

Inside Elections

with
Nathan L. Gonzales
Nonpartisan Analysis

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2022 Senate Ratings

BATTLEGROUND

Democratic-Held (4)

Cortez Masto (D-Nev.)
Hassan (D-N.H.)
Kelly (D-Ariz.)
Warnock (D-Ga.)

Republican-Held (4)

NC Open (Burr, R)
PA Open (Toomey, R)
Johnson (R-Wisc.)
Rubio (R-Fl.)

Solid Democratic (10)

Bennet (D-Colo.)
Blumenthal (D-Conn.)
Duckworth (D-Ill.)
Leahy (D-Vt.)
Murray (D-Wash.)
Padilla (D-Calif.)
Schatz (D-Hawaii)
Schumer (D-N.Y.)
Van Hollen (D-Md.)
Wyden (D-Ore.)

Solid Republican (16)

AL Open (Shelby, R)
MO Open (Blunt, R)
OH Open (Portman, R)
Boozman (R-Ark.)
Crapo (R-Idaho)
Grassley (R-Iowa)
Hoeven (R-N.D.)
Kennedy (R-La.)
Lankford (R-Okla.)
Lee (R-Utah)
Moran (R-Kan.)
Murkowski (R-Alaska)
Paul (R-Ky.)
Scott (R-S.C.)
Thune (R-S.D.)
Young (R-Ind.)

CALENDAR

Dec. 13	Texas Candidate Filing Deadline
Dec. 15	California Redistricting Deadline
Dec. 17	North Carolina Candidate Filing Deadline
Jan. 10	College Football Championship
Jan. 11	Florida's 20th District Special General Election
Jan. 28	Alabama Candidate Filing Deadline
Jan. 29	West Virginia Candidate Filing Deadline
Feb. 13	Super Bowl LVI

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Arizona Senate: Desert Storm

By Jacob Rubashkin

For the fourth time in four cycles, Arizona is gearing up for a competitive Senate race.

It's a fitting run for a state that has emerged as a top political battleground after decades of Republican domination, and it's set to continue apace in 2024 when headline-grabbing Sen. Kyrsten Sinema faces re-election.

But in 2022, it's the state's other senator, Mark Kelly, who will take center stage just two years after winning his seat the first time. That's because Kelly was elected in a 2020 special election to serve out the remaining years of the late Sen. John McCain's term.

Kelly was one of Democrats' top recruits last cycle, and begins as one of Republicans' top targets this time around. The retired astronaut's splashy ads and inspiring life story helped him raise nearly \$100 million last year, and his victory was a crucial part of Democrats' path to Senate control after the party fell short in North Carolina, Iowa and Maine.

Next year, however, Kelly will likely be swimming against the tide rather than with it. In 2020, he had the benefit of running in a state that Joe Biden carried (albeit narrowly). Now, President Biden's sagging job approval numbers seem to be weighing Democratic candidates down rather than giving them a boost. Recent gubernatorial results in Virginia and New Jersey — both more Democratic states than Arizona — show the pitfalls of running as a Democrat when the Democratic president is unpopular.

That said, Kelly has already shown he can outrun the president by a few points, and he has some early advantages as Republicans take a long time to sort out their primary, and former President Donald Trump intervenes to keep the most formidable of Kelly's potential opponents far away from the race.

The Lay of the Land

The Grand Canyon State has long been Republican territory at the federal level. Between 1952 and 2016, it only voted for a Democratic presidential candidate once: in 1996, when Bill Clinton eked out a 2-point victory over Bob Dole, 47-44 percent, with Ross Perot at 8 percent.

Likewise, Democrats failed to win either of the state's Senate seats for 20 years after Dennis DeConcini won his final term in 1988.

But in 2016, after voting for McCain and Mitt Romney by 9 points each, the state began to emerge as a battlefield, with Hillary Clinton investing \$2 million and campaigning there in the final days of the race. She lost to Trump by 3.5 percent, the closest result in 20 years.

Two years later, Democrats didn't just get close — they won. Rep.

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Virginia and New Jersey Governor: A Big Night for Republicans

By Nathan L. Gonzales

Even though Virginia and New Jersey are just two states out of 50, Republicans' strong showing in the recent gubernatorial elections are reverberating around the country and set the early stage for the 2022 midterm elections.

By the time we got to Election Day, Republican Glenn Youngkin's victory in Virginia should not have been a surprise, even though it is significant. But for those Democrats who dismiss his win, Republican Jack Ciattarelli coming close to knocking off an incumbent governor in New Jersey should be a wakeup call about the political environment that could lead to big GOP gains next year.

Considering the next big Election Day is a year away, there will be plenty of time to digest the results from Virginia, New Jersey, and elsewhere. For now, here are a few initial takeaways.

The Democratic majorities were at risk before this week and they're at risk after this week. This would have been a main point even if Democrat Terry McAuliffe pulled out a victory in Virginia. Democrats have narrow majorities in the House and the Senate and midterm elections are typically poor for the president's party. That strong historical trend, combined with President Joe Biden's slumping job rating is a recipe for a good (or great) GOP year in 2022, no matter what happened this week.

Even a narrow Youngkin loss would have been good news for the GOP. The fact that Youngkin was competitive in a state Biden won handily in 2020 was positive for the GOP. Republicans don't need to win states or districts that Biden carried by 10 points (as he did Virginia) in order to regain majorities in the Senate and the House. The fact that Youngkin is on pace to win with a bit to spare is the icing on the cake for the GOP and will just embolden Republicans.

Listen to the politicians. No matter what any political analyst or journalist says happened in the election, what matters more is what the politicians and party strategists think happened in the election. Because what the politicians think happened will drive their future behavior. It will be at least a few days before we know whether progressives see Tuesday's results as a repudiation. It's also unclear how Republicans view Trump's role in their recent success, considering Youngkin effectively kept the former president at arm's length in the final months

Candidate Conversation



Val Arkoosh (D)
Pennsylvania Senate —
Rating: Battleground
Interview Date: Oct. 18, 2021
Date of Birth: Sept. 22, 1960;
Omaha, Neb.
Education: Northwestern
Univ. (1982); Univ. of Nebraska
College of Medicine (1986);
Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (Masters, 2007)

Elected Office: Montgomery County Commissioner (since 2015; chairwoman since 2016); 13th District candidate (2014)

Current Outlook: GOP Sen. Pat Toomey is not seeking re-election, setting off competitive primaries for both parties. Arkoosh is a serious contender in a Democratic primary field that also includes Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, Rep. Conor Lamb, and state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta. Republicans have a competitive primary of their own. The general election race is an important part of the GOP path to the majority in a state Joe Biden carried narrowly in 2020.

