

Inside Elections

with
Nathan L. Gonzales
Nonpartisan Analysis

JULY 9, 2026

VOLUME 10, NO. 13

Florida 14: Calling All Castors

By Inshara Ali

Democrat Kathy Castor has represented Tampa in Congress for nearly two decades and has never lost an election by less than double digits. But redistricting and a new Republican-drawn congressional map has made her one of the most vulnerable incumbents in the country.

In the face of strong, historical midterm trends against the party that controls the presidency, Republicans made a mid-decade redistricting push to redraw as many districts as possible to favor GOP candidates in order to save the House majority. In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis and Republicans in the legislature drew a new map intended to gain as many as four additional seats. They did so by dividing Tampa's Democrats and turning Castor's district from a Democratic seat into one with more rural areas that President Donald Trump would have carried by 11 points in 2024.

Sensing opportunity, eight Republicans rushed to a race that was a national afterthought before the new map. But Castor's decision to run despite the challenge and the national environment that favors Democrats because of Trump's slumping job approval rating will make winning the 14th more difficult than it looks on paper.

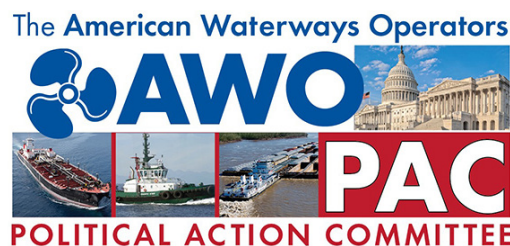
The Lay of the Land

The new 14th covers most of Tampa, including western Hillsborough County and southeastern Pinellas County. It now encompasses Republican territory, along with more evenly-divided areas near Brandon and Riverview and the majority-Hispanic community of Town 'n' Country. Aside from splitting the Democratic base in Tampa across several districts, the most consequential change is the carving out of the blue stronghold St. Petersburg entirely and placing it in the 13th and 16th Districts.

The newly-drawn district's population is substantially different. Less than a third of the Castor's current district remains in the new district: roughly half of current residents come from the former 16th (currently represented by Republican Vern Buchanan) and the rest from the former 15th (represented by Republican Laurel Lee). By population, the 14th is

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2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (3D, 11R)

AZ 1 (Open; Schweikert, R) IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R) PA 8 (Bresnahan, R) WA 3 (Perez, D)
AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R) MI 7 (Barrett, R) PA 10 (Perry, R) WI 3 (Van Orden, R)
CO 8 (Evans, R) NY 17 (Lawler, R) TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
FL25 (Moskowitz, D) PA 7 (Mackenzie, R) VA 2 (Kiggans, R)

Tilt Democratic (6D, 3R)

CA 13 (Gray, D) NY 4 (Gillen, D)
CA 45 (Tran, D) OH 1 (Landsman, D)
CA 48 (Open; Issa, R) TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)

Tilt Republican (2D, 3R)

CA 22 (Valadao, R)
FL22 (Open; Frankel, D)
IA 3 (Nunn, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)

Lean Democratic (7D, 1I)

CA6 (Open; Bera, D/Kiley, I) NY 3 (Suozzi, D)
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)
NJ 9 (Pou, D)
NV 1 (Titus, D)
NV 3 (Lee, D)
NY 19 (Riley, D)

Lean Republican (2D, 5R)

FL 14 (Castor, D) VA 1 (Wittman, R)
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)
NC 1 (Davis, D)
NC 11 (Edwards, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)

Likely Democratic (8D)

IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
CA 21 (Costa, D)
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)
MI 8 (McDonald Rivet, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)
NV 4 (Horsford, D)
VA 7 (Vindman, D)

Likely Republican (4D, 11R)

AK AL (Begich, R) ME 2 (Open; Golden, D)
AL 2 (Figures, D) MT 1 (Open; Zinke, R)
AZ 2 (Crane, R) OH 7 (Miller, R)
CO 3 (Hurd, R) TX 23 (Vacant; Gonzales, R)
CO 5 (Crank, R) TX 35 (Open; Casar, D)
FL 7 (Mills, R)
FL 9 (Soto, D)
FL 13 (Luna, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
IA 2 (Open; Hinson, R)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	188	182
Likely/Lean/Tilt	27	24
Total	215	206
Toss-up	14	
Needed for majority	218	

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

CALENDAR

July 14	Delaware Filing Deadline
July 19	World Cup Final
July 21	Arizona Primary
July 28	South Dakota Primary Runoff
July 28	Georgia 13 Special Election

