Washington 3: Same Place, Different Face

By Jacob Rubashkin

Marie Gluesenkamp Perez is one of the unlikeliest stories in the House of Representatives. First, the body shop owner who grew up in a Spanish-language evangelical church in Texas was the only Democrat to flip a Donald Trump-won district in a year that saw her party lose control of the House. Then, she cemented her position with a statement win in 2024, outrunning Vice President Kamala Harris by 7 points.

That's given Gluesenkamp Perez outsized prominence in her caucus, where she's quickly become a media darling and one of the more recognizable and eccentric Democrats in Washington, DC.

But Gluesenkamp Perez had help along the way, from an unlikely source: her two-time GOP opponent, Joe Kent, a Special Forces veteran who angered many Republicans in the district by ousting a moderate six-term incumbent in the primary and whose personal baggage made him toxic to some outside GOP groups, donors — and general election voters.

Should Gluesenkamp Perez's wins in 2022 and 2024 carry an asterisk? The answer may lay in the next election, where Republicans look to nominate a candidate quite different from Kent: John Braun, a well-liked, low-key state legislator with a healthy Rolodex.

All that points to a highly competitive race in the Pacific Northwest for a district that was on few pundits' bingo cards at the start of the decade.
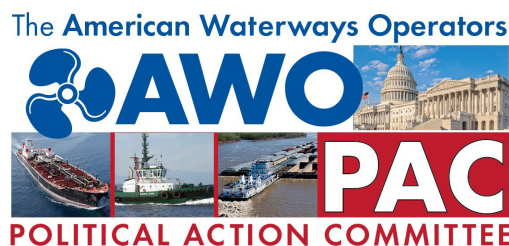
The Lay of the Land

Washington's 3rd District sits in the Olympic State's southwest corner, bordering Oregon to the south, the Cascades to the east, the Olympic Peninsula to the north, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The largest city, Vancouver (population 200,000), is a suburb of neighboring Portland, Oregon and makes up a quarter of the overall district population.

The rest of the district spans all of Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties and a sliver of Thurston County, all of which are more rural and sparsely populated.

Vancouver's economy is closely tied in with Portland's, and many

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (2D, 10R)

AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)	CO 8 (Evans, R)	NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)	PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)
AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)	IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)	NY 17 (Lawler, R)	TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
CA 48 (Issa, R)#	MI 7 (Barrett, R)	OH 1 (Landsman, D)	VA 2 (Kiggans, R)

Tilt Democratic (7D)

CA 13 (Gray, D)#
CA 45 (Tran, D)#
MI 8 (McDonald Rivet, D)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
NY 4 (Gillen, D)
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
WA 3 (Perez, D)

Tilt Republican (2D, 6R)

CA 22 (Valadao, R)#   WI 3 (Van Orden, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
NC 1 (Davis, D)*
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)
PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)

Lean Democratic (13D)

CA 21 (Costa, D)	NY 3 (Suozzi, D)
FL 23 (Moskowitz, D)	OH 13 (Sykes, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)	VA 7 (Vindman, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)	
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)	
NJ 9 (Pou, D)	
NV 1 (Titus, D)	
NV 3 (Lee, D)	
NV 4 (Horsford, D)	
NY 19 (Riley, D)	

Lean Republican (1R)

IA 3 (Nunn, R)

Likely Democratic (10D)

CA 6 (Open; Bera, D)*	NY 22 (Mannion, D)
CA 25 (Ruiz, D)	OR 5 (Bynum, D)
CA 47 (Min, D)#	PA 17 (Deluzio, D)
IL 17 (Sorensen, D)	
MI 3 (Scholten, D)	
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)	
NY 18 (Ryan, D)	

Likely Republican (2D, 10R)

AK AL (Begich, R)	PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
AZ 2 (Crane, R)	TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)
CO 5 (Crank, R)	TX 35 (Open; Casar, D)
FL 13 (Luna, R)	VA 1 (Wittman, R)
IA 2 (Hinson, R)	WI 1 (Steil, R)
ME 2 (Open; Golden, D)*	
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)	

	GOP	DEM
Solid	193	179
Likely/Lean/Tilt	21	30
Total	214	209
Toss-up		12
Needed for majority		218

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

CALENDAR

Nov. 22	NWSL Championship
Dec. 2	Tennessee 7 Special Election
Dec. 8	Texas Filing Deadline
Dec. 19	North Carolina Filing Deadline
Jan. 8	Utah Filing Deadline
Jan. 9	Kentucky Filing Deadline

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Report Shorts

California's 11th District. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 85, announced she won't seek re-election to her San Francisco-anchored district. She'll be replaced by a Democrat, it's just not clear which one. Pelosi has been in the House for nearly 40 years, so there are a lot of local Democrats who have been waiting for an opportunity to run. Solid Democratic.

California Governor. Democratic Sen. Alex Padilla announced he won't run for governor in 2026. That leaves a handful of Democrats including former HHS secretary/former Rep. Xavier Becerra, former Rep. Katie Porter, former LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, former state Assembly Majority Leader Ian Calderon, and former state Controller Betty Yee and Republican consultant Steve Hilton as the top contenders in a very crowded race. Solid Democratic.

Illinois' 4th District. Democratic Rep. Chuy Garcia made the surprise decision not to seek re-election just minutes before the filing deadline, which allowed his chief of staff Patty Garcia to be the only Democrat who filed to run for the district next year. That means this district will avoid the crowded primary fields of the 2nd, 7th, 8th, and 9th districts. It's also the reason why states including Nebraska have separate filing deadlines for incumbents and non-incumbents, so that sitting office-holders can't pull off this sort of handoff. Solid Democratic.

Kansas 3rd District. Republicans in Kansas declined to alter Democratic Rep. Sharice Davids' seat through redistricting. There was not a guarantee they could defeat her with new lines, and GOP Sen. Roger Marshall is breathing a sigh of relief because the congresswoman had publicly explored running against him if Republicans tried to redraw her out of the House. Solid Democratic.

Maine's 2nd District. Democratic Rep. Jared Golden brought Democrats back down to earth on Wednesday by announcing he won't seek re-election. His decision makes it extremely difficult for Democrats to hold the most Republican seat currently held by a Democrat. The 2nd voted for Donald Trump in three straight elections, by margins of 9 points, 6 points, and 9 points in 2016, 2020, and 2024.

