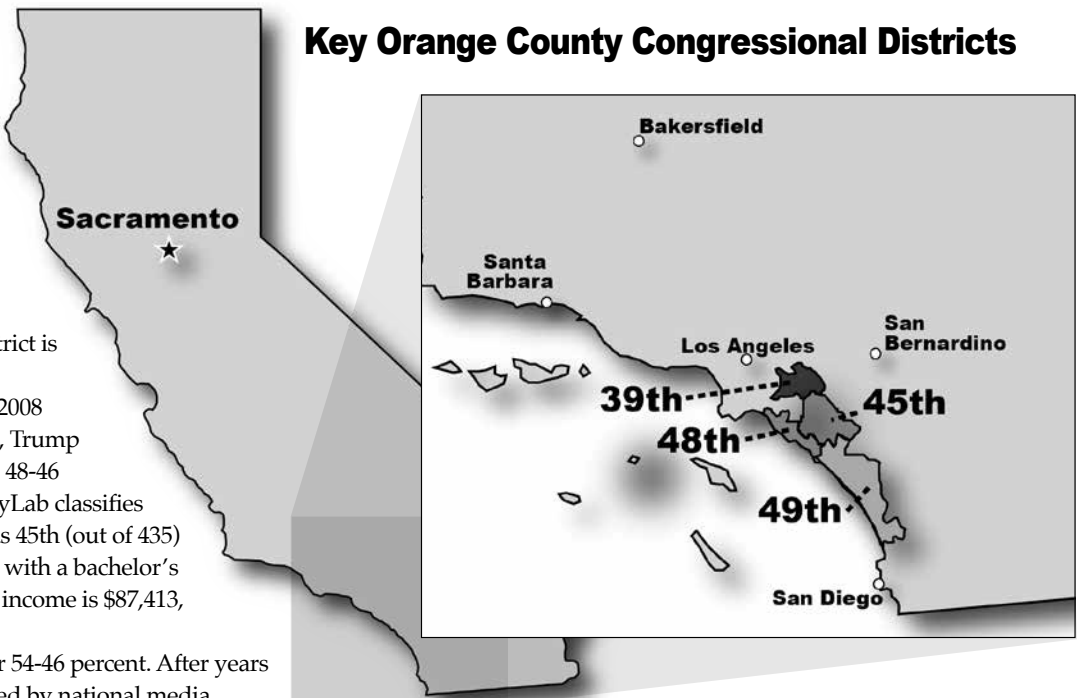
Rouda is a former Republican, who donated to Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a family friend. He registered as a Democrat in 2017 and supported Hillary Clinton in 2016. In the all-party primary in 2018, Rouda narrowly made the cutoff, outpacing scientist Hans Kierstead 17.3-17.2 percent. Kierstead was the early favorite of Democrats in Washington.

Rouda's campaign team includes J&Z Strategies for direct mail, Benenson Strategy Group for Polling and GMMB for media.

The Republicans

Michelle Steel was born in South Korea and immigrated to the United States at age 19. She is fluent in Korean and Japanese. She attended Pepperdine Univ. for her business degree and Univ. of Southern California for her Executive MBA. Between 2001-2004, she served as commissioner of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian

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Americans and Pacific Islanders for George W. Bush.

In 2006, Steel was elected to the California State Board of Equalization, where she represented 8 million people, including Orange County, in the Third Equalization District. She won re-election in 2010 and became vice chairwoman in 2011.

In 2014, Steel received 63 percent of the vote in her race for the Orange County Board of Supervisors, after raising \$427,000 (which included



Michelle Steel

\$75,000 in personal money). She currently represents the 2nd District, which includes Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach, and covers about two-thirds of the 48th Congressional District.

In January, Trump appointed Steel to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In March, she and her husband, Republican National Committeeman Shawn Steel, met the President on the tarmac at LAX before a fundraiser.

Steel's campaign team includes general consultant Sam Oh of Targeted Victory.

Former GOP state Sen. Janet Nguyen, who lives in Fountain Valley, is also considering running for Congress, after losing her state Senate seat in 2018. She recently applied for an open seat on the Orange County water board but could still run for Congress. Her state Senate seat covers the northern portion of the 48th Congressional District, including Seal Beach and Little Saigon. And her expensive 2018 state Senate race could mean that she enters the race with the strongest name ID. Nguyen was born in Saigon and moved with her family to California in 1981, according to the AP.

Former GOP Assemblyman Travis Allen, who gave up his Huntington Beach seat to run for governor, has also been mentioned as a possible House candidate. He placed fourth in the 2018 gubernatorial primary with 9.5 percent.

How It Plays Out

Republicans have a path to the majority without winning back the 48th District. But if the GOP is unable to take back some suburban territory, including historically-red Orange County, then the party's road is considerably narrower. The 48th is a good example of how complicated the Republicans' task is in 2020.

The DNA

Republican strategists believe the 48th District belongs in their column. According to a February report from the California Secretary of State, Republicans have a registration advantage of 8 points over Democrats, 38-30 percent. In 2018, gubernatorial candidate John Cox, who was endorsed by Trump, carried the district (52-48 percent) while losing statewide by 24 points. And the district supported the gas tax repeal (55-45 percent), which lost statewide by 13 points.