2026 House Open Seats

District	Outgoing Member	2024 Results	2024 Presidential	2026 Rating	District	Outgoing Member	2024 Results	2024 Presidential	2026 Rating
AL-01	Barry Moore, R	78%	Trump 77%	Solid Republican	MT-01	Ryan Zinke, R	52%	Trump 54%	Likely Republican
AZ-01	David Schweikert, R	52%	Trump 51%	Toss-up	NE-02	Don Bacon, R	51%	Harris 52%	Tilt Democratic
AZ-05	Andy Biggs, R	60%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican	NH-01	Chris Pappas, D	54%	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic
CA-11	Nancy Pelosi, D	New lines	Harris 82%	Solid Democratic	NJ-12	Bonnie Watson Coleman, D	61%	Harris 61%	Solid Democratic
CA-26	Julia Brownley, D	New lines	Harris 56%	Solid Democratic	NV-02	Mark Amodei, R	55%	Trump 56%	Solid Republican
CA-38	Linda Sanchez, D	New lines	Harris 55%	Solid Democratic	NY-07	Nydia Velazquez, D	78%	Harris 72%	Solid Democratic
CA-48	Darrell Issa, R	New lines	Harris 50%	Tilt Democratic	NY-10	Dan Goldman, D	82%	Harris 79%	Solid Democratic
CO-01	Diana DeGette, D	77%	Harris 77%	Solid Democratic	NY-12	Jerry Nadler, D	81%	Harris 81%	Solid Democratic
FL-02	Neal Dunn, R	62%	Trump 59%	Solid Republican	NY-13	Adriano Espaillat, D	84%	Harris 79%	Solid Democratic
FL-11	Daniel Webster, R	New lines	Trump 57%	Solid Republican	NY-21	Elise Stefanik, R	62%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
FL-16	Vern Buchanan, R	New lines	Trump 56%	Solid Republican	OK-01	Kevin Hern, R	60%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
FL-19	Byron Donalds, R	New lines	Trump 65%	Solid Republican	PA-03	Dwight Evans, D	Unopposed	Harris 88%	Solid Democratic
FL-22	Lois Frankel, D	New lines	Trump 55%	Tilt Republican	SC-01	Nancy Mace, R	58%	Trump 56%	Solid Republican
FL-24	Frederica Wilson, D	New lines	Harris 69%	Solid Democratic	SC-05	Ralph Norman, R	64%	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
GA-01	Buddy Carter, R	62%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican	SD-AL	Dusty Johnson, R	72%	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
GA-10	Mike Collins, R	63%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican	TN-06	John Rose, R	New lines	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
GA-11	Barry Loudermilk, R	67%	Trump 61%	Solid Republican	TN-09	Steve Cohen, D	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
IA-02	Ashley Hinson, R	57%	Trump 54%	Likely Republican	TX-02	Dan Crenshaw, R	New lines	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
IA-04	Randy Feenstra, R	67%	Trump 65%	Solid Republican	TX-08	Morgan Luttrell, R	New lines	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
IL-02	Robin Kelly, D	68%	Harris 66%	Solid Democratic	TX-09	Al Green, D	New lines	Trump 59%	Solid Republican
IL-04	Jesus Chuy Garcia, D	68%	Harris 73%	Solid Democratic	TX-10	Michael McCaul, R	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
IL-07	Danny Davis, D	83%	Harris 81%	Solid Democratic	TX-19	Jodey Arrington, R	New lines	Trump 75%	Solid Republican
IL-08	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D	57%	Harris 53%	Solid Democratic	TX-21	Chip Roy, R	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
IL-09	Jan Schakowsky, D	68%	Harris 68%	Solid Democratic	TX-22	Troy Nehls, R	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
KY-04	Thomas Massie, R	Unopposed	Trump 67%	Solid Republican	TX-30	Jasmine Crockett, D	New lines	Harris 73%	Solid Democratic
KY-06	Andy Barr, R	63%	Trump 57%	Solid Republican	TX-32	Julie Johnson, D	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
LA-05	Julia Letlow, R	63%	Trump 67%	Solid Republican	TX-33	Marc Veasey, D	New lines	Harris 65%	Solid Democratic
MA-06	Seth Moulton, D	Unopposed	Harris 59%	Solid Democratic	TX-35	Greg Casar, D	New lines	Harris 75%	Likely Republican
MD-05	Steny Hoyer, D	68%	Harris 66%	Solid Democratic	TX-38	Wesley Hunt, R	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
ME-02	Jared Golden, D	50%	Trump 54%	Likely Republican	UT-01	Blake Moore, R	New lines	Harris 60%	Solid Democratic
MI-10	John James, R	51%	Trump 52%	Tilt Republican	WA-04	Dan Newhouse, R	52%	Trump 59%	Solid Republican
MI-11	Haley Stevens, D	58%	Harris 57%	Solid Democratic	WI-07	Tom Tiffany, R	64%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
MN-02	Angie Craig, DFL	56%	Harris 51%	Likely Democratic	WY-AL	Harriet Hageman, R	71%	Trump 72%	Solid Republican
MO-06	Sam Graves, R	New lines	Trump 63%	Solid Republican					

*Note: Some outgoing Members are running in other districts

Source: Nicholas Demba, Inside Elections

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Senate Report Shorts

By Nathan L. Gonzales, Inshara Ali and Nicholas Demba

Alaska. Dan Sullivan (R), elected 2014 (48%) and 2020 (54%). **Primary Aug. 18.** The Alaska Supreme Court ruled that retired teacher Dan Sullivan can appear on the ballot after the state Division of Elections removed him because they said he “did not file in good faith” since he has the same name as the incumbent. Even if it complicates the senator’s competitive race against former Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola, we’ll see how many Sullivans finish in the top four in the primary and move on to the general election.

Oddly enough, these aren’t the only two Dan Sullivans in Alaska who have looked at running for this seat. Back in 2013, Anchorage Mayor Dan Sullivan met with the NRSC about running but ultimately declined, leaving more room for state Commissioner of Natural Resources Dan Sullivan to win the competitive primary and defeat Democratic Sen. Mark Begich in the 2014 general election. Peltola, who lost re-election in the at-large House district in 2024, is trying to become the first Democrat since Begich in 2008 to win a Senate race in Alaska. This looks like one of the four best opportunities Democrats have on the map to try to win the majority. Lean Republican.

Colorado. John Hickenlooper (D), elected 2020 (54%). Hickenlooper won re-nomination for a second term over progressive state Sen. Julie Gonzales by an underwhelming 53-47 percent. The result is striking, considering Hickenlooper outspent Gonzales \$6.2 million to \$643,000 through June 10, and fits with the growing national trend of candidates with Washington resumes struggling in competitive primaries. Despite the underwhelming primary showing, Hickenlooper is the prohibitive favorite in the general election against state Sen. Mark Baisley, who won the Republican nomination at the party convention in April. Republicans have only won one Senate race in the last quarter century, and that was 2014 in President Barack Obama’s second midterm. Solid Democratic.

Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2020 (53%). **Primary Aug. 4.** Marshall shot down rumors that he might resign from office to take a job in the Trump administration before this fall’s election. In 2025, Kansas Republicans passed a law restricting the governor’s ability to appoint replacements to vacant positions. The law would require the governor to appoint someone of the same party as the previous officeholder and pre-approved by the state legislature, a system used by several other states, and would prevent Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly from appointing a Democrat to replace Marshall.

But the law also says that “if the vacancy occurs on or after May 1 in an even-numbered year, then such vacancy shall be filled by election at the election of representatives in congress held two years following the year in which such vacancy occurs.” That provision suggests that if Marshall were to resign now, his appointed replacement wouldn’t have to stand for election this fall but rather in 2028. There’s reason to believe that part of the law wouldn’t be enforceable, as it would artificially extend Marshall’s current term beyond the constitutional six-year limit.

Even though Kansas is not considered a top Democratic takeover opportunity, there’s a crowded and competitive Democratic primary on Aug. 4 as potential challengers jockey for the nomination. Adam Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor, announced he raised \$3.66 million through the end of the second quarter. Solid Republican.

