

# Inside Elections

with  
**Nathan L. Gonzales**  
Nonpartisan Analysis

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## 2022 Senate Overview: No Margin for Error

By Nathan L. Gonzales & Jacob Rubashkin

The country and Capitol Hill are so divided that Republicans and Democrats can't agree on what to have for lunch on any particular day. But there's one thing providing consensus: control of the Senate is on the line in 2022.

Considering the Senate is currently divided 50-50, that's not exactly a bold prediction. Yet in the middle of the day-to-day grind of politics, the obvious can go unnoticed. And it's a reminder that literally every seat matters in the fight for the Senate.

Since the beginning of the year, three more Republican senators announced that they will not seek re-election, for a total of five. But those decisions didn't alter the size or shape of the initial Senate battleground.

Both parties have four states that look initially vulnerable. Democrats are on defense in Georgia, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Nevada while Republicans are defending Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Florida. Newly open seats in Missouri and Ohio could develop into Democratic opportunities, but considering President Donald Trump's wide margins in each state and the strong correlation between presidential results and Senate outcomes, Democrats have a lot to prove that those are serious opportunities.

It's a good thing Republicans need a net gain of just a single seat to regain the majority because this is one of the smallest initial battlegrounds in the last two decades.

According to ratings by The Rothenberg Political Report (and then Inside Elections) in January of the off-year at the beginning of each cycle going back 20 years, the initial Senate battleground consisted of an average of 12 seats. The largest recent battlegrounds were in 2000 (16 seats) and 2002 (17 seats) with 2008 (7 seats) being the only cycle when the initial Senate battleground was smaller than this cycle's eight seats.

With virtually no margin for error, each side will be making their best case to the voters. Republicans plan to hold Democrats accountable for legislative overreach, including making their case against incumbents before some of the crowded GOP primaries have played out. While the president's party usually loses seats in a midterm, Republicans shouldn't underestimate the power of a healthier economy and Covid-19 in the rearview mirror when voters go to the polls in November of 2022.

Democrats need to find a way to keep their own voters energized when President Donald Trump isn't in office or on the ballot. They're planning for their legislative record to be an asset (as they plan to restore confidence in the competency of government) and a return to in-person campaigning they abandoned during the pandemic. But Democrats shouldn't dismiss cultural issues that have the potential to paint them as out of touch.

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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

<b>April 24</b>	Louisiana's 2nd District Special Election Runoff
<b>May 1</b>	Texas' 6th District Special Election
<b>May 8</b>	Virginia Republican Gubernatorial Convention
<b>June 1</b>	New Mexico's 1st District Special Election
<b>June 8</b>	Virginia Democratic Gubernatorial Primary
<b>Aug. 3</b>	Ohio's 11th District Special Election Primary

# Report Shorts

## Louisiana's 2nd District

State Sens. Troy Carter and Karen Carter Peterson, both New Orleans Democrats, advanced to the runoff as expected — but the margins were notable. Carter Peterson, the former chairwoman of the state party and a DNC vice chair, barely beat out Baton Rouge activist Gary Chambers for the second spot in the runoff. Carter Peterson won 23 percent of the vote, while Chambers finished with 21 percent, just 1,510 votes from making the runoff.

Now Carter Peterson and Carter (36 percent) are set to clash on April 24. Carter is running as the more pragmatic candidate, highlighting his ability to build relationships across the aisle, and his endorsement from and relationship with former Rep. Cedric Richmond, who held this seat until he was appointed as a senior adviser in the White House.

Carter Peterson is running as an unabashed progressive who supports the Green New Deal and Medicare for All, and argues that a district as Democratic as Louisiana's 2nd, which voted for Joe Biden 75-23 percent, should have a representative with politics to match. She has been endorsed by Chambers, the third-place finisher.

## Louisiana's 5th District

Julia Letlow will become the first Republican woman to represent Louisiana in Congress after winning the special election to fill this Northeast Louisiana seat, which had been left vacant following the death of her husband, Representative-elect Luke Letlow, last December. Julia Letlow won 65 percent of the vote in the all-party primary, clearing the majority threshold needed to avoid a runoff.

## New Mexico's 1st District

The matchup is set in the special election to succeed now-Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in this Albuquerque-area district. The Republican nominee is state Sen. Mark Moores, who was selected from a field of seven options by the 121 members of the state GOP central committee that live in the 1st District. He was a late entrant to the field and won with a plurality (49 votes) to talk radio host Eddy Aragon's 34 votes.