Voters who live inland from the coast are more likely to feel the financial burden of living in California and are more likely to vote for change, according to one GOP strategist. And if Trump can persuade those voters with his performance and the direction of the economy, he

could attract support that he lacked in 2016.

Rohrabacher's profile resonated with voters in the district even if it didn't resonate with D.C., according to one Republican strategist. The district includes voters with entrepreneurial backgrounds but also roofers, contractors, and plumbers, mixed with people who inherited their wealth. Rohrabacher was perceived to be independent and appealed to blue-collar voters and wealthy hedge fund managers alike. But some of his comments — including about gay rights — went too far for socially moderate voters.

While the district does include working-class voters, including in Huntington Beach, they might not follow national trends and align themselves with Trump, according to one Democratic strategist. It's still a wealthy district in a state that's notoriously difficult for Republicans, and voters who are fiscally conservative frequently remain socially progressive. The strategist predicted that if California Sen. Kamala Harris ends up on the ballot, for example, the area will move to a deeper shade of blue. That said, there's no guarantee that Democrats carry the district in 2020, especially if the Democratic nominee is perceived to be too fiscally progressive for the district or portrayed as a socialist.

The Money

Despite national talk and media coverage of Rohrabacher's ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump, that alone likely wasn't enough to defeat the congressman. Rouda raised \$8.7 million for the 2018 race, including a \$56,000 personal contribution and a \$1.63 million loan, so he could afford airtime in the expensive Los Angeles media market. And House Majority PAC, the go-to outside group for Democrats, spent \$3 million against the GOP incumbent. Rohrabacher raised \$2.8 million.

Democrats and Republicans expect another expensive race this cycle. In the first three months of 2019, Rouda raised \$496,000. One Republican estimated that their nominee would have to raise \$3-\$5 million. It will



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Harley Rouda

likely cost candidates \$500,000 - \$1 million per week to air ads in the Los Angeles media market.

To avoid placing ads in an expensive media market, campaigns can look for alternatives, such as grassroots organizing, direct

mail, radio, and digital. That also includes Vietnamese-language ads on radio and in newspapers. Rohrabacher placed a modest television ad buy in the district last cycle. But Steel's campaign will likely aim to place a larger buy for her 2020 race.

The Candidates

The key to Rouda's success in 2018 was his personal profile and fundraising, which allowed him to take advantage of a good national environment for Democrats, especially in a highly-educated suburban district. Rouda, a former Republican and wealthy businessman, fit the profile for suburban Republicans who were weary of their congressman, Trump, or both.

One Republican argued that there's an opportunity to attack Rouda

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for being a flip flopper because his inaction on Medicare for All and the Green New Deal differs from his campaign messaging. While the goal of those criticisms would be to point to flaws in Rouda’s character and potentially suppress turnout by disappointed Democrats, it could also give Rouda an opportunity to contrast himself with more liberal Members of his own party.

Steel has disagreed with Trump publicly, including a *Washington Examiner* op-ed that praised the President for prioritizing public safety, but also argued against deporting Vietnamese refugees. But her husband’s relationship with the President is a different matter. Trump Tweeted his thanks to Shawn Steel in 2017, for example, after the former GOP chairman defended the President on Fox News. Even if voters don’t know who her husband is, he could make for fodder in attack ads that tie her to the President, along with images where the Steels appear with Trump. And Steel’s emphasis on ending deportations among Vietnamese refugees might not assuage the concerns of Latino voters.

If Trump isn’t an asset in a suburban district in 2020, one of the questions is whether Steel can separate her image from that of her husband, who has been more visible as a Trump supporter. But her husband’s connections with the state party could help with fundraising.

The Issues

One GOP strategist argued that her last name is an asset. The Steel family has been champions for Asian-Americans in the district for years, including hosting events and recruiting political candidates. And Michelle Steel has already received endorsements from a dozen Vietnamese elected officials throughout Orange County, including Supervisor Andrew Do.

Republicans will likely focus on local issues and hope that Democrats focus on national issues, such as impeaching the President. But, while it may have been widely known that Rohrabacher had personal relationships with Trump and the Russians, Rouda avoided discussing it in 2018. Democrats believe that Rouda won by discussing problems more pertinent to the district — like offshore oil drilling and prescription drug prices — a strategy that he’ll likely stick to in 2020.

Unlike some southern GOP districts, Rouda might not alienate Republican voters in Orange County by supporting social issues that are typically associated with Democrats, according to one party strategist. Gun safety, for example — including background checks and mental health screenings — isn’t necessarily a deal breaker for suburban Republicans. Environmental concerns and even abortion rights are often seen as bipartisan issues as well. But Republicans maintain that the suburbs remain pro-life, even if those voters disagree with the more severe restrictions to abortion access in recent legislation across the country.

The Bottom Line

It’s hard to isolate a single reason Republicans lost California’s 48th District. It could have been a controversial incumbent, dislike of Trump among urban and suburban voters, or simply that Rouda seemed like an inoffensive alternative for voters who wanted change or a check on the White House. The 2020 race will be a different dynamic, considering Democrats enter the race with the advantage of incumbency, and suburban Republicans have the opportunity to reject Trump directly on the ballot rather than displace his party in Congress.