2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (3)	
MI Open (Peters, D)	Ossoff (D-Ga.)
NC Open (Tillis, R)	
Tilt Democratic (1)	Tilt Republican (2)
NH Open (Shaheen, D)	Collins (R-Maine)
	Husted (R-Ohio)
Lean Democratic	Lean Republican (2)
	IA Open (Ernst, R)
	Sullivan (R-Ak.)
Likely Democratic (1)	Likely Republican (3)
MN Open (Smith, DFL)	TX Open (Cornyn, R)
	Graham (R-S.C.)
	Ricketts (R-Neb.)
Solid Democratic (9)	Solid Republican (14)
IL Open (Durbin, D)	AL Open (Tuberville, R)
Booker (D-N.J.)	KY Open (McConnell, R)
Coons (D-Del.)	LA Open (Cassidy, R)
Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)	MT Open (Daines, R)
Lujan (D-N.M.)	OK Open (Armstrong, R)
Markey (D-Mass.)	WY Open (Lummis, R)
Merkley (D-Ore.)	Capito (R-W.V.)
Reed (D-R.I.)	Cotton (R-Ark.)
Warner (D-Va.)	Hagerty (R-Tenn.)
	Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)
	Marshall (R-Kan.)
	Moody (R-Fl.)
	Risch (R-Idaho)
	Rounds (R-S.D.)

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

Kentucky. Open; Mitch McConnell (R), not seeking re-election. GOP Sen. Mitch McConnell, 84, was hospitalized on June 14 with few details about what happened or his current condition. Sens. John Thune and John Barrasso, along with CNN commentator Scott Jennings, reportedly had conversations with the senator on Tuesday, but information is scant. On Wednesday, Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear sent a letter to McConnell requesting an update on his health status.

The senator had already announced he was not seeking re-election, so his absence does not have an immediate electoral impact. Rep. Andy Barr won the competitive Republican primary and is heavily favored to win the general election against Democratic former state Rep. Charles Booker. But McConnell’s situation matters for Capitol Hill, where Republicans have a narrow, 53-47, Senate majority considering the senator has not been well enough to be present and vote. The situation gets more interesting if McConnell is unable to finish his term. Republicans in the legislature tried to handcuff the Democratic governor by requiring a special election in place of an appointment. But that has not been tested in court, and Republicans may try to keep the seat open if McConnell passes away, rather than have even a short-term Democratic appointee. Solid Republican.

Louisiana. Open; Bill Cassidy (R), lost in primary. The Trump-endorsed Rep. Julia Letlow won the GOP nomination with 57 percent of the vote in a runoff, after she and state Treasurer John Fleming handily beat

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Cassidy in a May primary. On the Democratic side, farmer Jamie Davis won over Democrats with 70 percent in his party's runoff. While Davis has proven his ability to fundraise, having raised \$1.2 million as of June 7, it certainly won't be an easy fight in a state Trump won by 20 points against a more experienced candidate with the president's backing. Solid Republican.

Maine. Susan Collins (R), elected 1996 (49%), 2002 (58%), 2008 (61%) 2014 (69%), and 2020 (51%). Democratic nominee Graham Platner suspended his campaign on Wednesday evening, giving Democrats an opportunity to replace him on the ballot by July 27. While negative headlines about Graham Platner's chest tattoo, Reddit posts and treatment of one former girlfriend surface, a more recent Politico article detailing more sexual assault allegations by another former girlfriend caused Democrats in Washington and Maine to pull support and called for him to drop out of the race.

It all happened just days before the Monday, 5pm Eastern time deadline to make a ballot switch. While the specific details for finding a replacement are still to come, the Maine Democratic Party said there will be a nominating convention. Former gubernatorial candidates Nirav Shah, Troy Jackson and Shenna Bellows are all interested, as well as Maine Beer Co. Founder Dan Kleban and Jordan Wood. While Republicans are publicly reveling in the chaos, it's probably good news that Democrats get behind a candidate with less baggage, even if the new nominee doesn't have the same organic energy behind their campaign. Collins has destroyed previous challengers, but this will be her most difficult race in a difficult political environment. Tilt Republican.

Public Policy Polling for Platner (D), July 1 (785 V) – General election ballot: Collins over Platner 47% - 42%, Jackson over Collins 49% - 44%, Bellows and Collins tied at 47%, Shah and Collins tied at 45%.

Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election.
Primary Aug. 4. State Sen. Mallory McMorrow suspended her campaign over the weekend, shaking up the Democratic race ahead of the Aug. 4 primary. The Democratic establishment is trying to consolidate behind Rep. Haley Stevens because there's some concern that nominating former state health department official Abdul El-Sayed would give Republicans, and likely nominee/former Rep. Mike Rogers, a better chance at taking over the Democratic open seat.

With endorsements from Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and, most recently, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, El-Sayed is embracing the more progressive lane at a time when the liberal wing of the Democratic Party is emboldened after recent primary wins in New York and Colorado. Stevens has struggled to cultivate confidence in her campaign up to this point and it's not clear how many McMorrow supporters there are (considering her recent decline in the polls) or how many will go to Stevens. McMorrow is not endorsing a candidate. All that being said, a one-on-one race against El-Sayed is a better bet for Stevens.

The general election is close to a must-win for Democrats considering the party would have to win a more Republican state elsewhere to balance out a loss in Michigan. But any analysis that says El-Sayed can't win in November underestimates Trump's current unpopularity and overall impact on the political environment. Toss-up.

Tavern Research, July 6-7 (2211 LV) (text-to-web) – Democratic primary ballot: El-Sayed 41%, Stevens 38%, McMorrow 5%. (McMorrow will still appear on primary ballots.)

Tulchin Research, June 24-28 (500 LV) – Democratic primary ballot: El-Sayed 46%, Stevens 27%, McMorrow 17%.

2026 Open Senate Seats

A record number of senators are calling it quits this year, and two have lost their primaries — the most since 2010.

State	Outgoing Senator	2024 Presidential	2026 Rating
Alabama	Tommy Tuberville, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
Illinois	Dick Durbin, D	Harris 54%	Solid Democratic
Iowa	Joni Ernst, R	Trump 56%	Lean Republican
Kentucky	Mitch McConnell, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
Louisiana	Bill Cassidy, R	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
Michigan	Gary Peters, D	Trump 49.7%	Toss-up
Minnesota	Tina Smith, DFL	Harris 51%	Likely Democratic
Montana	Steve Daines, R	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
New Hampshire	Jeanne Shaheen, D	Harris 51%	Tilt Democratic
North Carolina	Thom Tillis, R	Trump 51%	Toss-up
Oklahoma	Alan Armstrong, R	Trump 66%	Solid Republican
Texas	John Cornyn, R	Trump 56%	Likely Republican
Wyoming	Cynthia Lummis, R	Trump 72%	Solid Republican

Source: Nicholas Demba, Inside Elections

North Carolina. Open; Thom Tillis (R) not seeking re-election.