The Democratic state central committee chose state Rep. Melanie Stansbury, a management consultant who flipped a GOP-held state House seat in 2018 and had previously worked as a Senate staffer on Capitol Hill. Stansbury won a narrow, 103-97 vote runoff victory over state Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez, who had led the first round of voting, 74-43, but failed to cross the majority threshold to avoid a runoff.

The election is scheduled for June 1 in a district that is solidly Democratic, having voted for Joe Biden 60-37 percent last fall.

IE

# Candidate Conversation



Courtesy Kim campaign

## Sery Kim (R)

Texas' 6th District Special --  
Rating: *Lean Republican*

**Interview Date:** March 12, 2021 (Google Meet)

**Date of Birth:** April 26, 1978;  
Seoul, South Korea

**Education:** Univ. of North Texas (1998); Univ. of Texas, Austin (J.D., 2001)

**Elected Office:** None; First run for office.

**Current Outlook:** Kim is one of 23 candidates overall vying to succeed the late GOP Rep. Ron Wright in Texas' 6th District, which is in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs. The May 1 contest is a jungle primary, with all 23 candidates appearing on the same ballot, and the top two finishers advancing to a runoff if no one wins a majority. The race has the potential to be the first competitive special election of the Biden era; President Donald Trump won the district 51-48 percent in 2020, down from his 54-42 percent win in 2016. There are 11 Republicans in the race, including Wright's widow, Susan Wright; and Jake Ellzey, a sitting state legislator. Kim's strategy is to run on her credentials as a former Trump administration official, but even that lane is crowded, with former HHS chief of staff Brian Harrison in the race, and former Nevada 3rd District nominee Dan Rodimer highlighting his connections to Trump.

**Evaluation:** Unlike some candidates who try to obscure or couch their ambition, Kim flaunts hers and highlights it as a competitive advantage. Though she's never run for office before, Kim worked as a Capitol Hill staffer for four years and for the Mitt Romney 2012 presidential campaign. She also has worked for a decade as a freelance travel and leisure writer.

Kim is incredibly forthright about her unconventional campaign; she isn't working with a general consultant, pollster, or professional ad maker, saying they're all a waste of money. Instead, she says she's running a campaign focused on earned media (Kim has appeared as an on-air legal personality for Fox News and Newsmax) and is intent on securing an endorsement from President Trump, spending an hour a day working contacts at Mar-a-lago. She also says it'll take \$1 million to win this race, of which she had raised just \$100,000 at the time of our interview. So far, it's not clear if her out-of-the-box tactics are working. In the two public polls of the race (both sponsored by a Democratic candidate) Kim registered just 1 percent in one, and was not even included in the other.

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Nathan L. Gonzales

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



**Jacob Rubashkin**  
Reporter & Analyst  
jacob@insideelections.com  
@jacobrubashkin

**Ryan Matsumoto**  
Contributing Analyst  
ryan@insideelections.com

**Bradley Wascher**  
Contributing Analyst  
bradley@insideelections.com

**Robert Yoon**  
Contributing Reporter & Analyst  
robert@insideelections.com

@InsideElections  
facebook.com/InsideElections

**Will Taylor**  
Production Artist  
will@insideelections.com

**Stuart Rothenberg**  
Senior Editor  
stu@insideelections.com

1140 3rd Street, N.E., Washington, 20002 • 202-546-2822

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**ALABAMA. Open; Richard Shelby, R, not seeking re-election.**

Shelby's retirement means the state will host its second competitive GOP Senate primary in as many cycles. Trump's former ambassador to Slovenia, Lynda Blanchard, is running — the wealthy GOP donor committed to spending at least \$5 million of her own money on the race, and has reserved \$3 million in TV and radio time over the coming year. The other officially declared candidate is 5th District GOP Rep. Mo Brooks, who also ran for Senate in the 2017 special election, when Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions left to become Trump's attorney general. The congressman had \$1.1 million in his campaign account at the end of the year for this race.