Evaluation: Arkoosh doesn't garner as much attention as some of her Democratic foes, but she occupies some unique lanes. She's the only woman in the race and the only contender from the fast-growing Philadelphia suburbs, but she lags Fetterman and Lamb in name recognition and fundraising. Her best opportunity may be if those two spend their time and resources attacking each other and splitting the western Pennsylvania vote. In our interview, Arkoosh was confident and comfortable weaving her medical background into her message as a problem solver. While Fetterman has the reputation of a progressive populist, Arkoosh didn't hesitate to say yes when asked if the legislative filibuster should be eliminated to pass key pieces of legislation, including some progressive priorities, that are stalled in Congress. After finishing fourth in a congressional primary eight years ago, Arkoosh has clearly grown as a candidate and should be in the running for Senate nomination.

of the campaign. But we will be hearing a lot more about critical race theory and education from the GOP side over the next year.

Candidates and campaigns matter. Youngkin's personal wealth allowed him to spend to parity with McAuliffe. Previous, unsuccessful GOP candidates were often outspent. Youngkin also effectively defined himself with TV ads during the summer, particularly with independent voters,

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making it more difficult for Democrats to demonize him during the home stretch. In the end, Youngkin finished the race with 50 percent favorable/46 percent unfavorable rating, according to the CNN exit poll, compared to McAuliffe's 47 percent favorable/50 percent unfavorable rating.

Replicating Youngkin won't be easy. Youngkin blazed a legitimate path to victory in territory that previously rejected Trump by staying sufficiently close to and far away from him. While Trump will claim credit for Youngkin's success, his absence from the state and not requiring Youngkin to kiss the ring (and Youngkin not having to navigate a traditional primary) allowed the GOP nominee appeal to independent voters necessary to win. That won't be as easy for some GOP candidates in 2022 who have to navigate competitive primaries, and profess loyalty to Trump, before moving on to the general election. While some GOP candidates appear focused on mirroring Trump's style, Youngkin's performance as a pragmatic unifier is an alternate path.

Partisanship is alive and well. According to the CNN exit poll, 97 percent of GOP voters supported Youngkin and 96 percent of Democratic voters supported McAuliffe. That's similar to last year when 96 percent of Democratic voters in Virginia supported Biden and 90 percent of GOP voters supported Trump. On Tuesday, independent voters went for Youngkin 54-45 percent, which is a big turnaround from Biden's 57-38 percent victory with independents.

Virginia was an outlier compared to previous 2021 races. While it's a very small sample size, the results in Virginia were significantly different from other races this year that pitted Republicans against Democrats. There was the potential for Republicans to win the special election in

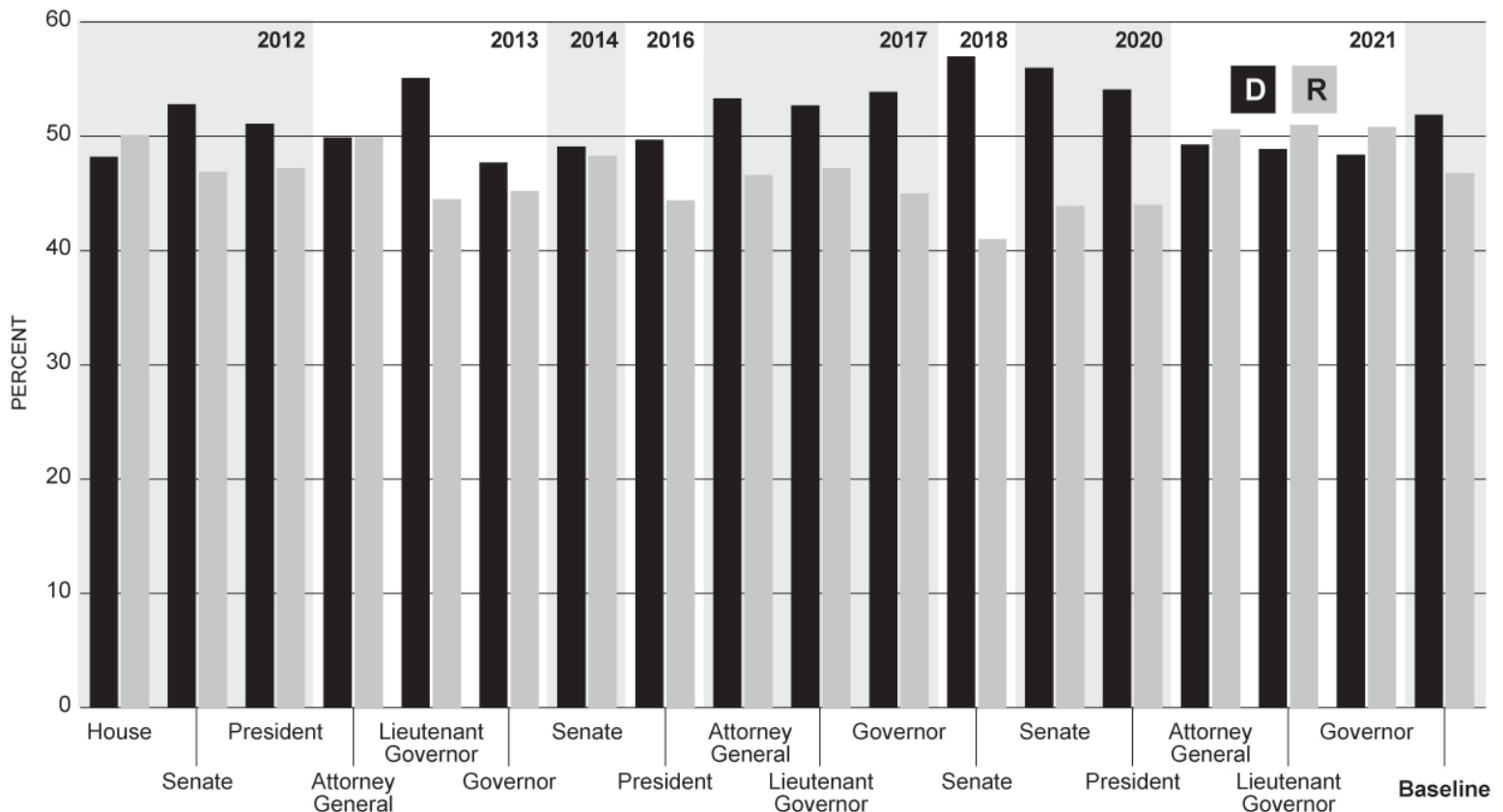
New Mexico's 1st District or recall Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom in California. But in the end, both areas performed about as expected while Youngkin dramatically overperformed. So what changed? Biden's job rating is significantly worse now compared to the beginning of June or even mid-September, when those races took place.