While former RNC Chairman Michael Whatley has consistently called himself a "son of Blowing Rock" and product of western North Carolina, NBC News reported that the GOP nominee was born in Michigan and moved to the state when he was in high school. The negative headlines won't end his campaign but it doesn't help when he's in the middle of a very difficult race against former Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Even though Trump won the Tar Heel State three times in the past presidential elections, North Carolina is a swing state at a time when Republicans are on their heels nationally with Trump's negative job approval rating. Whatley is also having a hard time keeping up financially. He trailed Cooper \$18.5 million to \$2.5 million in cash-on-hand on April 13. But the recent Supreme Court decision allows Whatley to coordinate with the NRSC and give the party access to the lower candidate rate for TV ads. Toss-up.

The New York Times/Siena Univ., June 15-27 (601 LV) (live caller) – General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley 50% - 43%.

YouGov for Catawba College Center for N.C. Politics & Public Service, June 1-10 (905 LV) – General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley 48% - 34%.

Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. A handful of recent polls confirm a very competitive race between the appointed GOP senator and former Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown. Even though Brown lost re-election in 2024 and Trump won the state handily, the political environment is clearly different. The president's negative job approval rating is giving Democrats an opportunity to win. Tilt Republican.

Beacon Research (D)/Shaw & Co. Research (R) for Fox News, May 28-June 1 (1015 RV)(multi-modal) – General election ballot: Husted over Brown 53% - 45%.

Fabrizio Ward (R) & Impact Research (D) for AARP, June 14-16 (800 LV) (multimodal) – General election ballot: Brown over Husted 48% - 45%

The New York Times/Siena Univ., June 15-28 (601 LV)(live caller) – General election ballot: Husted over Brown 50% - 47%.

Montana Senate: New Poll Confirms GOP Edge

By Jacob Rubashkin

When Montana GOP Sen. Steve Daines dropped his re-election bid at the last minute earlier this year, he injected some intrigue to a sleepy contest. For a moment, the race looked poised to crash the Senate battleground.

But a new poll obtained by *Inside Elections* shows Republicans remain favored to hold onto the open seat, despite a worsening national political environment for the GOP and a well-funded independent candidate in the race.

A June 23-24 poll conducted by GrayHouse, a Republican polling firm with no client in the race, found Republican Kurt Alme leading the field with 41 percent, followed by Democrat Alani Bankhead with 25 percent and independent Seth Bodnar with 17 percent. Libertarian Kyle Austin took 3 percent.

Alme, a former US Attorney and Daines' handpicked successor, is untested as a candidate, and his sudden elevation and avoidance of a primary ruffled some local feathers even as national strategists appreciated the lack of a messy primary. Bodnar, the former president of the University of Montana, has support from some of the state's most prominent Democrats, including former Sens. Jon Tester and Max Baucus.

Democrats have had some success in backing independent candidates running in Republican states: Nebraska's Dan Osborn and Utah's Evan McMullin turned no-shot contests into competitive races in 2024 and 2022.

But Montana's Democratic rank-and-file begin the general election reluctant to back Bodnar, a former Green Beret and Rhodes Scholar.

That's because unlike in Nebraska or Utah, there is still an actual Democrat in the race: Bankhead, a previously unknown Air Force veteran who was boosted to a primary win by millions of dollars in spending from a group that actually *supports* Bodnar. The group believed Bankhead was more likely to drop out of a general election than her primary opponents.

But the Democrat made clear in a recent press conference she has no plans to drop out, and *Inside Elections* shifted the race from Likely Republican to Solid Republican last week.

In the GrayHouse poll, 60 percent of Democrats supported Bankhead while 28 percent supported Bodnar. Independents split between the three top contenders, with Bodnar winning 30 percent, Bankhead 27 percent, and Alme 22 percent.

The results are the latest evidence that Bodnar's path to victory is severely limited so long as Bankhead remains in the race.

Two other polls conducted since the June 2 primary tell a similar story to the GrayHouse survey.

A June 8-11 poll from GOP firm Public Opinion Strategies showed Alme ahead with 44 percent, followed by Bankhead at 25 percent, and Bodnar at 20 percent. Austin captured 4 percent. Among Democrats, Bankhead led Bodnar, 59-32 percent.

A June 16-19 poll from Tavern Research found Alme leading a four-way field with 49 percent, followed by Bankhead at 26 percent, Bodnar at 24 percent, and Austin at 2 percent. Bankhead captured 78 percent of the Democratic vote to Bodnar's 20 percent.

Tavern, a Democratic firm, has polled for pro-Bodnar groups, including the super PAC that boosted Bankhead in the Democratic primary.

That effort, backed by \$2.5 million, was primarily to block former state Rep. Reilly Neill from winning the Democratic nomination. Neill was a vocal critic of Bodnar who had made clear she would not bow out of the general election. Unlike Bankhead, she had a staffed campaign that raised more than \$200,000 through mid-May — Bankhead raised just \$17,000. Republicans, meanwhile, spent several million dollars attempting to boost Neill among Democratic primary voters.

If there's a warning sign for Republicans, it's that their nominee is polling consistently below 50 percent in a state that President Donald Trump won with 58 percent of the vote in 2024 and where the last GOP nominee, Tim Sheehy, won 54 percent of the vote against an incumbent senator despite being outspent considerably. In GrayHouse's poll, a generic Republican beat a generic Democrat, 51-41 percent, and Trump's ratings remain in positive territory, at 53 percent approve and 47 percent disapprove.

As long as both Bankhead and Bodnar look competitive, that's not a problem for Alme, who only needs a plurality to win. But while Bankhead has said she won't drop out, she also hasn't shown any ability to raise money or mount a statewide campaign. Her primary win can be credited entirely to outside spending from a group that won't back her in a general election. Bodnar, meanwhile, is the top fundraiser in the field, with \$2.1 million raised through May 13 to Alme's \$1.2 million.

While Bankhead may poll ahead of Bodnar now, she does not have a path to victory herself even if Bodnar were to drop out, as she has called on him to do. So if the independent begins to spend more heavily to introduce himself to Democratic voters, and if outside groups begin to work to drive down Bankhead's support, the race could begin to develop in a different direction.

The Tavern Research poll found that in head-to-head matchups, Bodnar and Alme were tied, 50-50 percent, while Alme led Bankhead, 56-44 percent.

Ultimately, the presence of any Democrat on the ballot likely siphons off too many anti-Alme votes for Bodnar to pull ahead. That puts this race in a different category than Nebraska, where Osborn, the independent running a second time, engineered a one-on-one contest against Sen. Pete Ricketts that remains competitive — and unlike Montana, could provide a backdoor path to a Democratic Senate majority.

GrayHouse (R), June 23-24 (500 LV)(live caller/text-to-web) — General election ballot: Alme 41%, Bankhead 25%, Bodnar 17%.