Republicans already had a credible challenger in former Gov. Paul LePage, who has carried the rural seat in his multiple statewide runs. Now LePage is the frontrunner while Democrats take a fresh look for candidates. State Auditor Matt Dunlap was challenging Golden in the primary and has a head start on other Democrats looking to jump into the race, but there's plenty of skepticism among national operatives that he'd be able to beat LePage. Former state Senate president Troy Jackson is currently running for governor but has sought the 2nd District before and could switch races. Change from Tilt Democratic to Likely Republican.

IE

2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (3)

MI Open (Peters, D)	Ossoff (D-Ga.)
NC Open (Tillis, R)	

Tilt Democratic (1)	**Tilt Republican (1)**
NH Open (Shaheen, D)	Collins (R-Maine)

Lean Democratic (0)	**Lean Republican (1)**
	Husted (R-Ohio)

Likely Democratic (1)	**Likely Republican (2)**
MN Open (Smith, DFL)	IA Open (Ernst, R)
	Cornyn (R-Texas)

Solid Democratic (9)	**Solid Republican (17)**
IL Open (Durbin, D)	AL Open (Tuberville, R)
Booker (D-N.J.)	KY Open (McConnell, R)
Coons (D-Del.)	Capito (R-W.V.)
Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)	Cassidy (R-Lou.)
Lujan (D-N.M.)	Cotton (R-Ark.)
Markey (D-Mass.)	Daines (R-Mont.)
Merkley (D-Ore.)	Graham (R-S.C.)
Reed (D-R.I.)	Hagerty (R-Tenn.)
Warner (D-Va.)	Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)
	Lummis (R-Wyo.)
	Marshall (R-Kan.)
	Moody (R-Fl.)
	Mullin (R-Okla.)
	Ricketts (R-Neb.)
	Risch (R-Idaho)
	Rounds (R-S.D.)
	Sullivan (R-Ak.)

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

12 Initial Takeaways from the 2025 Elections

By Nathan L. Gonzales

While it may take a few days, or even weeks, to properly digest the 2025 elections, the results are clear: Democrats won decisively. In races from New Jersey and Virginia to Georgia and California, there really wasn't any ambiguity about who won and who lost.

Republicans have work to do. Yes, Democrats won the governorships of two Democratic-leaning states, but their margins of victory showed that Republicans could have a problem reassembling President Donald Trump's coalition when he's not on the ballot.

Trump lost Virginia by 6 points a year ago, while Democratic former Rep. Abigail Spanberger is poised to win the governorship by 15 points. Trump held Vice President Kamala Harris to a 6-point win in New Jersey in 2024, while Rep. Mikie Sherrill could end up winning the gubernatorial race by a dozen points when all the votes are counted.

The House was in play before the 2025 elections, and it's in play after the elections. On paper, Democrats need a net gain of three seats to flip the House next year. Functionally, that number should be higher because of Republicans' overall advantage in mid-decade redistricting.

But the passage of Proposition 50 in California, which green-lights a new Democratic-drawn map, coupled with Democrats' strong overperformance in key races, shows the GOP majority remains at risk.

Republicans still have the advantage to hold the Senate in 2026. Despite Democrats' sweeping gains this year, it's not immediately clear whether they'll be able to win in Republican-leaning states such as Ohio, Iowa, Texas, or Alaska next year. They'd need to flip Senate seats in at least two of those states to get to 51 seats.

Republicans' best race was one where their candidate received 8 percent of the vote. GOP nominee Curtis Sliwa hemorrhaged support in the final days of the New York City mayoral contest, but Democrat Zohran Mamdani's victory is the silver lining in an otherwise rough night for Republicans.

Republicans will attempt to make the self-identifying democratic socialist the face of the national Democratic Party. Democrats can't dismiss it because the party has no clear leader at the moment, and it fits into the narrative that Democratic politicians are too far to the left and too out of touch. But it's also hard to believe that the 2026 midterm elections will be defined by who was the mayor of New York City.

Parties don't have to have a clear leader, a clear message or be popular in order to win. Democrats this year showed that, similar to their own party in 2005 or Republicans in 2009, you don't have to have a clear national leader or a clear message or even be popular to win elections.

When voters are dissatisfied, they tend to focus on the party in power and are less bothered by the warts of the party out of power. This year's elections were more of a repudiation of the status quo rather than an embrace of the Democratic Party.

We've got to listen to the politicians and party officials. I've said it before, but it's important to listen carefully to the politicians and party strategists, because what happened in the elections matters less than what the politicians *think* happened in the elections.

Because what politicians think happened in the elections will drive future behavior. President Donald Trump's initial response was to blame the results on the shutdown and his absence from the ballot. If he believes that, it could lead to him being more engaged to end the shutdown. But it also means Republicans could be in a lot of trouble next year because there's no way to put his name on the ballot next year.

The elections weren't a strict referendum on Trump. That's true, but the elections took place in an environment in which voters were primed for change because of the president's poor job rating. Despite the supreme confidence displayed by Republicans in Washington, Tuesday's results showed there's some unrest with the current state of the country.

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Abigail Spanberger

To put it another way, if Trump had a positive job approval ratings or there were a Democratic president, these elections would have looked differently, at least on the margins, if not the results.

Ballot measures are easier to pass when it's a partisan race in a partisan state. California Gov. Gavin Newsom and his fellow Democrats did a good job of framing the state's redistricting measure as a partisan fight and a statement against Trump. Framing Proposition 50 as a nuanced lesson in redistricting would have been confusing and would have likely failed.

Ballot measures often die in a cloud of confusion. But making it a straight partisan fight in a Democratic state was effective.

Newsom will be part of the 2028 conversation. By taking on Trump and winning, Newsom has solidified his place as a future Democratic presidential contender. That doesn't mean he'll be the nominee, but he has the profile and infrastructure to make an impact.

Spanberger will be part of the 2028 conversation. With an elevated profile as governor and as a woman with a national security background, Spanberger will be in the mix for a slot on the future Democratic ticket. Yes, I know, she hasn't even been sworn in yet, but she doesn't have to make any moves for a couple of years.

Partisanship forgives a multitude of sins. Democrat Jay Jones' victory for Virginia attorney general of Virginia, in spite of him musing in 2022 texts about the death of a political opponent and his young children, showed that partisanship is a heck of a drug. Terrible acts committed by a political ally are easily forgiven while anything short of the death penalty is prescribed when an opponent does something wrong.