Republicans could smell an opportunity in New Jersey. The Republican Governors Association spent \$4 million late in the race in the face of data that showed Biden slipping significantly with independents. Private GOP polling in the final couple weeks showed Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy leading Republican Jack Ciattarelli by 4 points and 6 points in two separate surveys. But GOP strategists didn't run around making their polling public for fear of alerting Democrats to their vulnerability.

Suburbs still matter. Even after multiple cycles of movement toward Democrats, it's clear the suburbs aren't firmly in their column. At a surface level, when suburban voters are focused on Trump, they vote Democratic. When they're focused on Democrats in leadership and potential Democratic overreach, it's more of a mixed result. That's why the framing of the election and capturing voters' focus is critical in any race. Biden and congressional Democrats are reminding suburban voters why they voted Republican before Trump came along.

The midterm elections are a year away. This might be the only sliver of good news for Democrats. It's fair if Democrats want to blame Biden's poor job rating for Democrats' implosion in Virginia. But there's no guarantee he'll be in significantly better shape next year. There is the potential that voters think differently about federal races compared to state offices, as Stuart Rothenberg pointed out in his recent *Roll Call* column. But recent results showed Democrats have a lot of work to do. **IE**

Statewide Election Results in Virginia



Nebraska Redistricting: New Lines, New Indictment, Same Ratings

By Jacob Rubashkin

For members of Congress who find themselves in politically unfriendly districts, the decennial redistricting process can be an opportunity to shore up their position, either by adding new, more favorable voters, or removing less favorable ones.

But not for GOP Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska.

The retired Air Force brigadier general has represented the Omaha-anchored 2nd District since he was first elected in 2016, and is one of just nine Republicans to hold a district carried by President Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

Despite Republicans controlling both the Nebraska unicameral legislature and the governor's mansion, Bacon's 2nd District won't be shored up for the incumbent, but will rather remain evenly divided with a slight Democratic partisan advantage in statewide races. That's because the Nebraska unicameral's filibuster rules — uncommon in state legislatures — allowed Democrats to block a map that would have radically altered the 2nd.

The end result is a map that largely maintains each district's status quo partisanship. Republicans need a net gain of just five seats to reclaim the House of Representatives, and while the GOP has pickup opportunities across the map to focus on, the party won't have a free pass in Nebraska.

1st District

After winning re-election easily in 2020, GOP Rep. Jeff Fortenberry's prospects became decidedly less certain after he was indicted recently on charges of lying to the FBI about campaign finance violations. While he had to step down from his committee assignments, some Nebraska sources say Fortenberry might be able to weather the storm politically considering most GOP primary voters would be more likely to trust him over the FBI. And in an era when the standard for holding office is lower than it once was, it's unclear whether the indictment would be enough to defeat him. Of course, if he's convicted, he'd face significant intra-party pressure to leave before the next election.

In 2020, President Donald Trump carried the current district by 15 points, 56-41 percent, and Fortenberry won re-election by 22 points, after Democrats made some early noise about it being a competitive race.

In the new map, the 1st District largely retains its shape wrapping around the Omaha metropolitan area. It sheds Thurston, Burt, Washington, Otoe, and part of Polk counties to the 3rd District, and all of Saunders County to the 2nd District. It also picked up some of Sarpy County's suburbs south of Omaha.

Politically, the 1st has become slightly less Republican. Trump would have carried it by 11 points, 54-43 percent, in 2020, and GOP Gov. Pete Ricketts would have won it by 9 points, 54-45 percent, in 2018 (Ricketts carried the old 1st 56-44 percent). Though Trump's margin of victory in the new 1st dropped 7 points from his 2016 mark (56-38 percent), Fortenberry overperformed Trump last cycle and no Democrat represents a district Trump carried by more than 7 points.

Fortenberry's legal and political prospects are uncertain, but Republicans still shouldn't have a problem holding the seat, particularly in a midterm cycle shaping up to be rocky for Democrats. Initial rating: Solid Republican.

Rating Nebraska's New Congressional Districts

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	INITIAL RATING
1st	Jeff Fortenberry, R	Solid Republican
2nd	Don Bacon, R	Lean Republican
3rd	Adrian Smith, R	Solid Republican

2nd District

Bacon's new district had to lose roughly 47,000 residents to meet its target population, but remains anchored by Douglas County (Omaha). The new 2nd extends west to include Saunders County, and gave up several precincts in Sarpy County south of Douglas to the 1st District. Eighty-nine percent of the new district's residents live in Douglas County.

Biden would have carried the new 2nd District by 6 points, 52-46 percent, nearly identical to his margin in the old 2nd. That's a substantial increase from Hillary Clinton's performance in 2016, when she would have lost the new 2nd to Trump by 2 points, 48-46 percent. Bob Krist, the 2018 gubernatorial candidate, would have narrowly carried the new 2nd, 49-48 percent, while losing statewide, 59-41 percent.