Brooks placed third in the 2017 race after facing an onslaught of negative ads from the McConnell-aligned Senate Leadership Fund; Republicans eventually nominated Roy Moore, to disastrous results that allowed Democrat Doug Jones to win the seat. Former Shelby chief of staff and current president of the Business Council of Alabama Katie Boyd Britt says she is considering a run, and Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill, who briefly ran for the state's other seat in 2020, is also a potential candidate. The only Democratic member of the state's delegation, Rep. Terri Sewell, ruled out a run. The GOP nominee will be the prohibitive favorite in the general. Last year, Trump won by 25 points while former Auburn head football coach Tommy Tuberville defeated the well-funded incumbent (Jones) by 20 points. There's a lot of game left to be played on the Republican side, but for the general election, the race is rated Solid Republican.

**ALASKA. Lisa Murkowski (R) appointed 2002, elected 2004 (49%), 2010 (39% as a write-in), 2016 (44%).** Murkowski now has her first challenger. Former Alaska Department of Administration commissioner Kelly Tshibaka, a Republican, launched her campaign with a five-minute video attacking the senator as a career politician and a liberal Washington insider, citing among other things Murkowski's vote to convict former President Trump in his second impeachment trial. Trump has said he will campaign against Murkowski, and Tshibaka is working with several senior Trump alumni, including former Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien and his deputy Justin Clark.

Murkowski has faced intra party opposition before, most notably in 2010 when she lost the GOP primary to Joe Miller and won the general election as a write-in candidate. She also won a four-way race in 2016 against Miller (who ran as a Libertarian), former Republican Margaret Stock (who ran as an independent) and Democratic nominee Ray Metcalfe.

The senior senator will be aided by the new voting system Alaskans approved last fall. Instead of traditional party primaries, all candidates will run in an all-party primary, and the top four vote-getters will progress to the general election, which is then decided by ranked choice voting. Murkowski will not have to face just the GOP primary electorate,

and could benefit from her support among unaffiliated and Democratic voters via the ranked choice system.

There are a lot of unanswered questions in the race, including how involved Trump really gets in a race that is more than 4,000 miles away from Mar-a-Lago and whether Democrats can field a credible candidate. Murkowski had \$1 million in her campaign account at the end of the year and appears ready for another competitive and complicated race. Solid Republican.

**ARIZONA. Mark Kelly (D) elected 2020 special election (51%).**

Democrats are emboldened after taking both U.S. Senate seats over the last two cycles and topping it off with a Biden win over Trump. Even though Kelly just won in 2020, he must run again next year for the full term. The senator had \$1.4 million in the bank on Dec. 31, but Kelly won't have any problem raising money considering that was what was left after raising \$101 million last cycle.

The Republican race is slow to develop and a prime example where the priorities of Trump and the GOP are at odds. Republicans would probably be best off recruiting term-limited Gov. Doug Ducey into the race considering his two statewide victories. But Trump hates Ducey because he believes the governor didn't do enough to deliver Arizona to him in spite of not having as many votes as Biden. Since Trump still has considerable sway over primary voters, there's little reason for Ducey to invest his own time and energy into a race where he might not be able to win the nomination. Republicans are left with a field of second and third tier candidates. Rep. Andy Biggs, one of Trump's biggest apologists in the country, could run. But it's not clear how he expands the GOP coalition. Other potential GOP candidates include state Attorney General Mark Brnovich, U.S. Air Force Major General / state Adjutant General Michael McGuire, state Treasurer Kimberly Yee and former Rep. Matt Salmon (some of whom might try instead for the open gubernatorial seat).

Kelly proved to be a good first-time candidate, he'll raise a ton of money, and Republicans have a lot of work to do on their recruitment. But the state is solidly competitive. If the midterms turn against Democrats, this race is likely to follow suit. Battleground.

**ARKANSAS. John Boozman (R) elected 2010 (58%), 2016 (60%).** Boozman is one of the lowest-key senators on Capitol Hill and



John Boozman

a reliable GOP vote, but that doesn't make him immune from a primary challenge. Gun shop / firing range owner Jan Morgan is running against him from the right. She received 30 percent of the vote in a 2018 GOP primary against Gov. Asa Hutchinson. Boozman had \$907,000 in his campaign account at the end of the year. Trump (who has endorsed Boozman) defeated Biden by 27 points in 2020, so the Republican primary is the critical contest. Last cycle, the Democratic candidate dropped out after the filing deadline so the party couldn't replace him and GOP Sen. Tom Cotton won re-

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election with 67 percent. We'll see if Democrats can actually get and keep someone on the ballot this time. Solid Republican.