IE

Inside Elections Podcast

Episode 74: Nathan, Jacob and Manu Raju of CNN talk about how the upcoming midterm elections are affecting Capitol Hill and get a behind-the-scenes look at Manu's first pitch at Wrigley Field.

Episode 73: Nathan, Jacob and Pamela Wood of the Baltimore Banner looked ahead to the Maryland primaries and future of redistricting

Episode 72: Nathan, Jacob and Jeff Coltin of City & State analyzed the vast array of New York primaries.

House Report Shorts

By Nathan L. Gonzales, Inshara Ali, Nicholas Demba and Jacob Rubashkin

Alabama’s 2nd District. (Montgomery and southeastern Alabama) **Shomari Figures, D. Trump 57%.** The U.S. Supreme Court’s June ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais* allowed the state to return to a 2023 congressional map in which the 2nd District is much more Republican. But despite the challenge, Figures is running for re-election. The legal proceedings forced the GOP primary to be pushed back to Aug. 11, but state Rep. Rhett Marques has been endorsed by President Donald Trump and is regarded as the frontrunner. Even with help from the national political environment, Figures is still the underdog in November. Likely Republican.

IMPACT Research (D) for DCCC, June 22-25 (400LV) – General election ballot: Marques over Figures 45% - 44%.
Peak Insights, June 8-9 (400 LV) (text interview) – GOP primary election ballot: Marques 30%, McKee 10%, Harris 4%, Matthews 4% Richardson 2%, Horn 1%.

Colorado’s 1st District. (Denver) **Diana DeGette, D, re-elected 77%. Harris 77%.** Fresh off of primary victories the previous week in New York where candidates backed by democratic socialist Mayor Zohran Mamdani unseated Reps. Dan Goldman and Adriano Espalliat, progressives defeated another long-time incumbent. DeGette, who has served in Congress since 1997, fell to Melat Kiros, a democratic socialist activist and attorney, 53-40 percent. In this deep-blue district, Kiros is virtually guaranteed to be a member of Congress come January. Solid Democratic.

Colorado’s 3rd District. (Pueblo area and Western Slope) **Jeff Hurd, R, elected 51%. Trump 54%.** Hurd had quite the tumultuous primary en route to a 66-34 percent victory in a rematch against former state Rep. Ron Hanks. Earlier this year, President Trump endorsed former state party vice-chairwoman Hope Scheppelman over the first-term congressman after he voted against Trump’s tariffs on Canada. This set off a lobbying campaign from Speaker Mike Johnson and Republicans concerned that nominating Scheppelman could put the seat in jeopardy in November. Trump ultimately re-endorsed Hurd and enticed Scheppelman to drop out with an offer of administration positions for her and her husband.

Democratic voters nominated former Army Ranger and Aspen City Councilman Dwayne Romero. Hurd only won by 5 points in 2024. But he was massively outspent in that race by Democrat Adam Frisch, who benefitted from being able to raise money against Lauren Boebert for three years before the congresswoman decamped to the 4th District. It’s a different story for Hurd this cycle: he reported \$1.6 million in cash on hand to Romero’s \$371,000 in mid-June. Likely Republican.

Colorado’s 4th District. (Eastern Colorado and Denver exurbs) **Lauren Boebert, R, re-elected 54%. Trump 58%.** Two years after moving from the more competitive 3rd District to win re-election over a crowded primary field, Boebert faced no opposition in her primary this time. Earlier this year, Trump suggested that someone run against her after she campaigned for Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, but the filing deadline had already passed. Democrats have a credible challenger in retired Rear Admiral Eileen Laubacher, who was also unopposed in her primary and raised nearly \$10 million as of May 10. But it’s a tough district, even against a chronic underperformer like Boebert and in a good Democratic environment. Solid Republican.

Colorado’s 5th District. (Colorado Springs area) **Jeff Crank, R, elected 55%. Trump 53%.** Former Army captain/former Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff chief of staff Jessica Killin won the Democratic primary and will face Crank in November. Killin defeated Army veteran Joe Reagan, 61-39 percent. Having already put her on the DCCC’s Red to Blue program, national Democrats believe that Killin can make this blue-trending district competitive this year. Likely Republican.

Colorado’s 8th District. (Northern Denver suburbs and Greeley area) **Gabe Evans, R, elected 49%. Trump 49.6%.** This seat is one of the top targets nationwide for Democrats on their path to a House majority. State Rep. Manny Rutinel will face Evans, who flipped this seat two years ago. Rutinel defeated former state Rep. Shannon Bird, 63-33 percent. While some Democratic strategists preferred Bird because of Rutinel’s progressive reputation, the DCCC did not put its finger on the scale for her like it did in California’s 22nd, Maine’s 2nd or Arizona’s 1st districts. Republicans hope to levy a range of attacks against Rutinel including his activism for animal rights and against fossil fuels, but may have to deal with a colorful gubernatorial nominee at the top of the ticket. Toss-up.

Florida’s 7th District. (Northern Orlando suburbs and part of Daytona Beach area) **Cory Mills, R. Trump 56%.** Mills is facing challenges on multiple fronts. Legally, he’s facing numerous allegations of financial and personal impropriety and has a restraining order from an ex-girlfriend. The congressman faces former local TV anchor Ryan Elijah, who hosted a morning show on Fox 35 in Orlando, and real estate agent Sarah Ulrich in the GOP primary. And Democratic strategists are excited about former NASA chief of staff Bale Dalton, who is on the DCCC’s Red to Blue list, even though 2024 nominee Jennifer Adams and Navy veteran Marialana Kinter are also running. Now another GOP opponent, Michael Johnson, has filed a formal legal complaint that alleges the congressman improperly notarized his candidate documents and should be removed from the ballot. This is drawn as a Republican district, but the unique circumstances continue to make this race competitive. Likely Republican.

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Incumbents Defeated in 2026 Primaries

A little more than halfway through primary season, 10 incumbents have failed to win renomination

State	Office/District	Name	Party	Vote Share
Louisiana	Senate	Bill Cassidy	Republican	25%
Texas (Runoff)	Senate	John Cornyn	Republican	36%
Colorado	1st District	Diana DeGette	Democratic	40%
Kentucky	4th District	Thomas Massie	Republican	45%
New York	10th District	Dan Goldman	Democratic	34%
New York	13th District	Adriano Espalliat	Democratic	46%
Texas	2nd District	Dan Crenshaw	Republican	41%
Texas	23rd District	Tony Gonzales	Republican	42%
Texas (Runoff)	18th District	Al Green	Democratic	31%
Texas (Runoff)	33rd District	Julie Johnson	Democratic	46%

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Public Policy Polling for Bale Dalton (D), May 20-21 (570 RV)(multi-modal) – Dalton over Mills 41% - 39%.