Bacon has won close races in all three of his elections. In 2016 he ousted Democratic Rep. Brad Ashford by 1 point, 49-48 percent. Two years later, Bacon won by 2 points, 51-49 percent, in a surprisingly close race against Kara Eastman, who had largely been left to fend for herself by DC Democrats after defeating Ashford in the primary. Bacon overperformed both his party's nominees for governor and Senate. And in 2020, Bacon won a rematch with Eastman, 51-46 percent, a minor upset considering Biden's definitive victory at the top of the ticket.

The district's recent tendency to vote for Democrats means Bacon can't rest on his laurels ahead of 2022. He already has two announced challengers, state Sen. Tony Vargas and 2020 Senate candidate Alisha Shelton, and his district was listed as an initial target by the DCCC.

If Democrats want to buck history and maintain their House majority, they'll have to win back some districts Biden carried like this one. But while the party has shown the ability to win this district in statewide races, the burden is on them to prove a Democrat can actually win a congressional race, aside from a fluky 2014 result that had more to do with a flawed GOP incumbent (which Bacon is not). The 2nd District begins the 2022 cycle as Lean Republican.

3rd District

GOP Rep. Adrian Smith has represented the 3rd — which spans the vast majority of Nebraska's land area — since 2006. That's also the last time Smith had a real race (against Democrat Scott Kleeb) in one of the most Republican districts in the country.

The 3rd was the most underpopulated of Nebraska's districts. It had to pick up 53,000 new residents; those ended up coming from Thurston, Burt, Washington, and Otoe counties along the Iowa border, and the western half of Polk County, all of which it absorbed from the 1st District.

The partisanship of the district remains largely unchanged. Trump would have carried the new 3rd District by 52 points, 75-23 percent, down slightly from his 76-22 percent victory under the old lines but nothing to make Smith sweat or likely notice at all. The 3rd starts (and probably ends) this cycle as Solid Republican.

West Virginia Redistricting: When the Music Stops

By Jacob Rubashkin

Back in the spring, census data confirmed that West Virginia’s population had shrunk 3 percent since 2010, and that it would lose one of its three congressional districts in the reapportionment process.

With three incumbent representatives and just two districts to run in, the prospect for a member-vs.-member election was high from the start. But uncertainty remained: what would the districts look like, and would all three members run for re-election?

GOP Gov. Jim Justice signed the new congressional map into law on Oct. 22, and now we have answers to both of those questions. The state will be split into a northern district encompassing the Northern and Eastern panhandles, and a southern district encompassing Charleston and the bottom half of the state. (That was always the likeliest outcome, as *Inside Elections* wrote back in April.)

The map double-bunks 1st District Rep. David McKinley, who lives in Wheeling in the Northern Panhandle, and 2nd District Rep. Alex Mooney, who lives in Charles Town in the Eastern Panhandle; they now share the newly labeled 2nd District. Rep. Carol Miller, who previously represented the southern 3rd District, gets the new 1st District to herself.

And all three incumbents are running for re-election, setting up the first clash of colleagues of this redistricting cycle, between McKinley and Mooney.

Both new seats are Solid Republican, but so were all three old seats. That means West Virginia’s loss of a seat is also a loss for the House GOP caucus. Republicans need a net gain of just five seats to reclaim the House majority, and while historical trends indicate they’re likely to exceed that mark, losing a reliable seat in West Virginia means they’ll have to win an extra one elsewhere to compensate.

The 1st District

The new, southern 1st District is anchored by the old 3rd District, which was the least populated of the three at just 570,549 residents and had to pick up 325,476 new residents to meet its target population.

In addition to every county from the old 3rd District, the new 1st District picked up Kanawha County (Charleston), West Virginia’s most populous county, and several of the surrounding counties in the area, all from the old 2nd District. It also picked up one Eastern Panhandle County, Pendleton, from the old 2nd District, and one county, Gilmer, from the old northern 1st District.

By population the new 1st District is 64 percent from the old 3rd District, 35 percent from the old 2nd District, and 1 percent from the old 1st District. It would have voted for President Donald Trump by 41 points, 70-29 percent, compared to Trump’s 48-point victory in the old 3rd District.

Any danger for Miller, the second-term representative from Huntington, would come in a GOP primary. To the extent that she’s vulnerable, it would be from a Charleston-based candidate with a base in the 25 percent of the district that’s new to Miller, but no such challenger has emerged. Miller had just \$120,000 in the bank on Sept. 30 but is personally wealthy and could quickly ramp up a campaign if she needed to.

Miller faced a competitive general election as recently as 2018, but that was a combination of an open seat, a great year for Democrats, and a uniquely strong Democratic candidate — and she still won by 13 points. In 2022, this district starts as Solid Republican.

Rating West Virginia's New Congressional Districts

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	INITIAL RATING
1st	Carol Miller, R	Solid Republican
2nd	David McKinley, R Alex Mooney, R	Solid Republican

The 2nd District

The new, northern 2nd District encompasses the Northern Panhandle, the Eastern Panhandle, and the northern part of the state from Monongalia County (Morgantown) down to Parkersburg and Weston.

Geographically, the district is nearly all of the old 1st District plus the eastern half of the old 2nd District.

By population, 66 percent of residents in the new 2nd District previously resided in McKinley’s old 1st District, and 34 percent of residents in the new 2nd District previously resided in Mooney’s 2nd District.

Both McKinley, 74 years old and in his sixth term in the House, and Mooney, 50 and in his fourth term, have said they will run to represent the new district.

Mooney had long signaled he would run for re-election no matter what, and is widely believed to be planning a 2024 Senate run. McKinley took longer to make his plans known, and could have chosen to retire or run for governor in 2024.

At first blush, McKinley benefits from having previously represented more of the district than Mooney. But while that may be an advantage, it is not an overwhelming one. McKinley’s political base in the Ohio River Valley is, like much of the industrial Midwest, on the decline in population and economic and political power. Mooney, meanwhile, hails from the only part of the state that is growing, and his politics are more in line with today’s Republican Party. Mooney also had four times as much money in the bank (\$2.8 million on Sept. 30) as McKinley did (\$628,000).

And while McKinley already represents populous Monongalia County — home to Morgantown and West Virginia University, and where Joe Biden came the closest to winning any county in the state — he doesn’t have particularly strong ties to the area. Neither does Mooney.