**CALIFORNIA. Alex Padilla (D) appointed Jan. 2021.** Virtually all of the political focus in the state is on the GOP effort to recall

Democratic Gov.

Gavin Newsom.

On its current path, assuming Republicans have submitted enough valid signatures, that election could take place later this year. That's probably good news for Padilla, because there will

be less oxygen for another Democrat to gain traction against him.

Some aspiring politicians are perhaps annoyed they weren't appointed to replace Vice President Kamala Harris or see the former California secretary of state as weak because he hasn't been elected to this office. Padilla is a former president of the Los Angeles City Council who was twice elected to the state Senate before winning statewide elections for secretary of state in 2014 and 2018.

California's top-two primary system means Padilla's vulnerability is not a typical party primary. While California's Hispanic population is growing, and Padilla is the state's first Latino senator, Newsom's selection angered some people in the Black community and there are other ambitious politicians in California including Rep. Katie Porter. The shape and partisanship of the next set of congressional district lines will help determine which members of the delegation might try to make the statewide jump. Newsom also tried to head off criticism about not appointing a Black woman to the Senate by appointing state Assemblywoman Shirley Weber to replace Padilla as secretary of state.

Even though Republicans picked off three Democratic House seats last November, the GOP's prospects statewide are much more dire, considering Biden won by nearly 30 points. Republicans haven't won a Senate race in California since Pete Wilson was re-elected in 1988. Solid Democratic.

**COLORADO. Michael Bennet (D) appointed 2009, elected 2010 (48%), 2016 (50%).** Colorado has lurched to the left in the last two



Michael Bennet

cycles, including 2020, when Biden won the state by 13 points and former Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper defeated GOP Sen. Cory Gardner by 9 points. Republicans can hope that the state reverts back to the pre-Trump presidency

days, when Gardner knocked off a Democratic incumbent in 2014 and Hillary Clinton won the state by just 5 points in 2016. But that could be

wishful thinking. A key problem is that Republicans don't have a clear challenger. Rep. Ken Buck has already ruled out a run, but even he probably wasn't a top tier candidate considering his closeness to Trump and 2010 loss to Bennet. The senator had a modest \$530,000 in the bank on Dec. 31, but Republicans are searching for options. This race is a good barometer of the cycle. If Democratic turnout falls off a cliff, then this seat could come into play. For now, it's Solid Democratic.

**CONNECTICUT. Richard Blumenthal (D) elected 2010 (55%), 2016 (63%).** NRSC Chairman Rick Scott raised eyebrows when he listed Connecticut among the states that Republicans would target in 2022. Biden just won the state by 20 points last November, and Blumenthal hasn't had a tough race since 2010, when he defeated former WWE executive Linda McMahon by 12 points. The last Republican to win statewide was Gov. Jodi Rell in 2006. Currently, the only Republican publicly exploring the race is John Flynn, who lost state House races by 50 points (2018) and 56 points (2020) and doesn't have a working U.S. Senate campaign website yet. Blumenthal had \$3.9 million in his campaign account on Dec. 31. Solid Democratic.

**FLORIDA. Marco Rubio (R) elected 2010 (49%), 2016 (52%).**

After a string of close Republican victories it's hard to label Florida as a



Stephanie Murphy

swing state anymore. That certainly doesn't mean Democrats can't win, but it's clear that getting over the top is a challenge. Right now, GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis is attracting most of the political attention in the state, which could help Rubio. Most of the

prospective Democratic candidates look like they have their eyes on the governorship more than the U.S. Senate. Those potential challengers include state Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, state Rep. Anna Eskamani and U.S. Reps. Val Demings and Charlie Crist.

Democrats, however, have one potentially strong challenger to Rubio: Rep. Stephanie Murphy. She's a 42-year-old member of Congress who represents part of the important Orlando area, has a compelling refugee story, and speaks fluent Spanish. Her allies believe she can navigate the three different campaigns (Panhandle, I-4 corridor, and South Florida) necessary to win. Republicans could make her re-election more difficult (to the point where winning statewide might be easier) through the redistricting process. But any candidate will likely need to make their decision on a statewide campaign well before the spring when new maps are completed. Murphy is seriously considering the race.

While Rubio avoided a primary challenge from Ivanka Trump and has not been a focus of the former president's recent press release attacks, the senator doesn't seem to be a Trump favorite. It's not clear how much that will matter in a state Trump carried by 3 points in 2020. But if the former president is barnstorming the state for DeSantis, Trump supporters might notice a lack of zeal for the senator. In general, the race this cycle will likely be competitive and expensive, but not in the initial top tier of Democratic opportunities. But it could develop. Battleground.