Only 41 percent of Virginia voters said Jones' texts were disqualifying, according to the exit polls, and Republican incumbent Jason Miyares received 47 percent of the vote. The bottom line is that we're completely lost when it comes to what qualifies or disqualifies a candidate.

Speaker Mike Johnson caught a break. No candidate received more than 50 percent in the special election in Texas' 18th District to succeed the late Democratic Rep. Sylvester Turner. Democrats Christian Menefee and Amanda Edwards will advance to a yet-to-be-scheduled runoff. That means Johnson avoids having to sideline two Democratic members-elect. For now, it's just Adelita Grijalva of Arizona. It would have been even tougher to justify not swearing a Democrat in if there were two of them. House Republicans still have a vacancy of their own, with a special election in Tennessee's 7th District scheduled for Dec. 2. IE

A Detailed Analysis of Ohio's New Congressional Map

By Nathaniel Rakich

In a major departure from normal redistricting practices, four states have now approved new congressional maps for the 2026 midterms. (A fifth, California, looks like it will enact a new map via ballot measure next week, and several other states are making moves to redraw as well.) But the latest to do so is not like the others. While Texas, Missouri, and North Carolina opted to draw aggressive Republican gerrymanders as part of President Donald Trump's nationwide push to tilt the House playing field toward Republicans, Ohio was legally required to pass a new map — and took a less cutthroat approach.

Now that the Buckeye State has passed a congressional map for 2026, *Inside Elections* is releasing our initial ratings for the state's 15 House districts — three of which start out as competitive.

How We Got Here

Ohio has perhaps the nation's most convoluted redistricting process. Per a state constitutional amendment passed in 2018, the legislature takes the first crack at drawing the state's congressional map — but it must do so with a bipartisan supermajority. If the legislature fails, the task falls to a seven-member commission of Republican and Democratic politicians — but it, too, must pass a map with bipartisan support. If not, the legislature may pass a map by simple majority vote — but that map can only be used for half a decade.

Back in 2021 and 2022, Ohio went through this runaround not once, but almost two full times. The legislature passed a Republican gerrymander along party lines on its second attempt, but the state Supreme Court struck it down; round two ended when the commission (which has a 5-2 Republican majority) passed a tamer Republican gerrymander over Democrats' objections. But that map was always scheduled to expire after the 2024 election, making Ohio the one state that was actually *supposed* to redistrict mid-decade.

This time around, the legislature once again blew past its deadline to pass a bipartisan map. And at first, the commission looked like it would do the same, allowing the GOP-controlled legislature to pass another Republican gerrymander that would be good for the rest of the decade. But earlier this week, Republicans and Democrats on the commission unexpectedly struck a deal. On Friday morning, the commission

unanimously passed a new Ohio congressional map that is a bit better for Republicans than the old one — but still a far cry from the maximal GOP gerrymander that the legislature was likely to pass.

Why did Republicans agree to pull their punches? Democrats were threatening to organize a veto referendum against any map passed by the legislature, and merely collecting enough signatures to force a vote would have put the map on hold. The commission's map, though, is not subject to a veto referendum.

Overview of the New Map

As mentioned, the congressional map Ohio used in 2022 and 2024 was already pretty good for Republicans. According to *Inside Elections'* Baseline, our measure of the baseline partisanship of states and congressional districts, the old map had 10 districts that were R+5 or redder and just two districts that were D+5 or bluer. However, it also had three districts that were in the competitive zone between R+5 and

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Greg Landsman

D+5, and so far this decade, Democrats have won all three of those seats, resulting in a 10-5 Republican delegation.

The new map, though, takes two of those competitive seats and moves them into the Republican-leaning bucket, albeit narrowly. As a result, the new map has 12 seats that are R+5 or redder, two seats that are D+5 or bluer, and only one seat in between.

Another way of measuring how gerrymandered Ohio's map is is a statistic called efficiency gap, which compares how many of one party's votes are "wasted" versus the other's. (For these purposes, a "wasted" vote is one cast for the losing party or for the winning party after it already won a majority in a district.) Based on the results of the 2024 presidential election, Ohio's old map had an efficiency gap of R+13, indicating that Republicans wasted 13 percentage points fewer votes than Democrats did. The new map's efficiency gap is up to R+20.

District by District

Let's start with those two purple seats that have gotten more Republican. The Baseline of Democratic Rep. Greg Landsman's 1st District, anchored around Cincinnati, goes from D+3 to R+5 by exchanging some blue suburbs for red exurbs in Hamilton County; the district also adds deep-red Clinton County.

However, the seat remains very competitive. Most elections here over the past decade would have been within single digits under the new lines. For instance, Trump would have carried this version of the 1st District by 3 points in 2024, but former Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown would have carried it by 2 points. And in the 2020 presidential election, Joe Biden would have barely won it, 49.3 percent to 49.2 percent.

In 2024, under the old lines, Landsman won re-election in the 1st

District by 9 points as then-Vice President Kamala Harris was carrying it by 6 points. A similar overperformance in 2026 would point to a tied race. Landsman already faces a few Republican challengers, such as former CIA officer Eric Conroy and dentist Steven Erbeck, but others are likely to take a fresh look at the race given the new lines. The 1st District starts out as a Toss-up in our ratings.

To the north, Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur — the longest-serving woman in congressional history — is in a deeper hole. Her 9th District, which runs along the Michigan border and the Lake Erie coast from Toledo to Sandusky, was already tough for a Democrat, but it has gotten even tougher with the addition of a few conservative inland counties. Its Baseline moves from R+3 to R+8 as a result. Only one Democrat would have carried the new district in a statewide race over the past decade: Brown in 2018. More often, Republicans win here by double digits, as Trump did in 2024 (by 11 points).

Courtesy Nadeem Campaign

Alea Nadeem

Kaptur, though, is a proven overperformer. In 2022, she won by 13 points in a district that Trump would carry by 7 points two years later. However, her opponent that year was the scandal-plagued J.R. Majewski, who attended the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and exaggerated his military service. In 2024, facing a more establishment Republican, Kaptur triumphed by less than a single point (that was still 8 points better than Harris' margin, though).