A McKinley-Mooney matchup would be a stark competition for what it means to be a West Virginia Republican. McKinley traces his West Virginia roots back seven generations and was deeply involved in GOP politics back when the state was dominated by Democrats. Mooney moved to the state in 2013 after serving in the Maryland state legislature and chairing the Maryland Republican Party.

McKinley is a low-key member of the House GOP caucus who voted against objecting to Biden’s electoral college victory, talks up his bipartisan legislative achievements, and in 2016 called himself a “Kasich guy” referring to Ohio Gov. John Kasich, the more moderate Republican then running against Trump in the 2016 GOP P primary.

Mooney is a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, voted against certifying Biden’s victory, and keeps his name in the headlines far more than McKinley — though not always for the best of reasons, like when the House Ethics Committee found he may have illegally used campaign money for personal purposes. Initial rating: Solid Republican.



Oregon Redistricting: (Mostly) Good News for Democrats

By Bradley Wascher

Following a dramatic dispute between members of the Oregon House of Representatives, and just hours before control of redistricting would have shifted to the state Supreme Court, Oregon became the first state to approve a new congressional map for the next decade.

Democrats, who effectively held complete control over Oregon's redistricting process, initially proposed a map that would have given their party a comfortable advantage in five of the state's six congressional districts. Republicans, in response, staged a boycott.

The deadlock was ultimately broken after both parties agreed to Democrats' second proposal, a compromise map that is likely to protect many of the state's five incumbents. After just narrowly missing out on an additional seat last cycle, Oregon has finally expanded the size of its congressional delegation to six members. And the new seat should be competitive.

The 1st District

The 1st District is still situated in west Portland and its suburbs. But the district's lines have changed slightly, as it now extends more into the city, while also stretching down the northwest Pacific coast by bringing in Tillamook County. These changes should serve to further boost Democratic Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, who wasn't in much danger anyway. The new 1st preferred Democrats by an average of 31.5 points in a composite of 2016-2020 elections, and it would have voted for Joe Biden by 40 points, making the new lines approximately 11 points more favorable to Democrats than the previous lines. Initial Rating: Solid Democratic.

The 2nd District

At first glance, the 2nd District's boundaries have hardly changed. It still takes up most of eastern and southern Oregon — essentially everything east of the Cascades. The most important difference is that the district shed the fast-growing city of Bend. But it still includes Medford, and also now extends more into GOP-friendly Douglas County. Consequently, freshman GOP Rep. Cliff Bentz will have little difficulty seeking a second term in this district that was R+25 in the 2016-2020 average and that preferred Donald Trump by 24 points in 2020 (meaning the new 2nd is approximately 10 points more Republican compared to the old lines). Initial Rating: Solid Republican.

The 3rd District

The 3rd District, which contains the eastern portions of Portland and its suburbs, is also largely similar to its previous configuration. The 3rd has ceded part of its reach into the city, but at the same time it takes in Hood River County. Put simply, Democratic Rep. Earl Blumenauer doesn't have much to worry about in this Biden +47 district that voted for Democrats by 42.7 points across an average of all federal and statewide elections in Oregon between 2016 and 2020. Initial Rating: Solid Democratic

The 4th District

The 4th District is still home to the city of Eugene (and the Univ. of Oregon) and Corvallis (Oregon State Univ.). The district continues to duck into southwest Oregon along the Pacific Coast, but has traded Linn County for Lincoln County in the north. If anything, these changes should shore up Democratic Rep. Peter DeFazio, who earned just 52

Rating Oregon's New Congressional Districts

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	INITIAL RATING
1st	Suzanne Bonamici, D	Solid Democratic
2nd	Cliff Bentz, R	Solid Republican
3rd	Earl Blumenauer, D	Solid Democratic
4th	Peter DeFazio, D	Likely Democratic
5th	Kurt Schrader, D	Likely Democratic
6th	OPEN	Likely Democratic

percent in 2020, his lowest share since first being elected to the seat in 1986. Alek Skarlatos, the 2020 GOP nominee, announced his second campaign before the lines were finalized. While the political environment will likely be better for Republicans than last year, the district is more difficult. The new 4th averaged D+9.2 in the composite of 2016-2020 races, and it would have voted for Biden by 13 points last November, compared to Biden +4 for the old lines. Initial Rating: Likely Democratic.

The 5th District

The 5th District had its boundaries heavily redrawn, and has essentially swapped out Salem for Bend. The new 5th now begins in the eastern half of the Willamette Valley, having been cut down the middle to make way for the new 6th District. To balance this out, the 5th also now extends south into Linn County, and east into parts of Deschutes County.

But these differences are unlikely to pose much of a new challenge for Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader, who was re-elected to a seventh term by 7 points in 2020. Although the 5th would have only voted D+3.2 in a composite of 2016-2020 elections, it preferred Biden by nearly 10 points and Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley by 11 points in 2020 — suggesting that redistricting has not altered the district's overall partisanship.

Schrader is likely to seek re-election here, in the seat that includes his Canby home, but it's possible he runs in the new 6th District. He would be challenged by Bend-area attorney Jamie McLeod-Skinner in the primary and former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer could be a formidable general election opponent. Initial rating: Likely Democratic.

The 6th District

The new district contains the city of Salem, and it also takes in Polk and Yamhill counties as well as portions of Washington and Clackamas counties.

Former Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith is running (even though she doesn't currently live in the district). Democratic state Rep. Andrea Salinas of Lake Oswego is considering a bid and would be a strong contender, though she wouldn't run against Schrader if he decided to run here. State Rep. Ron Noble and Army veteran Nate Sandvig are two of many GOP names mentioned.

The 6th will likely be one of the state's more competitive congressional districts. Across a composite of all federal and statewide elections in Oregon between 2016 and 2020 (12 races in total), the 6th preferred Democrats by an average of 5.3 points. But notably, it would have voted for Hillary Clinton by 8 points in 2016 and Joe Biden by 14 points in 2020, a shift possibly influenced by the fact that Salem's population has grown by 13.5 percent over the last decade. Given these trends, the district's rating begins at Likely Democratic.



Continued from page 1

Sinema defeated star GOP recruit Rep. Martha McSally, 50-48 percent, becoming the first Democratic senator from the state since DeConcini. And Democrats won races for secretary of state and superintendent of education, row offices the party hadn't won since 1990. Though GOP Gov. Doug Ducey won re-election easily, 56-42 percent.