Iowa's 2nd District. (Northeastern Iowa) Open; Ashley Hinson, R, running for Senate. Trump 54%. While GOP strategists express confidence that Senate nominee Ashley Hinson's district is not at significant risk of a Democratic takeover, the White House is apparently concerned enough to have Health & Human Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. call Libertarian candidate Rick Stewart to try to convince him to drop out of the race.

Former state Rep. Mitchell, the GOP nominee, is facing Democratic pastor/state Rep. Lindsay James in a district where President Donald Trump finished ahead of Vice President Kamala Harris by 10 points in 2024. But the entire state of Iowa is much more competitive this cycle as Democrats are seriously challenging for the Senate seat, governorship and three out of four congressional districts. There hasn't been a Libertarian candidate on the ballot in the last two cycles, so there's not a clear baseline. But RFK's actions signify the expectation of a close race where every percentage point could matter. Likely Republican.

Montana's 1st District. (Western Montana) Open; Ryan Zinke, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 54%. A new Democratic poll first reported by *Inside Elections* showed Republican Aaron Flint running even with Democratic smokejumper Sam Forstag at 44 percent. Libertarian candidate Nick Sheedy was at 5 percent. Both of the main candidates had similar name ID with Flint at 32 percent favorable/35 percent unfavorable and Forstag at 39 percent favorable/29 percent unfavorable. The poll was conducted June 22-26 by Impact Research for the Forstag campaign. Even though it's a GOP-leaning district where Trump finished ahead of Harris by 11 points, Democrats haven't had trouble keeping it close in House races. Democrat Monica Tranel received 45 percent against Zinke last cycle, so Forstag being at 44 percent is not a surprise. It's the last few points that have been difficult for Democrats. Oddly, Zinke might have given Democrats a better chance but he's not running again. Likely Republican.

New Jersey's 7th District. (Southwestern New York City suburbs and exurbs) Tom Kean Jr., R, re-elected 52%. Trump 49.6%. After more than 100 days out of the public eye, off of Capitol Hill and in the political wilderness, GOP Rep. Tom Kean Jr. returned to Washington last week. He explained that his absence was due to treatment for depression. Kean was already in a difficult re-election prior to the mystery and intrigue surrounding that absence. It might still be another couple of weeks before there's substantial polling data to gauge what impact the situation had on the race. But Democrats nominated a serious challenger with Navy veteran Rebecca Bennett and Kean had little margin for error in a district where Trump narrowly outpaced Harris. In President Trump's first midterm, Kean defeated Democratic Rep. Tom Malinowski by 3 points. Tilt Democratic.

New York's 21st. (North Country and part of Albany area) Open; Elise Stefanik, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 60%. GOP state Assemblyman Robert Smullen will not move forward with his campaign on the Conservative Party line after an Oval Office meeting with President Donald Trump. That's good news for Republicans and GOP nominee Anthony Constantino because Smullen might have siphoned off some right-of-center votes, giving Democratic farmer Blake Gendebien an opportunity in the otherwise GOP leaning district. Solid Republican. 

Likely New Members of Congress

These 47 candidates who have won their primaries in seats rated Solid are — barring a drastic change in fortunes — headed to Congress next year.

State/ District	Likely New Member	2024 Presidential	Current Member
Alabama	Barry Moore, R	Trump 65%	Tommy Tuberville, R
Illinois	Juliana Stratton, D	Harris 54%	Dick Durbin, D
Kentucky	Andy Barr, R	Trump 65%	Mitch McConnell, R
Louisiana	Julia Letlow, R	Trump 60%	Bill Cassidy, R
Montana	Kurt Alme, R	Trump 58%	Steve Daines, R
Oklahoma	Kevin Hern, R	Trump 66%	Alan Armstrong, R
CA-01	Mike McGuire, D	Harris 54%	James Gallagher, R
CA-26	Jacqui Irwin, D	Harris 56%	Julia Brownley, D
CA-38	Hilda Solis, D	Harris 55%	Linda Sanchez, D
CO-01	Melat Kiros, D	Harris 77%	Diana DeGette, D
GA-01	Jim Kingston, R	Trump 58%	Buddy Carter, R
GA-10	Houston Gaines, R	Trump 60%	Mike Collins, R
GA-11	John Cowan, R	Trump 61%	Barry Loudermilk, R
GA-13	Jasmine Clark, D	Harris 71%	VACANT*
IA-04	Chris McGowan, R	Trump 65%	Randy Feenstra, R
IL-02	Donna Miller, D	Harris 66%	Robin Kelly, D
IL-04	Patty Garcia, D	Harris 73%	Jesus Chuy Garcia, D
IL-07	La Shawn Ford, D	Harris 81%	Danny Davis, D
IL-08	Melissa Bean, D	Harris 53%	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D
IL-09	Daniel Biss, D	Harris 68%	Jan Schakowsky, D
KY-04	Ed Gallrein, R	Trump 67%	Thomas Massie, R
KY-06	Ralph Alvarado, R	Trump 57%	Andy Barr, R
MD-05	Adrian Boaf, D	Harris 66%	Steny Hoyer, D
NJ-12	Adam Hamawy, D	Harris 61%	Bonnie Watson Coleman, D
NV-02	David Flippo, R	Trump 56%	Mark Amodei, R
NY-07	Claire Valdez, D	Harris 72%	Nydia Velazquez, D
NY-10	Brad Lander, D	Harris 79%	Dan Goldman, D
NY-12	Micah Lasher, D	Harris 81%	Jerry Nadler, D
NY-13	Darialza Avila Chevalier, D	Harris 79%	Adriano Espaillat, D
NY-21	Anthony Constantino, R	Trump 60%	Elise Stefanik, R
OK-01	Mark Tedford, R	Trump 60%	Kevin Hern, R
PA-03	Chris Rabb, D	Harris 88%	Dwight Evans, D
SC-01	Jenny Costa Honeycutt, R	Trump 56%	Nancy Mace, R
SC-05	Wes Climer, R	Trump 61%	Ralph Norman, R
SD-AL	Marty Jackley, R	Trump 63%	Dusty Johnson, R
TX-02	Steve Toth, R	Trump 61%	Dan Crenshaw, R
TX-08	Jessica Steinmann, R	Trump 63%	Morgan Luttrell, R
TX-09	Alex Mealer, R	Trump 59%	Al Green, D
TX-10	Chris Gober, R	Trump 58%	Michael McCaul, R
TX-19	Tom Sell, R	Trump 75%	Jodey Arrington, R
TX-21	Mark Teixeira, R	Trump 60%	Chip Roy, R
TX-22	Trever Nehls, R	Trump 58%	Troy Nehls, R
TX-30	Frederick Haynes III, D	Harris 73%	Jasmine Crockett, D
TX-32	Jace Yarbrough, R	Trump 58%	Julie Johnson, D
TX-33	Colin Allred, D	Harris 65%	Marc Veasey, D
TX-38	Jon Bonck, R	Trump 60%	Wesley Hunt, R
UT-01	Ben McAdams, D	Harris 60%	Blake Moore, R

* Pending Special Election

Source: Nicholas Demba, Inside Elections

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50 percent white (up from 47 percent previously) with notable Hispanic (28 percent) and Black populations (13 percent).