Shortly after the commission passed the new map, Kaptur affirmed that she would be running for re-election in 2026. Can she turn in an overperformance closer to 2022's than 2024's? On one hand, not having to run on the same ticket as a Democratic presidential candidate should help. On the other, she has already drawn several credible opponents, including former state Rep. Derek Merrin (her 2024 foe), state Rep. Josh Williams, and Air National Guard Lt. Col. Alea Nadeem. The new district also conspicuously scoops up the home of state Senate President Rob McColley, who is reportedly on the verge of announcing a campaign for the seat as well. We are starting this race out as Tilt Republican.

Ohio's final competitive House seat is the 13th District, anchored by Summit County (Akron) south of Cleveland. Unlike the other two, however, the 13th District gets a bit bluer under the new lines; it sheds part of Republican-leaning Stark County and picks up the Democratic-voting city of Kent. Accordingly, its Baseline ticks up from D+2 to D+4.

Republicans have carried this district in a few recent statewide elections, such as the 2022 gubernatorial race, so it remains competitive going forward. However, the new lines should make it easier for Democratic Rep. Emilia Sykes to win re-election. Former state Sen. Kevin Coughlin, whom Sykes defeated by 2 points in 2024, dropped out of the 2026 race with the new lines. We're starting the 13th District out at Lean Democratic.

Most of Ohio's other districts also undergo some changes under the new map, some of them substantial. For instance, about a third of Rep. Bob Latta's and Rep. Michael Rulli's constituents will be new to them; Latta's 5th District is now a much more compact north-central-Ohio-based district, while Rulli's 6th no longer stretches as far into Appalachia.

That said, none of these changes fundamentally shift the partisanship of these other districts. Our initial read is that they all start as solid for the incumbent party. However, three of these districts — Rep. Max Miller's 7th, Rep. Mike Turner's 10th, and Rep. Mike Carey's 15th — each have Baselines of R+10, putting them on the outer fringes of competitiveness. If the 2026 election develops into a "blue wave" midterm similar to 2018, they could conceivably become vulnerable. (Turner could also be a threat to retire after losing his chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee.) We will of course keep our ratings updated as the cycle plays out.

Data and Ratings for Ohio's New Congressional Districts

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	BASELINE		2024 PRESIDENTIAL MARGIN		RATING
		Old Map	New Map	Old Map	New Map	
1	Greg Landsman (D)	D+3	R+5	D+6	R+3	Toss-up
2	Dave Taylor (R)	R+43	R+36	R+48	R+42	Solid Republican
3	Joyce Beatty(D)	D+38	D+38	D+40	D+40	Solid Democratic
4	Jim Jordan (R)	R+37	R+42	R+37	R+43	Solid Republican
5	Bob Latta (R)	R+28	R+21	R+29	R+24	Solid Republican
6	Michael Rulli (R)	R+26	R+26	R+34	R+35	Solid Republican
7	Max Miller (R)	R+10	R+10	R+11	R+11	Solid Republican
8	Warren Davidson (R)	R+26	R+19	R+24	R+16	Solid Republican
9	Marcy Kaptur (D)	R+3	R+8	R+7	R+11	Tilt Republican
10	Mike Turner (R)	R+10	R+10	R+6	R+8	Solid Republican
11	Shontel Brown (D)	D+56	R+10	R+11	R+11	SolidDemocratic
12	Troy Balderson (R)	R+31	R+30	R+33	R+30	Solid Republican
13	Emilia Sykes (D)	D+2	D+4	D+0.05	D+3	Lean Democratic
14	Dave Joyce (R)	R+15	R+16	R+18	R+20	Solid Republican
15	Mike Carey (R)	R+10	R+10	R+9	R+10	Solid Republican

A Detailed Analysis of North Carolina's New Congressional Map

By Nathaniel Rakich

If there's one state that's accustomed to mid-decade redistricting, it's North Carolina. The Tar Heel State drew itself new congressional districts for the 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2024 elections — and so it's not too surprising that it's jumping on the bandwagon of the 2026 cycle's gerrymandering wars as well. As part of President Donald Trump's push for Republican-led states to draw more red districts to try to hold the House for Republicans, North Carolina passed yet another new congressional map — one that makes Democratic Rep. Don Davis' 1st District more Republican-leaning.

There are still a few pieces of North Carolina's 2026 political picture that have yet to fall into place. For instance, while Davis has said he will run for re-election, he hasn't yet announced where; the new map actually places his home in the new 3rd District, which has gotten less red under the new lines. In addition, the reconfiguration of the historically Black 1st District may run afoul of the Voting Rights Act, and advocates have already filed a legal challenge against the new map. (However, the Voting Rights Act itself is in danger of being weakened or struck down by the Supreme Court next year.)

For now, though, this new map is on track to be used in the 2026 midterms. Assuming Davis runs for re-election in the 1st District, *Inside Elections* is changing its rating for the seat from Toss-up to Tilt Republican. If Davis runs elsewhere or retires, we will likely move this rating even further toward the GOP.

Overview

One reason it maybe *was* surprising that North Carolina redrew its congressional map is that the state was already gerrymandered to within an inch of its life. After the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled in 2023 that the state constitution did not prohibit partisan gerrymandering, Republican legislators passed a new congressional map that was heavily skewed toward the GOP.

According to *Inside Elections*' Baseline, the map used in 2024 had 10 seats that were R+5 or redder and just three seats that were D+5 or bluer — with just one seat, Davis' 1st District, in the competitive zone in between. The map also had an efficiency gap of R+26 (based on the 2024 presidential election results), meaning 26 percentage points fewer Republican votes were "wasted" under the map than Democratic votes. (A "wasted" vote is any vote cast for the losing party or cast for the winning party after it already won a majority.) If anything, the new map is an even more aggressive gerrymander. It still has an efficiency gap of R+26, but it now has 11 seats with a Baseline of R+5 or redder and three seats with a Baseline of D+5 or bluer.

District By District

North Carolina's new congressional map is a more targeted redraw than Texas', California's, or Missouri's. Twelve of the state's 14 districts are exactly the same; only the 1st and 3rd districts, based in Eastern North Carolina, are changing shape.

Specifically, the two districts swung a 10-county trade: Six heavily Republican, coastal counties (Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Hyde, and Pamlico) are moving from the 3rd to the 1st, while four more evenly divided inland counties (Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, and Wilson) are going from the 1st to the 3rd. To make the math work, a tiny bit of Onslow

County is also moving from the 3rd to the 1st.