In 2020, Arizona continued its leftward march. Biden became the first Democratic presidential nominee to win since Clinton in 1996, and with a greater share of the vote (49.4 percent to Trump's 49.1 percent) than any Democrat since Harry Truman in 1948. And Kelly defeated McSally, who by then had been appointed to the late McCain's seat, 51-49 percent.

The Democratic Incumbent

The Orange, New Jersey-born Kelly, 57, first rose to national prominence in 2010 when he and his identical twin brother, Scott, nearly became the first siblings to be in space together. A 1986 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and a decorated Navy pilot who flew 39 combat missions during the first Gulf War, Kelly and his brother were both members of the 1996 astronaut class.

Kelly didn't end up meeting his brother in space due to scheduling issues, and he soon became a household name for a more tragic reason: the attempted assassination of his wife, 8th District Rep. Gabby Giffords, in a 2011 attack that left her with a severe brain injury and six others dead.

After commanding the final mission of the USS *Endeavor*, Kelly retired from NASA, and following Giffords' resignation from Congress in 2012, the two founded the gun control advocacy group and Super PAC Americans for Responsible Solutions (now known simply as Giffords).

In 2019, Kelly announced he would run in the special Senate election to finish out McCain's term. His opponent was McSally, who had been appointed to the seat by Ducey.

Bolstered by his background as an astronaut, his prominence as Giffords' husband, and his ties to an already strong grassroots activist and donor base, Kelly became one of the 2020 cycle's top fundraisers, hauling in just shy of \$100 million. That makes him the fifth-biggest Senate fundraiser of all time (all five ran in 2020).

Kelly led the race from start to finish, but like most Democrats in 2020, he underperformed the polls when he defeated McSally by 2 points, 51-49 percent, overperforming Biden by nearly 2 points. Because he won a special election, Kelly was sworn in just a few weeks after Election Day, on Dec. 2, 2020.

In the Senate, he serves on the Energy and Natural Resources, and Environment and Public Works committees, and is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities on the Armed Services Committee.

Kelly's campaign team includes Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for polling and Wavelength for digital. Ed Peavy of Mission Control is doing the direct mail. The media consultant is Pia Carusone (now of SKDK), who was Kelly's lead strategist and admaker in 2020 while at Left Hook Media and is also a former chief of staff to Giffords.



Mark Kelly

Courtesy Brnovich Campaign

The Republicans

Five Republicans have announced their candidacies so far: state Attorney General Mark Brnovich, Thiel Capital COO Blake Masters, solar energy executive Jim Lamon, retired Air Force Major General Mick McGuire, and state Corporation Commissioner Justin Olson.



Mark Brnovich

Brnovich, 54, was born in Detroit and moved to Arizona with his family as a young child. A 1988 graduate of Arizona State University and 1991 graduate of University of San Diego law school, Brnovich served nine years in the Army

National Guard from 1995 to 2006 as a Judge Advocate. He went on to work in the state attorney general's office, at the conservative Goldwater Institute, and as an assistant U.S. Attorney before he was appointed director of the state gaming commission in 2009 by GOP Gov. Jan Brewer.

In 2014, Brnovich ran for attorney general, narrowly defeating scandal-plagued incumbent Tom Horne in the GOP primary, 53-46 percent. In the general election, he beat Democrat Felecia Rotellini, 53-47 percent.

In 2018, a mixed year for Arizona Republicans that saw the governor win re-election easily but GOP nominees for Senate and several other statewide offices lose, Brnovich won re-election 52-48 percent. He benefited from a massive outside spending effort by the Republican Attorney Generals Association, which spent \$2.5 million backing him — more than he and his opponent spent combined.

Brnovich's campaign team includes general consultant George Khalaf of Data Orbital, whose firm is also doing polling, media consultant Justin Clark of National Public Affairs, and Targeted Victory for digital.

Masters, 35, was born in Colorado but grew up in Tucson. He graduated from Stanford in 2008, and then from Stanford Law School in 2012 (after a year at Duke law school). While at Stanford Law, he met Silicon Valley venture capitalist Peter Thiel, who made billions as an investor in eBay, PayPal, Facebook, and other companies.

After graduating law school, Masters co-founded a legal research company with investment from Thiel, and soon went to work directly for the billionaire, first as a co-author on his book *Zero to One*, and then at Thiel Capital (where he is now COO) and the Thiel Foundation (where he is president).

In 2018, Masters moved from San Francisco back to Tucson. A year later, he floated a primary challenge to appointed Sen. McSally but didn't end up running. Then in early 2021, Thiel publicly seeded a Super PAC with \$10 million for the express purpose of supporting a Masters candidacy (Thiel did the same in Ohio with another one of his acolytes, author J.D. Vance). Masters announced his candidacy soon thereafter.

Masters' campaign team includes general consultant Chad Willems of Summit Consulting Group, polling and data firm Numinar, and Campaign Solutions for digital. For now, the campaign is doing media production in-house, relying on a friend of Masters' who produced the campaign's first two spots.

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Lamon, 65, was born in Alabama and graduated from the University of Alabama in 1979, where he played football under legendary coach Bear Bryant. After graduating, Lamon served six years as an airborne officer in the Army. Following his service, Lamon took a job at Clark Construction, rising to be a vice president before he was recruited by Norwegian coal company Aker Kvaerner in 1995. In 2004, he joined Canadian manufacturer Shaw Group, and in 2008 he moved to Tempe, Arizona, to take a job at solar energy company First Solar.

After four years at First Solar, Lamon founded his own solar energy firm, Depcom Power, in Scottsdale, where he has been CEO since.

Lamon was the first candidate to jump into the race against Kelly. He's personally wealthy, and has already loaned his campaign \$5 million (though he's only spent \$1.7 million of it through Sept. 30).

Lamon's campaign team includes general consultant Stephen Puetz of Axiom Strategies, which is also handling direct mail, pollster John McLaughlin of McLaughlin & Associates, and media consultants Owen Brennan and Nathan Baker of Madison McQueen.