The race boils down to a central question: whether candidate

quality, rather than changes in partisan leaning in the suburbs, caused Republicans to lose the 48th District in 2018. If the suburbs are still in play for the GOP, then Rouda is one of the most vulnerable Democrats in the country. If they’re not, then Republicans have a narrow path to a majority in 2020.



2020 House Ratings

Toss-Up (3R, 8D)

- GA 7 (Open; Woodall, R)
- IA 2 (Open; Loeb sack, D)
- IA 3 (Axne, D)
- IL 14 (Underwood, D)
- NC 9 (Vacant; R)
- NY 11 (Rose, D)
- NY 22 (Brindisi, D)
- OK 5 (Horn, D)
- SC 1 (Cunningham, D)
- TX 23 (Hurd, R)
- UT 4 (McAdams, D)

Tilt Democratic (10D)

- GA 6 (McBath, D)
- IA 1 (Finkenauer, D)
- ME 2 (Golden, D)
- MI 8 (Slotkin, D)
- NJ 2 (Van Drew, D)
- NJ 3 (Kim, D)
- NM 2 (Torres Small, D)
- NY 19 (Delgado, D)
- VA 2 (Luria, D)
- VA 7 (Spanberger, D)

Tilt Republican (3R)

- IL 13 (Davis, R)
- PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
- PA 10 (Perry, R)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	200	235
Currently Solid	171	195
Competitive	29	40
Needed for majority	218	

Lean Democratic (11D)

- CA 48 (Rouda, D)
- IL 6 (Casten, D)
- KS 3 (Davids, D)
- MI 11 (Stevens, D)
- MN 2 (Craig, DFL)
- MN 7 (Peterson, DFL)
- NH 1 (Pappas, D)
- NJ 7 (Malinowski, D)
- NV 3 (Lee, D)
- TX 7 (Fletcher, D)
- TX 32 (Allred, D)

Lean Republican (11R)

- CA 50 (Hunter, R)
- MN 1 (Hagedorn, R)
- MO 2 (Wagner, R)
- NC 2 (Holding, R)
- NE 2 (Bacon, R)
- NY 24 (Katko, R)
- NY 27 (Collins, R)
- OH 1 (Chabot, R)
- TX 22 (Olson, R)
- TX 24 (Marchant, R)
- TX 31 (Carter, R)

Likely Democratic (11D)

- AZ 1 (O’Halloran, D)
- AZ 2 (Kirkpatrick, D)
- CA 10 (Harder, D)
- CA 21 (Cox, D)
- CA 25 (Hill, D)
- CA 39 (Cisneros, D)
- CA 45 (Porter, D)
- NJ 11 (Sherrill, D)
- PA 8 (Cartwright, D)
- PA 17 (Lamb, D)
- WI 3 (Kind, D)

Likely Republican (12R)

- IA 4 (King, R)
- KY 6 (Barr, R)
- MI 6 (Upton, R)
- MN 8 (Stauber, R)
- NC13 (Budd, R)
- NY 1 (Zeldin, R)
- NY 2 (King, R)
- OH 12 (Balderson, R)
- TX2 (Crenshaw, R)
- TX 10 (McCaul, R)
- TX 21 (Roy, R)
- WA 3 (Herrera-Beutler, R)

moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics

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risk of losing their supermajority.

But despite some gains down the ballot, it remains true that it's been more than 20 years since a Texas Democrat has won statewide office. And in 2018, the \$80 million that O'Rourke raised wasn't enough to push him over the edge, even as he surpassed Cruz in fundraising.

O'Rourke's three-point loss marked the strongest Democratic performance on the 2018 statewide ballot. Gov. Greg Abbott showed the strongest GOP performance, winning re-election 56-43 percent in a race that was never perceived to be competitive. In 2016, Trump won Texas 52-43 percent. Despite the fact that no Democrat has won Texas in a presidential race since 1976, it's possible that Texas enters the presidential battlefield in 2020, especially if former San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro or O'Rourke wins the nomination or is selected as a running mate.

The Incumbent

John Cornyn, 67, was born in Houston and raised in San Antonio. He stayed there after high school, graduating from Trinity Univ. with a major in journalism and from St. Mary's Univ. with a law degree. He worked at a San Antonio law firm before running for an open seat for Bexar County state district court judge. He was elected to the Texas Supreme Court in 1990 and re-elected in 1996, after getting his master's in law from Univ. of Virginia. And in 1998, he was elected state attorney general, 54-44 percent.



John Cornyn

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

In 2001, GOP Sen. Phil Gramm announced he would retire. The following year, Cornyn won a five-person primary to fill his seat with 77 percent. That Cornyn would be a frontrunner was no surprise. In a 2000 article in *Texas Monthly*, Paul Burka, recounting a conversation in which Cornyn boasted that he won the attorney general position after starting with just 8 percent in the primary polling, concludes: "Never in the history of the world has a politician overcome such odds without thinking that he just might be a figure of destiny, and so one hears around the Capitol (though not from John Cornyn) that he has his eye on bigger things: the United States Senate, perhaps..."