As a result, the 1st District has gone from an evenly divided Baseline (technically, it was ever so slightly Democratic-leaning at D+0.3) to R+8. Some Democratic candidates over the past decade, including current Gov. Josh Stein in 2024 and former Auditor Beth Wood in 2020, would have still won it under the new boundaries, but they are the exception rather than the rule: Republicans would have carried it in 50 of the last 56 statewide elections.

In the 2024 presidential election, Trump would have carried the new 1st District by 12 points. That's a daunting, but not insurmountable, margin for Davis, should he choose to run here again. Davis won re-election in 2024 by 2 points even as Trump was carrying his district by 3 points. If he overperforms by the same amount in 2026 (not a given, since many of his constituents will be new to him), he would need the underlying political environment to shift 7 points toward Democrats in order to win.

Before the new lines, three Republicans had declared campaigns against Davis: Rocky Mount Mayor Sandy Roberson, state Sen. Bobby Hanig, and Lenoir County Commissioner Eric Rouse. Hanig has confirmed that he will still run in the 1st District under the new map, and Roberson seems like a safe bet to do so as well (his hometown wasn't affected by the redraw). But Rouse's hometown is now in the 3rd District, so it's unclear what he's going to do.

For its part, the 3rd District is now almost as competitive as the 1st. With the loss of many of its reddest counties, the seat has gone from a Baseline of R+19 to R+10. Like the new 1st, Stein would have carried the new 3rd District by 3 points in 2024, but Trump would have won it by 14.

Republican incumbent Rep. Greg Murphy has already declared his intention to seek re-election in the 3rd, which could deter Rouse from switching. Despite its tightening, no new Democrats have expressed interest in running for the district since it was redrawn, but former state House candidate Chris Schulte was already running. For now, we are keeping the 3rd District rated Solid Republican, but that could change if Davis decides to switch seats.

Potential Challenges

The dismantling of the 1st District may be especially offensive to Democrats because of the racial politics involved. Northeastern North Carolina has a significant Black population, and since 1992, the 1st District has been home to enough Black voters to ensure it elects their preferred candidate (Eva Clayton, then Frank Ballance, then G.K. Butterfield, and now Davis).

Even through multiple prior rounds of redistricting, Republicans left the 1st District's Black population largely intact. (In fact, at one point, the GOP tried to pack the district so full of Black voters that their voting power was diluted in other parts of the state, an overzealousness that was eventually struck down by the Supreme Court.) This time, however, they slashed it: The Black share of the voting-age population goes from 40 percent to 32 percent under the new lines. That could open up the map to a challenge under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires that racial minorities must have an equal

opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.

However, with the meaning of "equal opportunity" subject to lots of interpretation, courts have settled on a complex series of criteria for whether the Voting Rights Act requires that a district be drawn to favor a minority group — and North Carolina's 1st District may not meet them. Northeastern North Carolina's Black population has declined in recent years, and it is no longer possible to draw a Black-majority district in the region that isn't geographically contorted. Yet in the 1986 Supreme Court case *Thornburg v. Gingles*, the court held that minority groups, in order to be protected by the Voting Rights Act, must be "sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single-member district."

(Note that minority-opportunity districts aren't *required* to be majority-minority; it just has to be possible to draw them that way. For instance, a district that is only 40 percent Black could still functionally be a minority-opportunity district if Black voters are a majority of the Democratic primary electorate and the Democratic candidate consistently wins in the general election.)

All this may not matter anyway if the Supreme Court neuters Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act next year, as many court observers expect it to do in the case *Louisiana v. Callais*; either way, the legal case against North Carolina's new map will inevitably collide with that one. In the meantime, though, it's possible that a lower court stays the North Carolina map until its legality can be fully assessed based on whatever the Supreme Court decides. In other words, there's still plenty of uncertainty surrounding Davis' future and the future of the 1st District, and we will keep our ratings updated accordingly.

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residents live there to optimize their tax burden (Washington has no income tax but high sales taxes; Oregon has no sales tax but high income taxes). The Columbia River Gorge is also a draw for outdoor activities. The rest of the district has a long history in logging, and the 3rd is one of the country's major producers of Christmas trees. There's also a strong agricultural presence — Clark County is home to the second-most farms in the state — and Pacific County is the source of a quarter of the nation's oysters.

The 3rd was one of the few districts around the country where Vice President Kamala Harris ran stronger than Joe Biden. Biden lost the district by 4 points, 51-47 percent, while Harris lost it by 3 points, 50-47 percent. In 2016, Hillary Clinton would have lost the 3rd by 8 points.

The 3rd has voted Republican in 27 of 28 statewide races over the past decade, with the one exception coming in 2020's insurance commissioner race in which the Democratic incumbent won statewide by 31 points. But the trend seen at the top of the ticket has expressed itself down ballot as well, as the winning margin for GOP gubernatorial nominees has decreased from 10 points in 2016 to 9 points in 2020 to 8 points in 2024. Overall, the district has a baseline of R+5.8, meaning a typical Republican candidate should win by about 6 points — but even that measure moved 2 points in Democrats' favor since 2022.

The bulk of the swing district's votes come from Clark County, which includes Vancouver and two-thirds of the electorate. Clark has grown rapidly over the past three decades thanks in part to an influx of Portlanders, more than doubling in size from 1990 to 2020 and accounting for nearly 80 percent of the district's growth over the same period.

Clark has also become more steadily Democratic as it has become more suburban; Vice President Kamala Harris' 7-point margin in the county was the largest for a Democratic presidential nominee since 1968, and her improvement in the county is the reason she outperformed Biden.

As is the case around the country, Democratic margins continue to improve in the suburbs and fall in more rural areas. While Harris ran 2 points ahead of Biden in Clark County, she performed 1 point worse than him in the rest of the district.

Most recently, Gluesenkamp Perez won Clark by 13 points en route to a 4-point win districtwide. As recently as 2020, then-GOP Rep. Jaime Herrera-Beutler won Clark by 5 points.

The Democratic Incumbent

Gluesenkamp Perez, 37, is only in her second term in Congress but has embraced her role as a poster child for working class Democratic officeholders, cultivating a national profile that makes her one of the most prominent members of her caucus.

"She's a Blue-Collar, Bible-Quoting, Israel-Supporting, Pro-Choice, Millennial Latina. Is She the Future of Democratic Progressivism?" asked *Politico Magazine* last year. Not to be outdone, *The New York Times* has published four features on the congresswoman in the past year, calling her "a red district conqueror" and "The Blue-Collar Democrat Who Wants to Fix the Party's Other Big Problem."