Blake Masters

Courtesy: Gage Skidmore

McGuire is a 1987 graduate of the Air Force Academy and recently retired from the military and his role as Adjutant General of the Arizona National Guard, to which he was appointed to in 2013 by then-Gov. Brewer.

Like Kelly, McGuire is a fighter pilot who served in the Gulf War. He joined the Arizona National Guard in 2001, and piloted drones during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in 2010. McGuire had planned on retiring in 2020, but when the coronavirus pandemic struck, he stayed on an extra year as Adjutant General and as director of the Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, where he was a key player in the state's response to the virus.

Olson, 42, is a member of the state's Corporation Commission, which regulates utilities, railroads, pipelines, and business organizations. A Mesa, Arizona native, Olson graduated from Arizona State University, where he also received an MBA in 2013. Olson was briefly a congressional aide for Arizona Republican Rep. Trent Franks from 2005 to 2006, and has worked primarily as a tax analyst, including for the University of Phoenix from 2010 to 2018.

He first ran for office in 2010, winning a seat from a multi-member State House district in the Mesa area. Olson won easy re-elections in 2012 and 2014, and in 2016 he ran in the GOP primary to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon. He placed fourth with 20 percent behind eventual winner Andy Biggs (29 percent).

In 2017, Olson was appointed by Gov. Ducey to the Corporation Commission to fill a vacancy. In 2018, he placed first in the GOP primary for corporation commissioner, with 25 percent (the top two finishers were both nominated). In the general election, Olson eked out a narrow second-place finish by just 4,468 votes, or 0.11 percent. Democrat Sandra Kennedy came in first, 22,938 votes ahead of Olson.

Olson's campaign team includes general consultant Billy Grant of

Arsenal Media, which is also handling media, pollster Brock McCleary of Cygnal, and Majority Strategies for direct mail and digital.

Ducey, who is term-limited as governor, could run for this seat, and would be a formidable general election candidate. And National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman Rick Scott, who himself ran for Senate as a sitting governor, has been saying for months he thinks Ducey will run.

But there are major hurdles to a Kelly vs. Ducey showdown.

First, Ducey has repeatedly said he isn't running and doesn't want to. That's not as dispositive as it sounds, since most candidates aren't running up until the moment that they are. Until the April 4 filing deadline, nothing is for certain. But Ducey has been pretty clear about where his head is right now.

Second, and more important, Ducey has a terrible relationship with Trump. The former president blames Ducey for his failure to overturn Biden's victory in Arizona last fall, and has repeatedly called him out in press releases, including one over this summer when he celebrated that Ducey would not be a candidate and said that if he did run, "his aspirations would be permanently put to rest."

While it's possible to win a GOP primary without Trump's endorsement, it's still a tall order, especially if the former president were to actively campaign against Ducey. Usually a figure like a sitting governor can count on clearing a primary field, but that wouldn't be the case here, and Ducey simply may not want to deal with a nasty, prolonged primary fight that he's not guaranteed to win, with his reward being a general election campaign he's not guaranteed to win either — especially if he wants to run for higher office in 2024.

The Republican Primary

Republican strategists say Brnovich starts out as the frontrunner, with a name ID advantage from his two terms in statewide elected office, and his following among pre-Trump movement conservatives and libertarians in the state.

But while the limited early polling confirms he started out ahead, he's not seen as a particularly strong frontrunner, and despite announcing early, he didn't keep out other candidates from jumping in after him or clear the field. If the primary were held today, he'd probably win. But the primary isn't until Aug. 2, well into 2022, and that gives the field plenty of time to develop.

The primary complaint about the attorney general is his lack of fundraising prowess. He brought in just \$564,000 in the third quarter. That's a middling sum for a Senate candidate these days, let alone the putative frontrunner for the nomination in a marquee race. Republican strategists in the state say Brnovich has never been a great fundraiser or an energetic campaigner.

Brnovich could also have a Trump problem. The former president has criticized him over his perceived inaction on election fraud in Maricopa County (though there's no evidence of widespread fraud), calling him "lackluster" and telling him to "step it up."

Trump hasn't been as harsh on him as he has Ducey, and Brnovich's team says that the two have good conversations. But the other Republican candidates are already trying to use election integrity issues to drive a wedge between Brnovich and Trump and will continue to do so, with the Masters Super PAC airing ads attacking Brnovich on election integrity, and Lamon running Fox News ads in the New York media market to target Trump when he's watching from his Bedminster property.

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Brnovich, several Arizona Republicans say, has done a decent job raising his profile and burnishing his partisan bona fides, with appearances on Fox News and strategic lawsuits against the Biden administration over the president's border policies and vaccine mandate — two hot-button issues that play well among the GOP primary electorate.

Masters and Lamon appear to be the best positioned to take advantage of the open field, since both will have significant resources. In addition to the \$10 million in Super PAC support from Thiel, Masters raised eyebrows when he raised a strong \$1.1 million in his three months in the race.

It remains to be seen just how much more of his own money Lamon is willing to spend.

And it's also unclear how much more money Thiel plans on spending to support Masters. The \$10 million Thiel used to seed the Super PAC won't go as far as \$10 million in the candidate's own bank account, because candidates have special access to lower advertising rates.

Lamon is trying to position himself as the most Trump-aligned conservative candidate in the race. He went further than the other candidates in support of the controversial Maricopa County "audit" ordered by the state Senate that became a cause célèbre for Trump supporters who falsely believe that the 2020 election was stolen. He also donated \$2 million to an "election integrity" group that is involved with supporting Jan. 6 defendants, and is also touting an endorsement from the National Border Patrol Council union.

Masters, meanwhile, will look to make headway by talking about taking on China and Big Tech, and his campaign hopes his youth, tech savvy, and affinity for cryptocurrency will allow him to tap into a younger generation of voters. His campaign also plans on putting a greater share of resources into ground game because the Super PAC will be taking care of TV advertising; several Arizona Republicans unaffiliated with his campaign say his presence across the state is already more notable than some of his competitors.

But he will have to counter charges that he's a Big Tech-funded, Silicon Valley candidate who moved back to the state after 14 years away just to run for office and perceptions that he's in Thiel's pocket because of his financial ties to the billionaire.