Two years later, *The New Yorker* called Cornyn "a typecast candidate, with the bearing and silver-haired looks of a United States senator." The article noted that a personal friendship with President George W. Bush and relationship with strategist Karl Rove, who worked on his campaign, also cemented Cornyn's place as the frontrunner. Democrats nominated Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk — part of the "Dream Team" that included gubernatorial candidate Tony Sanchez and lieutenant governor nominee John Sharp. All three Democrats lost.

In 2008, Cornyn won re-election against Democratic state Rep. Rick Noriega with 55 percent, the same share of the vote he received in his 2002 race against Kirk. But in 2014, he received 62 percent in his re-election bid against Democratic dentist/investor David Alameel.

In the Senate, Cornyn serves on the Committee on Finance and

as chairman of the subcommittee on International Trade, Customers, and Global Competitiveness. He also serves on the Committee on the Judiciary, where he is chairman of the subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration, and on the Select Committee on Intelligence. He served as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee for the 2010 and 2012 elections. In 2012, he was elected Minority Whip.

His 2020 campaign team includes general consultant Rob Jesmer of FP1 Strategies. Jesmer managed Cornyn's 2008 race and was subsequently executive director of the NRSC.

The Democratic Challengers

The biggest news of the cycle so far has been who's not running for Senate: O'Rourke, who's running for President, and Rep. Joaquin Castro, whose twin brother is running for President.

But before Castro made up his mind, 2018 House candidate MJ Hegar announced that she would run. Hegar lost a House race against GOP Rep. John Carter by 3 points (51-48 percent) last cycle, in a suburban district between Austin and Waco that Trump carried by 13 points (54-41 percent) two years earlier.

Hegar, 43, received national attention for her autobiographical video, "Doors," in which she discussed leaving her abusive father with her mom and sister, signing up for ROTC at Univ. of Texas, and attending flight school. The ad featured her service as a combat helicopter pilot in the Air Force, including three tours in Afghanistan, and being awarded a Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor. After her injury, she was a plaintiff in an ACLU lawsuit fighting the Department of Defense's ban on women serving in combat. She wrote a book about her experience in Afghanistan called "Shoot Like A Girl," which has been discussed as a potential movie.

Hegar's campaign team includes pollster Zac McCrary of ALG, media consultants Kevin McKeon and Cayce McCabe of Putnam Partners, and Emily Parcell of Wildfire for direct mail. Former DSCC deputy executive director Preston Elliott is managing Hegar's campaign.

Hegar is the only major announced candidate, but she might not have the field to herself.

Houston City Councilwoman Amanda Edwards is likely to join the



MJ Hegar

Democratic primary, though she's expected to announce her decision in June or July. Edwards grew up in Houston, graduated from Emory Univ. in Atlanta with her bachelor's degree and worked for Democratic Rep.

Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas in Washington D.C. She then graduated from Harvard Law School and moved to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, where she clerked for a federal district judge.

Edwards was elected to the Houston City Council in 2015 at age 33, in an open seat because the incumbent was term-limited. She placed first in a crowded, nonpartisan general election, and won the runoff with 62 percent. Ahead of the election, the *Houston Chronicle* endorsed Edwards,

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arguing, “She has built a strong coalition of African-American voters, business leaders and forward-thinking urbanists who all want to make Houston a better city and who see Edwards as the sort of person who can get it done.” She’s also a municipal finance attorney, though she left her firm, Bracewell, to serve full time on the council. She may not have to resign her position to run for Senate, though she might not choose to run for re-election this year.

State Sen. Royce West is mentioned as a potential candidate as well. He was elected to the state Senate in 1992 to a Dallas-area district, and served as President Pro Tempore from 2006-07. West is also a partner at West & Associates LLP. But he’s been discussed as a potential candidate in previous races and enjoys a safe seat in the state Senate, though he might not need to resign in order to run for Congress.

Former Rep. Chris Bell, who represented part of Houston in the House, is also exploring a bid and is aiming to announce his decision in July or early August. He was elected to Congress in 2002 but, running in a newly-drawn district, lost a primary in 2004 to Al Green, who had support from Maxine Waters and Sheila Jackson Lee. According to a *Roll Call* report at the time, Bell’s loss was largely a result of insufficient fundraising (\$850,000 raised), which prevented him from introducing himself to Houston voters on television. Since then, he has lost elections for governor (2006), state Senate (2008), and Houston mayor (2015). In 2017, he started a law firm, focused on personal injury and commercial litigation, in Houston. Before graduating from South Texas College of Law in 1992, Bell was a journalist.

The Democratic Primary

It seems likely that there will be a Democratic primary that features Edwards and Hegar, and possibly West. Strategists largely dismiss Bell as a credible threat given his reputation as a perennial candidate. However, it’s also possible that his experience running for office — including a statewide run — could set him apart from other Democratic candidates.

Hegar brings connections and a record of fundraising from her 2018 House race. She raised \$5.1 million for her 2018 House race. The fact that Hegar has also gone through the scrutiny of a federal race gives her the added benefits of exposure and experience, along with a national email list.

Edwards, however, is seen in some Democratic circles as a rising star in Texas politics. And while the cost of a council race pales in comparison to a mid-tier congressional race, Edwards does have experience fundraising (she raised a few hundred thousand dollars in 2015).