Twenty-four percent of residents have earned at least a bachelor's degree, significantly lower than the national average of 36 percent, and the share of senior voters is now two points higher than the national average at over 20 percent.

On paper, the district was drawn by Republicans to elect a Republican. While Vice President Kamala Harris finished ahead of Trump by 8 points under the old lines in 2024, Trump would have carried the newly-drawn district by 11 points.

It's a similar story in other statewide races. In 2024, GOP Sen. Rick Scott lost the old 14th by 7 points but would have finished ahead by 10 points in the newly-drawn seat. In 2022, GOP Sen. Marco Rubio lost the old 14th by 8 points but won the new seat by 15 points.

The Democrat

National Democrats are fortunate that Castor and Democratic colleagues Jared Moskowitz and Darren Soto have decided to run for re-election, even though their districts were significantly redrawn. The trio gives Democrats an opportunity to thwart the GOP redistricting effort, even if it's just temporarily until the political environment improves for Republicans.



Kathy Castor

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Castor has proven to be a good candidate. In 2024, she won re-election by more than 15 points, out-performing Harris in the district by nearly 10 points. The congresswoman also posted a 1.5 Vote Above Replacement (VAR) score, which means she outperformed an average Democratic candidate. But the new lines will test whether she can replicate that success.

Even though the district lines have changed, Castor's team is taking advantage of her family ties to the region. Born in Miami and raised in Tampa, she is the daughter of Betty Castor, a former state senator who lost a US Senate race in 2004, and former Hillsborough County judge Donald Castor. Kathy followed her mother on the Hillsborough commission (2002-2006) before running for Congress. Betty Castor is now campaigning alongside her daughter, hoping to reach the slightly older and significantly more rural population Castor seeks to represent.

After graduating from Florida State University College of Law in 1991, Kathy Castor served as an assistant general counsel for the Florida Department of Community Affairs and went on to work as a land use attorney. Castor ran unsuccessfully for the Florida state Senate in 2000 but was elected to Congress six years later in what was then the 11th District. She won that race by more than 40 points and became the first woman to represent the Tampa Bay area in the House.

After years of races outside the national spotlight, Castor finds herself near the center of the fight for the House majority, thanks to redistricting. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee placed her on their "Frontline" list, where the most vulnerable incumbents are highlighted for donors. Soto and Moskowitz are also on the list.

After years of neglect, there's renewed interest in the Sunshine State. After 2018, when DeSantis won his first gubernatorial election by less than half a percentage point and Nikki Fried won her race for commissioner of agriculture, Democrats haven't won a single statewide race and Republicans have grown their margins. But President Trump's unpopularity could make this year's Senate and gubernatorial races competitive and Republicans' redistricting plans less than a sure bet.

Castor has raised more than \$2 million in her bid for an eleventh term, closing out June with \$1.3 million in cash on hand, according to Democratic sources. Official second quarter FEC reports are due July 15.

The Castor campaign team includes media consultants Martha McKenna and Isaiah Nelson of McKenna Media, direct mail strategist Karen Patel, pollster Rosa Mendoza of Global Strategy Group and campaign manager Sarah Green.

Strategically, the campaign is leaning on Castor's legislative record, including her work on healthcare costs and military pay raises, rather than an overtly ideological pitch. Democrats hope that approach has a substantive appeal in a more conservative-leaning district, but carries risk: wins on unglamorous policy issues may not reliably generate voter enthusiasm a tougher district now demands.

The Republicans

Eight Republicans are running for the newly-drawn seat. State Rep. Kevin Steele, former state Rep. Mike Beltran and former White House staffer Bea Valenti make up the top tier while Navy veteran Robert Rochford, business owner John Peters, former Wall Street analyst Michael Marcel, Tampa restaurant owner Ergin "Batman" Tek and kombucha brewery operator Gavriel Soriano are running as well.

Steele has represented Pasco County in the Florida legislature since 2022, winning both elections by wide margins. Born and raised in Tampa, he attended Hillsborough Community College and the University of South Florida (which is actually in Tampa). After working



Kevin Steele

Courtesy Steele Campaign

briefly in finance, he was recruited for local telecommunications startup Z-tel and went on to start DataLink Software, a healthcare tech company. Now retired, Steele reported a net worth of \$152 million in 2025 – making him the wealthiest

member of the Florida legislature. As a Dade City resident, he's now seeking to represent a district he neither lives in nor has ever represented. (According to the constitution, House members only need to live in the state they represent, not necessarily the district.)

Steele came under fire in 2025 from College Democrats and Republicans alike, albeit for different reasons, after his introduction of House Bill 113, which required each public university in Florida to rename a campus roadway in honor of the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk or face the withholding of state funds for those that do not comply.

For his race, the Steele campaign team includes Jim McLaughlin, one of President Trump's top pollsters and key advisors.

Beltran, 42, is a Brooklyn native and Riverview resident who moved

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to Florida in 2010 to work as a law clerk after graduating from Harvard Law. He went on to represent Florida's 70th House district, which mostly overlaps with the 15th district, for three terms beginning in 2018, and is now a practicing attorney in Tampa.

By most conventional measures, Beltran is a traditional conservative; he's received endorsements from Gun Owners of America for his "100% pro-gun record" for this race and, in 2018, Florida Right to Life. But during his tenure in the Florida legislature, Beltran often clashed with members of his party – most notably voting against DeSantis' 2024-2025 budget and a 2020 proposal to punish social media companies for flagging content.

After losing influence in the Florida House, Beltran chose not to run for re-election in 2024 and cited personal reasons. He went on to sharply

criticize the legislature, calling it an "oligarchy," and claimed his opposition to the governor's attempt to limit street protests after the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement was the reason he lost committee assignments.