Several Arizona Republican consultants not affiliated with any of the campaigns say McGuire has a strong profile and would make a solid general election candidate against Kelly, but that his path to victory in the primary is not clear. He had to make an early course correction after calling Biden the "duly elected president" in a speech before he became a candidate. And his fundraising numbers, just \$427,000 since entering the race plus a \$250,000 personal loan, don't inspire confidence that he'll be able to raise the money he would need to introduce himself to voters statewide.

Olson, Republicans say, may begin the race as one of the only non-Brnovich candidates with a base of support rooted in the state's

400,000-strong Mormon community. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and hailing from the historically Mormon Phoenix suburb of Mesa, Olson could have built-in appeal among the traditionally Republican constituency.

But though Olson has run statewide once before, the Corporation Commission is a low-profile office with multiple members that doesn't afford much, if any, name recognition. Though his campaign thinks he can win the primary with only a few million dollars, he'll have to show he can raise that much, and then use it effectively enough to compete with better-funded opponents.

How It Plays Out

Of the four most vulnerable Democratic senators in 2022, Kelly starts out in a decent position. He's well on his way to restocking his astronomical war chest, raising \$8.2 million from July through September and entering October with \$13 million in the bank.

Arizona's late primary is also a boost for Kelly. While the Republican contenders will be primarily focused on each other until August, Kelly will be able to begin his general election effort at the beginning of the year. He will stockpile cash — Democratic and Republican strategists expect him to come close to or even exceed his \$100 million mark from last cycle — and get in front of voters early, while his eventual GOP opponent will have just three months to make their broader case before Election Day. In 2020, Kelly went up on TV in February and never came down.

That said, Kelly will have to deal with outside money from Republican groups such as the NRSC, Senate Leadership Fund, and One Nation, which won't wait for there to be a Republican nominee to start hitting him. Already, according to data from Kantar, One Nation has spent \$2.8 million on anti-Kelly ads. The senator has also received some air cover from groups such as Democratic 501(c)(4) Future Majority, which has spent \$3.9 million on pro-Kelly ads, and End Citizens United, which has shelled out \$2.7 million to bolster Kelly, among others.

Biden's victory last fall proves that Arizona is really a battleground state and not just an anti-McSally state.

And the three Democratic wins in 2018 and 2020 paint a two-step roadmap for the party's future success in the Grand Canyon State that involves capitalizing on the suburban shift toward Democrats we saw over the past decade.

The first step is to win Maricopa County (Phoenix), which casts two-thirds of all votes in the state. From 1948 through 2016, no Democratic presidential nominee carried Maricopa County, and often they lost by double digits. In 2020, Biden won it by 2 points, and his 45,109-vote margin there was quadruple his 10,457-vote statewide win. Kelly won by 4 points, and his 80,193-vote margin was just slightly larger than his 78,826-vote statewide victory. Without Maricopa, both Biden and Kelly would have lost.

The second step is to get over 60 percent in Coconino County (Flagstaff) and as close to 60 percent as possible in Pima County (Tucson). In 2020, Biden hit 61 percent in Coconino and 58 percent in Pima, while Kelly put up 63 percent in Coconino and 60 percent in Pima, where he lives.

In 2020, Kelly's advertising focused heavily — and to great effect — on service to country and overcoming tragedy. His sterling biography helped him overperform Biden, and could help insulate him from a diminished national Democratic brand. It helps that he spent tens of

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Jim Lamon

Courtesy Lamon Campaign

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millions of dollars on TV just a year ago introducing himself to voters, though Arizona's transitory nature — well over a third of the state's population moved there since 2017 — lessens the residual effects of that spending because there will be so many new voters to appeal to.

And now that he's a sitting senator, he'll have to mix in some of his record as a legislator to convince voters to re-up his contract. That also gives Republicans a record to attack.

Thus far, Kelly has opted to keep his head down in Congress. That's a sharp contrast to his colleague Sinema, who has positioned herself as a key obstacle to Biden's legislative agenda and is a mainstay in headlines and in the curses of Democratic party activists and base voters.

Republicans say Sinema's outspokenness is hurting Kelly indirectly, by highlighting that he's going along with the Democratic agenda and making him seem like he's not the independent voice for Arizona.

Democrats, however, counter that Sinema's antics are a boon for Kelly because it makes him look like more of a workhorse, and because as Sinema has grown less popular among the party faithful, he looks better by comparison despite not staking out particularly left-wing political ground.

One Democratic consultant from Arizona said Kelly now has "the benefit of party loyalty over and above what he could have gotten, because he's not Sinema." Recent polling from Arizona-based OH Predictive Insights found Kelly and Sinema's overall favorability ratings roughly equal: 47 percent favorable/43 percent unfavorable for Kelly and 46 percent/39 percent for Sinema. But among Democrats, Kelly had a 69 percent/11 percent rating, while Sinema had just a 56 percent/20 percent rating.

If Democrats succeed in passing an infrastructure bill, it will feature heavily in Kelly's advertising. But Republicans will also mine the two massive spending packages for anything they can use against Kelly.

They'll also go after him on the topline spending numbers. But unlike in previous years when Republicans focused primarily on the increase in the debt, after four years of debt-fueled Trump spending the party will instead tie spending to inflation and higher gasoline costs — issues they think resonate more with voters.

The Bottom Line

In the end, Kelly's biggest vulnerability may simply be that he's a Democrat in a Republican-leaning state running in what's shaping up to be a poor cycle for Democrats nationwide.

In a wave year, even strong candidates and candidates with spending advantages — like Kelly — can lose. If Biden's approval continues to flounder, because of Covid-19, the economy, or something else we don't even know about yet, and Democrats aren't able to coalesce around a clear and compelling reason why they should be in charge, marginal states like Arizona will begin to look very dicey for them.

For now, Kelly has the luxury of time and money. He also benefits from Trump's continued opposition to Ducey, who would be a tougher general election opponent than anyone currently running.

Given Kelly's fundraising prowess, and the concurrent gubernatorial race that features one of Trump's favorite candidates in the country, newscaster Kari Lake, this race will attract serious national media attention.

And because Arizona is so evenly divided, politically, it will likely be competitive from start to finish. **IE**

Statewide Election Results in Arizona