Edwards has spoken with EMILY’s List and the DSCC about her political future. EMILY’s List endorsed Hegar for her 2018 House bid but there’s no guarantee she’ll receive it in the Senate primary with Edwards in the race.

West has a political base in North Texas, including African American voters, and connections from his decades of service in the state Senate who could help him across the state. His time in the state Senate also means he’ll be well-versed in state issues in a potential debate or town hall. But his state Senate experience could hurt him if he’s painted as an establishment politician, or if opponents mine his past financial contributions, considering the state’s lax limitations on financial contributions.

But there might not be room for any attacks or substantive back-and-

forth in a Democratic primary. Rather, it’s likely that the race becomes one for name recognition. Edwards has a base in Houston, where, as one of five at-large council members, she represents 2.3 million people and won her seat with 106,000 votes. Hegar’s base is in Austin, though that only makes up about 10 percent of the vote in general and primary elections, so she’ll need to expand into other metro areas. And West likely has an advantage in Dallas, though if he chooses not to run, the demographic profile of potential Edwards supporters in Houston—suburban Republicans and nonwhite voters — could translate to Dallas in a primary. Outside of their respective geographical bases, the candidates would also have to compete in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley.

If no candidate receives a majority in the primary on March 3, the top two vote getters will compete in a runoff. In a three- or four-way race, that scenario seems likely.

The Republican Primary?

While some Republicans staunchly dismiss the notion that Cornyn will face a primary, others argue that he could be challenged for the

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2020 Presidential Ratings (Electoral Votes)

Toss-Up (54)

Florida (29) North Carolina (15) Wisconsin (10)

Tilt Democratic (36) Tilt Republican (11)

Michigan (16) Pennsylvania (20) Arizona (11)

Lean Democratic (14) Lean Republican (6)

Maine (4) Nevada (6) Iowa (6)
New Hampshire (4)

Likely Democratic (10) Likely Republican (34)

Minnesota (10) Georgia (16) Ohio (18)

Solid Democratic (209) Solid Republican (164)

California (55)	New York (29)	Alabama (9)	Nebraska (5)
Colorado (9)	Oregon (7)	Alaska (3)	North Dakota (3)
Connecticut (7)	Rhode Island (4)	Arkansas (6)	Oklahoma (7)
Delaware (3)	Vermont (3)	Idaho (4)	South Carolina (9)
D.C. (3)	Virginia (13)	Indiana (11)	South Dakota (3)
Hawaii (4)	Washington (12)	Kansas (6)	Tennessee (11)
Illinois (20)		Kentucky (8)	Texas (38)
Maryland (10)		Louisiana (8)	Utah (6)
Massachusetts (11)		Mississippi (6)	West Virginia (5)
New Jersey (14)		Missouri (10)	Wyoming (3)
New Mexico (5)		Montana (3)	

270 needed to win

moved benefiting Democrats,

* moved benefiting Republicans

GOP **DEM**

2016 Results 304 227

2020 Ratings 215 269

Toss-up 54

Continued from page 7

nomination, even if it's more inconvenient than politically lethal. Former Florida Rep. Allen West has been mentioned as Senate candidate but also as a challenger in the 32nd District, where freshman Democrat Colin Allred is running for re-election. State Attorney General Ken Paxton has also been mentioned as a potential Cornyn challenger.

Republicans who aren't concerned about a primary threat cited endorsements from Trump, Cruz, and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who was once speculated to be a primary threat.

Cornyn vs. Cruz

A clear dividing line in Washington is whether the 2018 Senate results in Texas were an aberration or part of a trend.

There are two main lines of thinking about how Cornyn compares to Cruz as a GOP Senate nominee: In the first scenario, Cruz, a former presidential candidate who is beloved by the Tea Party, evokes strong feelings from voters within and outside of Texas. The animosity he attracts from Democrats nationally translated into record-breaking fundraising for his opponent. In contrast, Cornyn falls way down the list of Democratic enemies and won't have to face the same intensity of national derision. And even among Republicans, Cruz's non-endorsement of Trump at the 2016 Convention wasn't universally embraced.

In the second scenario, given the fact that he's so well-known, Cruz is well-defined. Like him or hate him, most voters have an opinion about Cruz, and it's difficult for outside groups to move voters with attack ads. Cornyn lacks the support of a firm base that Cruz enjoys and could be more susceptible to Democrats' attacks.

Democrats believe that Cornyn will be more easily attached to the Washington establishment, given his positions in leadership and decades on a Texas ballot. Cruz, on the other hand, entered the political arena as an anti-establishment candidate with backing from the Tea Party. And in terms of timing, O'Rourke was late to start airing negative ads on Cruz — starting in mid-October — but Democrats could begin attacking Cornyn earlier in the cycle.