Valenti, 29, is a self-described "America First MAGA conservative" and Navy reservist who hails from Hillsborough County and graduated from FSU in 2020. While this is her first electoral bid, she's no stranger to DC. She served as the senior advisor for appointed GOP Sen. Ashley Moody and worked as a House staffer for three years. Before her time on the Hill, she worked in the public affairs department for the Navy and as a White House staffer during Trump's first term.

Rochford, longtime Hillsborough County resident, is seeking a rematch with Castor, who defeated him by more than 15 points in 2024 under the old map. Rochford's campaign team includes Jaime Arellano Harding, an exiled Nicaraguan political commentator.

Stanley Steemer franchise owner Peters, 62, was previously running in the 16th district before qualifying for this race by petition when the new lines were drawn. Like Steele, Peters lives outside of the 14th District as a Lakeland resident. He's also a self-described "one-man gang" who is managing his own race.

This marks his second attempt to run against Castor after losing the primary to Rochford in 2024. This time, he appears determined not to repeat that outcome: a notable portion of Peters' primary strategy criticizes Rochford directly and has a "Rochford Record" page on his website that provides a rundown of his rival's past electoral setbacks.

Tek, 47, is a political newcomer and owner of Gengiz Khan Mediterranean Grill in South Tampa. He is running most prominently on his "Batman Vision Hurricane Barrier" plan, a proposed storm-surge barrier intended to protect the Tampa Bay area from flooding. Political consulting firm Revolutionizing Microtargeted Campaigns is managing Tek's campaign.

Also new to politics are farmer and brewery operator Soriano, 31, and consultant Marcel, 61, who hope to appeal to anti-establishment Republican voters by touting their political outsider statuses and business experience. In 2022, Soriano finished third with 5 percent behind incumbent Dan Webster (51 percent) and Laura Loomer (44

percent) in the 11th District GOP primary. Marcel, a Sarasota resident, has worked in Florida's construction industry for over a decade.

The Republican Primary

While thousands of GOP voters will choose a nominee in the Aug. 18 primary, everyone is waiting for the most important Republican to weigh in with an endorsement. Despite his poor job approval rating nationwide among all voters, President Trump is still extremely popular and influential within the Republican Party and his support is coveted in primaries. But while some GOP strategists believe he'll select Steele or Beltran, there's no indication specifically when or if the president will get involved.

With or without Trump, Steele and Beltran stand out in the packed primary as viable candidates and proven fundraisers.

Steele ditched his bid for chief financial officer when the new district lines were finalized and vaulted to the top tier. He's used \$2.5 million of his own money and has begun flooding the Tampa/St. Petersburg airwaves with TV ads.

He has the backing of all three of Florida's elected cabinet members, Attorney General James Uthmeier, Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia (who he sought to beat in the CFO race just a few months ago).

But if anyone can match Steele's war chest, it's Beltran. The former state representative brings comparably deep pockets to what's shaping to be an expensive primary. He has already pledged \$1 million of his own money after his break from politics allowed him to grow his litigation firm.

Valenti isn't personally wealthy but has some establishment support with endorsements from her former employers, Reps. Mike Ezell of Mississippi and Neal Dunn of Florida's 2nd District, but a Trump endorsement remains the single biggest variable that could reshape her

odds against more established rivals.

In a June debate, which Steele notably missed to attend a campaign event for Republican gubernatorial candidate Byron Donalds, candidates Beltran, Peters, Rochford, Soriano,



Bea Valenti

Tek, and Valenti all said they would refuse to accept money from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Castor has received more than \$53,000 from AIPAC through bundled individual contributions and its PAC this election cycle.

While the race is just beginning, it looks like Steele and Beltran are the biggest contenders while Valenti will need a few things to break her way. Unless Trump intervenes and clears the field of all but one of the most credible candidates, Republicans could be looking at an extended primary fight while Castor marshals her resources for the general election.

The General Election

While Castor has the more extensive and successful political career compared to any of her potential challengers, Florida's redrawn map

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Continued from page 9 makes her a notable underdog in this race. Democratic strategists are hopeful in Castor’s ability to hold the seat, but aren’t treating this race as settled, and the district is likely to continue to draw outside spending regardless of which Republican emerges from the primary.

Still, Castor won her 2024 race comfortably under the old map and has a long history on Capitol Hill. That means ability to fundraise, win elections and tap into national contacts to help boost her prospects.

But structural advantages ultimately give Republicans a considerable advantage: a Trump +11 seat are the kind of numbers that make this race look like a prime pickup opportunity for Republicans and to help hold the House majority.

Even with a more favorable map, the president’s party isn’t taking the race for granted. The Congressional Leadership Fund has reserved a \$6.5 million ad blitz aimed at Castor and Moskowitz’s districts.

It’s clear the incumbent must win over a large portion of new voters, but retaining the coalition that has delivered Castor comfortable margins – a mix of Hillsborough County Democrats and ticket splitters that have stuck with her, even when the county began trending red, may be just as important. Whether that coalition is enough to balance the newly-added GOP strongholds is the real test, not necessarily whether she can flip Trump voters outright.



Ergin Tek

Courtesy Tek Campaign

Republicans, meanwhile, have to get past a crowded and, in some respects, contentious primary before they can capitalize on the map. Steele brings personal wealth and strong state-level endorsements, but needs to maintain his fundraising levels to keep up with Castor. Beltran’s past willingness to oppose DeSantis could appeal to swing voters, but could complicate his standing with the party’s base heading into a primary. Valenti offers voters some experience on the Hill, but has yet to prove her electability in the region. Democratic strategists are still holding out hope for a financially bruising primary – even though a Trump endorsement could potentially prevent one – that could boost Castor’s chances and leave the eventual nominee with fewer resources to consolidate the district’s new advantage before the general election.

The Bottom Line

The fight for Florida’s 14th is a microcosm of part of the national narrative. The district is a key cog in Republicans’ mid-decade redistricting strategy designed to insulate the party’s House majority from historical midterm trends that work against the president’s party. But the current president’s negative job approval rating is making it difficult for Republicans to keep their successful coalition together and giving Democrats a chance to win in seats – and maybe even statewide – where they’ve been losing handily.

There’s still uncertainty on the Republican side. President Trump could endorse and anoint a frontrunner, but it looks likely there will be a competitive primary to the end. But no matter who wins the nomination, the 14th will be a top GOP target in November.

Castor will have to fight hard to win what is poised to be the toughest election of her career. The 14th’s Baseline has shifted from D+12.4 to R+10.9. But while the geographic odds are against her, it’s possible that her experience as a candidate, roots in the region, and national political environment help her earn another term.

IE

Statewide Election Results for Florida's 14th District