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Marie Gluesenkamp Perez

Born in Texas to a Mexican immigrant father who preached at a Spanish-language evangelical church and a Washingtonian mother, Gluesenkamp Perez grew up in Houston but decamped to Reed College, where she put herself through school working at a manufacturing plant and graduated in 2012.

She and her husband moved to Skamania County after college to open an auto repair shop, which they still manage.

Gluesenkamp Perez's first foray into electoral politics came in 2016, when she ran for an at-large county commissioner seat; she lost, 54-46 percent, but did better than Clinton at the top of the ticket, who lost Skamania 50-38 percent. In 2018, she again sought local office, losing an election for public utility commissioner 57-43 percent. From 2020 to 2022, she served on the state Democratic Party's executive committee.

In 2022, Gluesenkamp Perez made a late entrance into the 3rd District race, which had been a notable recruitment hole for Democrats looking for upset opportunities. The incumbent, Herrera Beutler, faced a tough re-election campaign after voting to impeach Trump following January 6; Trump had endorsed former Army officer Joe Kent in the all-party primary. Despite stories tying Kent to prominent white nationalists and Proud Boys, he placed second in the primary behind Gluesenkamp Perez but just ahead of Herrera Beutler.

In the general election Gluesenkamp Perez highlighted abortion rights, her own blue collar bona fides, and painted Kent as too extreme for the district. One notable ad featured four former GOP officeholders

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vouching for her and expressing disgust with Kent. The race flew under the radar and attracted minimal outside spending; in the closing weeks House Majority PAC made a low-six figure investment in the race.

Gluesenkamp Perez ultimately prevailed by less than 3,000 votes, a margin of 0.2 percent.

Undeterred, Kent launched another campaign for the seat in January of 2023, setting the stage for a rematch. The two candidates met again in the general election, this time at the center of the House battlefield.

Gluesenkamp Perez, one of the strongest Democratic fundraisers in the country, outspent Kent, $12 million to $2 million, and benefitted from significant outside spending even as the main GOP super PAC, Congressional Leadership Fund, declined to support Kent. The end result, even as Trump carried the district at the top of the ticket, was a 4-point win, 51-47 percent, for the Democrat.

In Congress, Gluesenkamp Perez serves on the Appropriations Committee and is a co-chair of the Blue Dog Caucus, which she re-configured alongside fellow Trump-district Democrats Jared Golden of Maine and then-Rep. Mary Peltola of Alaska.

Her campaign team includes media consultant Dan Kully of KMM Strategies, pollster Pete Brodnitz of Expedition Strategies, and direct mail consultant Delana Jones of Bottled Lightning Collective.

The Republican Challenger

State Senate Minority Leader John Braun is the only announced challenger to Gluesenkamp Perez. State party chairman Jim Walsh has discussed running but appears less likely to go for it, and Camas City Councilwoman Leslie Lewallen, who ran in 2024, is another potential candidate as well.

Braun, 58, has served in the state Senate for more than a decade, and as the GOP leader for the past five. The Ohio-born Braun's family moved to Washington when he was a teenager, and he attended college at the University of Washington. After graduating in 1989, he served in the Navy for seven years, including time on nuclear submarines. In 1996, he left active duty and earned an MBA and Masters in Engineering Management from the University of Michigan in 1999.

From there, he returned to Washington to work as the general manager of his family's ambulance manufacturing company. Braun comes from a long line of ambulance manufacturers dating back to his family's Ohio days, and is still the president of the company to this day — now it makes all sorts of emergency vehicles including mobile command centers and prisoner

John Braun

Courtesy Braun Campaign

transports. Braun lives in Centralia, located in the very northern part of the 3rd District.

After serving for several years on the boards of the local library system, community college and hospital, Braun challenged longtime GOP state Sen. Dan Swecker in 2012. In the all-party primary, Braun finished second to Swecker, 47-40 percent. In the general election, he easily outpaced Swecker, 55-45 percent.

Braun has won three more terms, all unopposed, in 2016, 2020 and 2024. In 2020, he was elected by his colleagues to be the GOP state Senate leader. He currently represents 20 percent of the 3rd District population.

In leadership, Braun has developed a reputation as a mild-mannered legislator with a good working relationship among Democrats as well as his own caucus. "He's real conservative but he's always enjoyed the respect of people across the aisle from how he deals with them," said one Washington Democrat who has worked with him.

Braun's campaign team includes general consultant Stan Shore.

The Primary

Washington uses an all-party primary system in which all candidates appear on the same ballot and the top two finishers, regardless of party, advance to the general election.

Braun and Gluesenkamp Perez are almost certainly destined for a general election matchup. But the primary could indicate how much trouble each has with their flank.

Gluesenkamp Perez faces a nominal challenge from her left from Brent Hennrich, a former home theater installer who ran for the 3rd District in 2022. Hennrich had been running for a year but was eased out of that race by Democratic leaders after Gluesenkamp Perez made her late entrance.

Hennrich is looking to capitalize on frustrations with Gluesenkamp Perez for the votes she's taken against the party line since coming to Congress. She was one of just a handful of Democrats to vote to censure Texas Rep. Al Green after he interrupted Trump's address to Congress, and to support GOP-led bills on voter ID and fossil fuels. Those frustrations boiled over in an April town hall that saw hundreds of constituents boo and heckle her for her votes.

While local Democratic sources don't believe Hennrich poses a threat to Gluesenkamp Perez in the all-party primary — he had just $12,000 in campaign funds on Sept. 30 — his ultimate level of support will be a gauge on how frustrated more progressive Democrats are with the incumbent.

Gluesenkamp Perez can't ignore those frustrations, especially because the House race is the highest-profile race in Washington this cycle. There's no presidential, Senate or gubernatorial race to drive turnout, and in a close race, even a few Democrats choosing to sit out the race could make things more challenging in the general election.

Braun, too, may face a challenger to his right, though one hasn't materialized yet. Kent's two runs showed there was an appetite for a more aggressively MAGA candidacy, and while Braun has never publicly picked fights with Trump in the past, he has at times gently distanced himself from the president's false theories of election fraud. Braun also suggested after the 2022 midterms that Trump was a drag on his party.