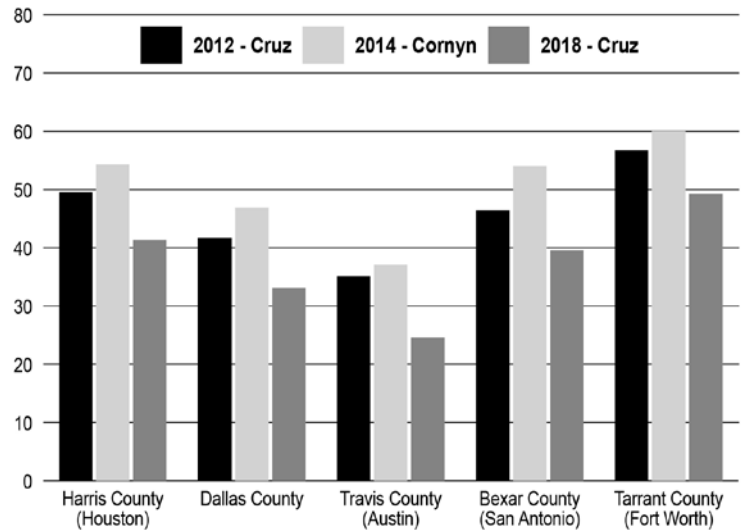
It's also possible, however, that Cornyn could end up enjoying the best of both worlds. Even if Cornyn doesn't have a fervent base, he'll benefit from Trump at the top of the ballot, which Cruz did not have. That could allow Cornyn to focus on appealing to traditionally Republican, white suburban voters who dislike Trump, while the President turns out the GOP base.

City vs. Country

In 2018, Republican performance plummeted in the five counties surrounding Texas's metro areas: Harris (Houston), Dallas, Travis (Austin), Bexar (San Antonio), and Tarrant (Fort Worth). In 2012, Cruz lost those five counties by 3 points. In 2014, Cornyn carried those five counties by 7 points. But in 2018, O'Rourke carried those five counties by 22 points, 61-39 percent.

Cornyn's profile could resonate among traditionally Republican, suburban voters in a way that Cruz's did not. Republicans point to policies where Cornyn disagrees with Trump, a dynamic that could help Republicans attract support from suburban voters—center-right voters, especially women, who were key to Democratic overperformance in Texas's metropolitan areas in 2018.

GOP Senate Performance in Texas Metro Areas



At the same time, some Democrats believe Hegar could maintain or improve upon O'Rourke's performance in the rest of the state. While O'Rourke could have been perceived as privileged or out of touch, Hegar is a working mom and veteran, who has the added benefit of a career free of a voting record for her opponents to mine. Outside of the top five major counties, O'Rourke lost by 21 percent, showing a stronger performance than previous Democratic Senate nominees. For comparison, the 2014 and 2012 Democratic Senate candidates lost by 28 and 31 points respectively. But at the same time, between 2018 and 2012, Cruz improved his performance in 197 counties.

It All Comes Down To Turnout

Republicans and Democrats are less concerned about performance outside of the major metro areas than about overall statewide turnout. Strategists across the political spectrum believe that if Democrats maintain their margins in key demographics, a surge in turnout could push their nominee over the 50-percent mark. In 2018, turnout in Texas hit 46.3 percent, including 8.4 million votes for Senate. In 2020, strategists predict that turnout between 9-10 million would give the Democratic candidate an opportunity to win.

After about 10 million votes, one Democratic strategist argued, there's less room to grow among white voters, who tend to vote Republican. White voters turned out at 63 percent, while turnout among minority groups—African Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinos—each fell short of 50 percent. In a presidential year, higher turnout could translate to more young voters and minorities. Plus, Democratic successes down ballot in 2018 could expand voter access in key metropolitan areas. The new Harris County Clerk, for example, implemented a program that allowed Harris County voters to cast their votes at any precinct for 2019 elections.

If Edwards or West is the nominee, they could improve upon O'Rourke's performance with young voters and black voters, especially given criticisms of the lack of diversity in his 2018 campaign. While Trump on the ballot could help turn out those voters anyway, it's also possible that in a state as red as Texas—where it's been more than 40

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years since a Democratic presidential nominee won—a Senate candidate who speaks directly about issues they care about could further boost enthusiasm.

But it's not yet clear whether the Democratic nominee can hold O'Rourke's margins without the same fundraising and fanfare. First, Democrats are likely to face a primary, a dynamic O'Rourke did not contend with in 2018. It's possible that the eventual nominee enters the general election bruised. However, given the March primary and May runoff, Democrats could have enough time to recover ahead of the general election.

Actually, It All Comes Down To Money

In order for any of the above factors to matter — Cornyn's personal vulnerabilities, turnout among nonwhite voters, the Democratic nominee's strengths, etc. — the Democratic candidate likely needs to raise upwards of \$50 million, according to strategists.

That's particularly challenging in Texas, where Democrats likely need to tap into national resources, but also need to prove viability in order to earn those resources. Democrats are banking on Hegar to draw upon her fundraising network from her last race. But a Senate campaign is a different game, especially for West and Edwards, who have only fundraised for state or local offices.

While Democrats battle it out in the primary, there's no guarantee that Republicans will take advantage. Texas is an expensive state to campaign in — including 19 media markets. Cornyn raised \$2 million in the last quarter, and had \$7.4 million cash on hand as of March 31. He raised \$11.4 million for his last Senate race in 2014. Cruz spent \$39.5 million in 2018.