"To be successful in Washington, you have to win in suburban districts, and President Trump is deeply unpopular in suburban districts," Braun told *The Seattle Times*. "If we're going to win, we've got to change."

These days, Braun is more likely to tout his support of Trump's signature One Big Beautiful Bill legislation, and hasn't attracted the president's ire — or his explicit support, which is the most coveted endorsement in GOP politics and would ensure his path to the general election.

The General Election

Republicans have already secured an initial win by avoiding a third Kent candidacy. The square-jawed veteran's ties to white nationalists and his pro-life policies proved too much for voters in the district (though

not US Senators, who confirmed him to be director of the National Counterterrorism Center earlier this year). Had Kent run again, he may have continued to dominate the primary but struggled again to win a general election.

The low-key Braun cuts a different profile, and one that GOP strategists believe will defuse the most effective attacks Democrats levied last cycle when they ran ads painting Kent as too extreme and divisive for the district. Kent had also frustrated a faction of the local GOP by ousting the well-liked Herrera Beutler, leading to Gluesenkamp Perez's striking campaign ad. Braun's relationships are much more solid.

More importantly for Braun, he's a more attractive candidate for outside Republican spending than Kent. In 2024, the main GOP super PAC, Congressional Leadership Fund, cut Kent off entirely, spending no money on his behalf even as it pumped more than $200 million into dozens of other competitive races across the country. That left Kent at a serious spending disadvantage; Democrats ultimately outspent Republicans in the 3rd District by roughly $10 million.

That's less likely to be the case this cycle, with outside groups more eager to get involved against Gluesenkamp Perez. The cost of entry in the district is also likely to be lower than in previous years, when the Portland media market was crowded by a competitive 2022 Oregon gubernatorial race and competitive 2024 Oregon House races.

Braun is also off to a better start fundraising than Kent, and had $488,736 in campaign funds at the end of September. Gluesenkamp Perez had $1.85 million.

For the Democrat, the 2026 race will test if her brand is strong enough to stand on its own, without Kent as a foil. Even Democratic strategists acknowledge that her 2022 win was more about the Republican; her improvement in 2024 against the same opponent, and especially in the

Statewide Election Results in Washington's 3rd District

most Republican areas of the district, suggests that her brand is taking hold.

But the contours of this race will be very different. GOP strategists are confident that the district wants to vote for a more generic Republican and see Braun as able to fill that role, between his military service, many years in the state legislature and his local business that employs hundreds of people in the area. "He's no dummy and he's a decent guy," said one Washington Democrat, "but he has no 'rizz.'"

Braun himself has leaned into that persona. "I'm sure there's things people don't know about me," he told PBS in 2020. "I'm not sure any of it's very interesting."

Democrats are planning to work on changing that, with the ultimate goal, say party strategists, of portraying Braun as a consummate insider and politics as usual. While the contrast Democrats wanted with Kent was divisive vs. reasonable, their ideal contrast with Braun is insider vs. outsider. Democratic ads could also contrast Gluesenkamp Perez's body shop business with Braun's ambulance company (a comparison both parties think favors their candidate).
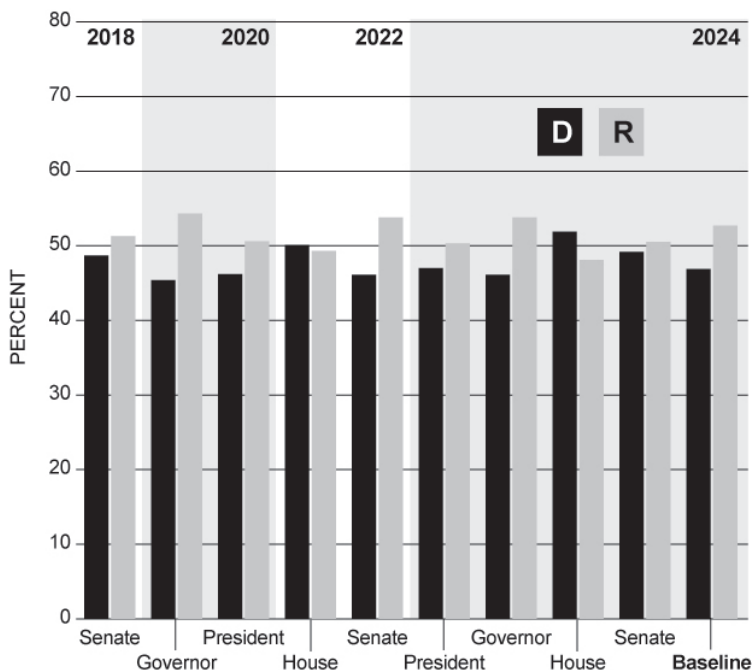
But issues like rural hospitals and trade are sure to come up as well, due to Trump's tariff plan and signature legislation. A recent report from the state's Office of Financial Management estimated that the tariffs could cost the trade-dependent state tens of thousands of jobs and $2 billion over the next four years. While Braun hasn't had to vote on those items, he's been vocal about supporting the One Big Beautiful Bill legislation.

Republicans may return to the same hits against Gluesenkamp Perez used in previous cycles, with the aim of portraying her as more liberal and partisan than she appears as well as soft on crime, drug trafficking, and the border. "All the hits worked against her," said one operative, "but presented with the options of Joe Kent and her, people went with her." Chief among those hits was Gluesenkamp Perez's comment that "nobody stays awake at night worrying about the Southern border," which Kent and the NRCC spent millions of dollars boosting in TV ads about immigration and fentanyl deaths last year.

Republicans have already started to message against Gluesenkamp Perez in earnest. One GOP group has been airing TV ads hitting Gluesenkamp Perez for voting against the reconciliation bill, arguing her no vote amounts to a vote to raise taxes. Congressional Leadership Fund, which avoided this district last year, has also waded into the fray with a six-figure digital buy accusing Gluesenkamp Perez of "fanning the flames" of hate by talking about fascism and white nationalism.

Gluesenkamp Perez's vote against Trump's reconciliation bill may also feature in ads focused on working class voters and the bill's no tax on tips provision, a tactic Republicans are looking to employ all across the country.

The Bottom Line

Washington's 3rd is trending toward Democrats but still prefers Republicans, so Gluesenkamp Perez cannot take too much comfort in those trends. Both parties are poised to be heavily involved in this contest, with the GOP eager to win back the seat before it shifts even further away from the party.