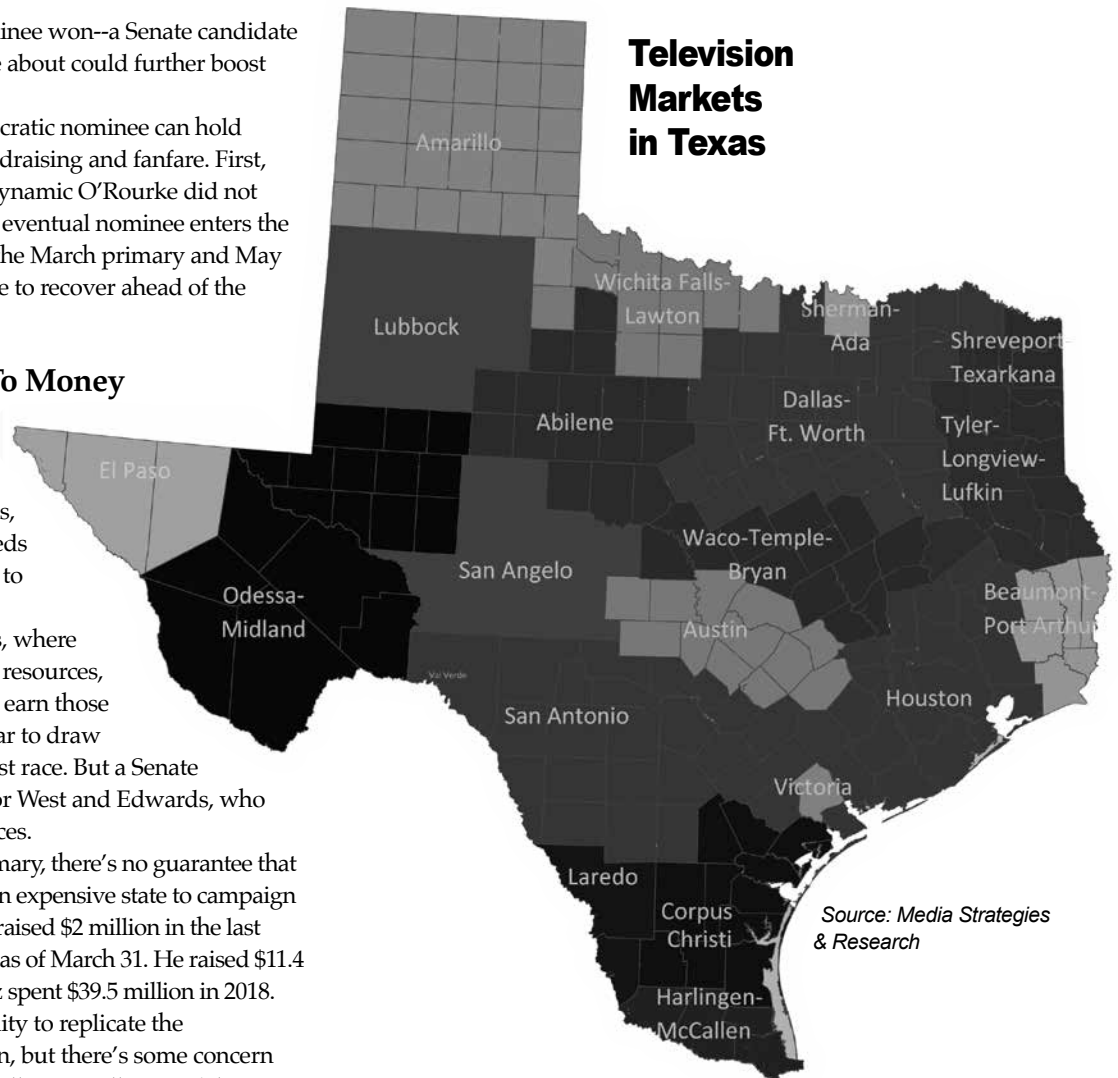
Democrats are banking on Hegar's ability to replicate the organizational success of her last campaign, but there's some concern that she benefited from one viral ad that will eventually stop delivering. While her introductory ad to the Senate largely replayed that viral ad, she could change her messaging throughout the campaign after initially reminding donors and supporters to keep her in their plans for 2020.

How It Plays Out

There are handful of other unknowns, including whether Texas is in play during the presidential race and who benefits from the end of straight-ticket voting, which will be implemented in 2020. And while Republicans hope that suburban voters who turned out to voice their frustration with Trump in 2018 will split their ticket in 2020, the emerging debate about abortion could turn off suburban voters even further, especially anti-abortion women who think that recent legislation in states such as Alabama goes too far (in terms of limiting access for cases of rape and incest).

It's possible that both nominees will try to make the race about Texas rather than about the national environment. Republicans have already coined the epithet "Hollywood Hegar," while Democrats will argue that Cornyn is more focused on appeasing party leadership than on issues facing Texans. Republicans will be prepared with examples of Cornyn securing funding for state issues — like securing hurricane funding and for local police to test backlogged rape kits. Democrats, on the other hand, argue that Hegar has branded herself as a Texan despite raising national money.

Television Markets in Texas



Source: Media Strategies & Research

The Bottom Line

There are two major differences between 2018 and 2020 that are virtually irrefutable: Cruz won't be on the ballot and Trump will be at the top of it. O'Rourke could end up appearing on the ballot if he makes it through a 20-candidate Democratic primary or ends up on the ticket as a running mate.