House Democrats need a net gain of just 3 seats to reclaim the majority, but GOP-led redistricting efforts have and will continue to complicate that math. For Republicans to keep their majority, though, they will have to compete and put pressure on Democrats in Trump districts such as Washington's 3rd, preventing Democrats from pressing even further in GOP-held territory. IE

California House: Voters Enact New Map That Benefits Democrats

By Jacob Rubashkin

Democrats fought back against Republican redistricting efforts in Texas and elsewhere by drawing a new map in California, but needed voters to sign off on the changes. The answer from voters was a resounding yes, as the measure approving the new map passed by a wide margin, 64-36 percent, on Tuesday.

The newly-drawn map gives Democrats an opportunity to gain between 3-5 seats in the Golden State, which is similar to the 3-5 seats Republicans could gain in Texas. But, overall, Republicans have more opportunities to draw more friendly districts in more states compared to Democrats. And every seat matters when Democrats need a net gain of just three seats for a majority.

We detailed the changes in the new map back on August 21, but now that the new lines have been codified, here's updated analysis along with rating changes in 13 districts.

1st District. Doug LaMalfa, R. Harris 54%. The new 1st District now extends south along the Pacific Coast all the way to wine country, transforming it from a seat Trump won by 25 points to one Harris would have carried by 12 points. Audrey Denney, LaMalfa's Democratic opponent in 2018 and 2020, is already running here; state Sen. Mike McGuire could run as well. Either way, LaMalfa's days in Congress are numbered. Move from Solid Republican to Solid Democratic.

3rd District. Kevin Kiley, R/Ami Bera, D. Harris 53%. The 3rd now includes parts of Sacramento previously in the 6th and 7th Districts, changing it from a seat Trump won by 4 points to one Harris would have carried by 10 points. 6th District Rep. Ami Bera, a Democrat, has already said he'll run here next year; the new district contains 37 percent of his current constituency. That could set up a member-vs.-member clash, but Kiley might also switch to the 6th District, which now contains his home and 34 percent of his current constituents. Or he could take his chances running in the 5th District, currently held by GOP Rep. Tom McClintock. Move from Likely Republican to Solid Democratic.

6th District. Open; Ami Bera, D, running in 3rd District. Harris 53%. Bera's shift to the 3rd creates an open seat in a district that is less Democratic under the new map. The new 6th would have voted for Harris by 8 points, down from 14 points under the old lines. But it would have been closer in several 2022 statewide races, voting for Gov. Gavin Newsom by just 1 point that year and for GOP controller candidate Lanhee Chen by 4 points. Former Democratic state Sen. Richard Pan is running here after briefly running in the 3rd District; he could be joined by state Sen. Angelique Ashby and Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho. 3rd District Rep. Kevin Kiley could run here, and this is the rare district that looks slightly better for the GOP on the new map, especially as an open seat. Move from Solid Democratic to Likely Democratic.

9th District. Josh Harder, D. Harris 54%. Harder is one of the biggest beneficiaries of the new map, as his 9th District is reconfigured into a Harris +12 seat after previously voting for Trump by 2 points at the top of the ticket. Plus, former Stockton Mayor Kevin Lincoln is poised to jump from a rematch in this district to the 13th, leaving Harder without a top-tier opponent. Move from Lean Democratic to Solid Democratic.

13th District. Adam Gray, D. Harris 46%. Gray flipped the 13th even as Trump carried it by 5 points at the top of the ticket. The new 13th would have voted for Harris by 1 point. That's good news for Gray, but a race against former Stockton Mayor Kevin Lincoln, who is a more credible candidate than any of the three Republicans running before the new lines, will be competitive. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

22nd District. David Valadao, R. Trump 50%. Even after redrawing the map, Valadao's district remains relatively Trump-friendly, and would have backed Trump by 2 points, 50-48 percent. That's slightly reduced from Trump's 6-point advantage under the old lines, but Valadao is a tough out for Democrats, who are still contending with a primary between local school board trustee Randy Villegas and state Assemblywoman Jasmeet Bains. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

27th District. George Whitesides, D. Harris 53%. Whitesides' path to a second term gets much easier under the new map, which turns his Harris +4 seat into one the vice president would have won by 10 points. That puts the former space company CEO in a strong position against Santa Clarita Councilman Jason Gibbs. Move from Lean Democratic to Solid Democratic.

40th District. Young Kim, R/Ken Calvert, R. Trump 55%. Kim's mildly competitive Orange County district was essentially dismantled, with the new 40th containing her base in the Orange County hills but also part of Riverside County from Calvert's old district. That set the two on a collision course in a seat Trump would have carried by 12 points. Hours after Calvert announced he would run in the new 40th, Kim announced a $3.25 million ad buy for the primary. 48th District Rep. Darrell Issa could also join the fray; the San Diego Republican currently represents 15 percent of the new district. Move from Lean Republican to Solid Republican.

41st District. Open: Ken Calvert, R. Harris 56%. The new 41st is an east LA district that has no overlap with the old 41st. Democratic strategists expect Rep. Linda Sanchez, who currently represents half of the new district, to run here, opening up her 38th District. Former Rep. Hilda Solis has already filed to run. Move from Lean Republican to Solid Democratic.

45th District. Derek Tran, D. Harris 51%. Tran gets a light boost as the 45th goes from a Harris +1.5 seat to a Harris +4 seat, but will still face a competitive re-election. Westminster Mayor Charlie Nguyen and former Cerritos Mayor Chuong Vo are running as Republicans. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

47th District. Dave Min, D. Harris 53%. Min's life will get easier now that the new 47th would have voted for Harris by 10 points rather than 4 points. Move from Tilt Democratic to Likely Democratic.

48th District. Darrell Issa, R. Harris 50%. After two cycles of uncompetitive races, Issa finds himself at the center of the House battlefield — if he decides to run in the significantly redrawn district. The new 48th would have voted for Harris by 3 points, compared to the old district's 15-point margin for Trump. Democrats will have to sort through a primary field that includes San Diego Councilwoman Marni Von Wilpert, 2020 nominee Ammar Campa-Najjar, and a few candidates who were previously running against Ken Calvert. This race will be competitive and expensive. Move from Solid Republican to Toss-up.

49th District. Mike Levin, D. Harris 55%. Long at the edge of the battlefield, Levin's district is shored up considerably and would have voted for Harris by 12 points. Move from Lean Democratic to Solid Democratic.