Other than the high-profile figures of Texas politics, most of the dynamics of the 2020 Senate race are similar to those of the rest of the country. It's unclear whether the suburbs will support Republicans in Congress now that they can direct their anger directly at Trump by voting him out of office. And even if they do end up splitting their tickets, it's unclear whether there are enough Democratic voters in Texas's metropolitan areas to overcome losses in the rest of the state. It's also unclear how much the future Democratic presidential nominee will hurt or help their party's chances in Congress.

It's hard to argue that O'Rourke built a new floor for Democrats in 2018, given that he was the top-performing statewide member of his party. But it's also unwise to ignore the enthusiasm that he generated in 2018, and how a future candidate could use his campaign as the foundation to build to a majority.

Baseline (2012 - 2018)

State	Democrat	Republican	Margin
Wyoming	26%	68%	-41%
Utah	29%	64%	-35%
North Dakota	34%	63%	-29%
Oklahoma	34%	63%	-28%
South Dakota	35%	62%	-27%
Tennessee	35%	61%	-26%
Idaho	36%	61%	-25%
Nebraska	37%	61%	-23%
Arkansas	37%	59%	-23%
Alabama	39%	60%	-21%
Mississippi	39%	59%	-20%
Kansas	39%	59%	-20%
South Carolina	41%	57%	-16%
Louisiana	42%	58%	-16%
Kentucky	42%	57%	-16%
Texas	41%	56%	-14%
Indiana	42%	55%	-12%
Alaska	39%	51%	-12%
Ohio	44%	54%	-10%
Georgia	45%	54%	-9%
Montana	45%	52%	-7%
Missouri	45%	51%	-6%
West Virginia	45%	51%	-6%
Arizona	47%	52%	-5%
Florida	47%	51%	-4%
Iowa	46%	51%	-4%
Nevada	46%	48%	-2%
North Carolina	49%	50%	-1%
Wisconsin	49%	49%	0%
Maine	45%	42%	3%
New Hampshire	50%	47%	3%
Colorado	49%	46%	3%
Michigan	50%	46%	4%
Virginia	52%	47%	5%
Pennsylvania	52%	45%	7%
Minnesota	52%	43%	9%
New Mexico	54%	44%	10%
Washington	55%	44%	11%
Oregon	53%	41%	12%
New Jersey	55%	43%	12%
Connecticut	55%	42%	14%
Illinois	55%	41%	14%
Delaware	58%	40%	19%
California	60%	39%	21%
Massachusetts	60%	37%	23%
Vermont	59%	36%	24%
Maryland	60%	36%	24%
Rhode Island	60%	36%	25%
New York	63%	35%	28%
Hawaii	68%	30%	38%

Candidate Conversation



Thomas McKinless/CQ Roll Call

John Walsh (D)

Colorado Senate --
Rating: Toss-Up

Interview Date: May 21, 2019

Date of Birth: May 28, 1961;
New York City, N.Y.

Education: Williams College (1983); Stanford (1986 J.D.); Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (attended)

Elected Office: None; candidate for Denver District Attorney (2004)

Current Outlook: Walsh will likely be one of a handful of Democratic candidates vying to take on GOP Sen. Cory Gardner in the general election. Gardner is arguably the most vulnerable Republican up for re-election in a state President Donald Trump is likely to lose in 2020, so the Democratic nomination is valuable.

Evaluation: After eight years as an assistant US attorney in California's Central District (Los Angeles), Walsh moved back to Colorado, where he grew up, in 1995. Since then, he's worked in both private practice and in public service, including as a partner at Denver firm Holland & Hart and as US Attorney for Colorado, for which he was appointed by President Barack Obama. In 2016, he returned to private practice until resigning in March to run for this seat. Former colleagues Tweeted their support of Walsh after he entered the race, including former Attorney General Eric Holder and former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates (who passed on a Senate run in Georgia).

Walsh plans to navigate a crowded primary as a candidate focused on public service rather than on elected office, emulating successful 2018 Democratic House candidates. His policy preferences reflect a pragmatic progressivism, in which the Green New Deal is imperfect but aspirationally important, Medicare for All could follow a more immediate public option, and ousting the President in November in 2020 is preferential to impeachment (though he didn't rule it out.) Walsh is fluent in Spanish and never showed a hint of being flustered, even when asked whether the Senate really needs another white man. (He believed it was an important question and expressed that former state Speaker Crisanta Duran's decision not to run for Senate—a woman who he thought could be a strong candidate—helped him to decide that he should run instead.) It's too early to know if he'll end up as the frontrunner in the primary, but Walsh has the elements for a serious candidacy.

CALENDAR

June 26-27	Democratic Presidential Debates (Miami, Fl.)
July 9	North Carolina's 3rd District Runoff
July 30-31	Democratic Presidential Debates (Detroit, Mich.)
Aug. 6	Mississippi Gubernatorial Primary
Aug. 27	Mississippi Gubernatorial Primary Runoff
Sept. 10	North Carolina's 3rd & 9th District Special General Elections
Sept. 12-13	Democratic Presidential Debates
Oct. 12	Louisiana Gubernatorial Jungle Primary