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## GEORGIA. Raphael Warnock (D) elected 2020/Jan. 5, 2021

**runoff (51%).** Warnock's victory was an integral component of Democrats gaining control of the Senate and his re-election to a full term is critical to Democrats keeping the chamber. GOP strategists admit that letting Warnock define himself for months, without any negative ads from Republicans until the runoff was a strategic mistake. And Republicans won't let that happen again. Even as the GOP field solidifies, Republicans will focus on the senator and his new voting record.



Raphael Warnock

Courtesy Warnock for Senate Campaign

Potential GOP candidates include former Sen. Kelly Loeffler (who lost the seat to Warnock), former Rep. Doug Collins (who finished third in the initial 2020 race when all candidates ran together), former Dallas Cowboys/Univ. of Georgia running back Herschel Walker (who was publicly encouraged to run by Trump but currently lives in Texas), and banking executive/ex-Navy Seal Latham Saddler. GOP Rep. Buddy Carter might run if Walker declines, while former state supreme court chief justice Harold Melton could run as well. Republicans declining to challenge Warnock include Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, former Sen. David Perdue (who lost re-election last cycle in the state's other seat), and Rep. Jody Hice (who is running for secretary of state).

While Democrats are ecstatic about their 2020 success, they understand Georgia is not firmly in their column. Without Trump on the ballot to boost Democratic turnout, Democrats will look to a backlash against GOP efforts to change voting rules in the state as well as high Black turnout for a ticket that could include Warnock and Stacey Abrams, who is likely to challenge GOP Gov. Brian Kemp again. Republicans will hope to regain some ground in the suburbs, potentially by focusing on Democratic overreach in Washington, to get themselves back on top. Be prepared for one of the most competitive races in the country. Battleground.

**HAWAII. Brian Schatz (D) appointed Dec. 2012, elected 2014 (70%), 2016 (74%).** Though Schatz had to beat back a primary challenger in 2014, he ended 2020 with more than \$3 million in the bank, and ambitious state-level Democrats are more focused on the open gubernatorial contest to succeed the term-limited Democrat David Ige. Biden won Hawaii by nearly 30 points last year, and Schatz put up a dominant 74-22 percent victory the last time he was on the ballot. Solid Democratic.

**IDAHO. Mike Crapo (R) elected 1998 (70%), 2004 (99%), 2010 (71%), 2016 (66%).** Crapo had \$4.1 million in the bank at the end of the year, and locked up an endorsement from former President Trump — who won the state by 31 points last November — in early March. That should be enough to ward off any primary challengers, and the general election won't be an issue in a state that last sent a Democrat (the legendary Frank Church) to the Senate in 1974. Solid Republican.

**ILLINOIS. Tammy Duckworth (D) elected 2016 (55%).** If the midterm electorate revolts against the Democrats, there's a chance this race could end up on the edge of the map — as it did in 2010 when Democrats let Barack Obama's old seat slip away to Republican Mark Kirk. But Duckworth defeated Kirk by 15 points in 2016, J.B. Pritzker unseated GOP Gov. Bruce Rauner by 16 points in 2018, and Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin and Biden won 16 and 17-point victories, respectively, in 2020. Rep. Adam Kinzinger, one of the most outspoken anti-Trump Republicans in Congress, has been floated as a statewide candidate, but it's unclear if he could even win a primary — he already has a pro-Trump challenger in his House race. Illinois is set to lose a seat in redistricting, and the Democratic legislature could try to put one or more GOP officeholders out of a job with new lines. Duckworth had \$2.6 million in the bank at the end of the year. Solid Democratic.

**INDIANA. Todd Young (R) elected 2016 (52%).** The last time Young was on the ballot, he was in a tough race against Democratic former Sen./former Gov. Evan Bayh, and Republicans were in danger of losing the state's gubernatorial mansion too. This time around, things look much more straightforward for the former NRSC chairman.

The state Democratic Party is in rebuilding mode, having lost every

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## 2022 Governor Ratings

### Battleground

#### Democratic-held (6)

Kelly (D-Kan.)  
Mills (D-Maine)  
Whitmer (D-Mich.)  
Sisolak (D-Nev.)  
PA Open (Wolf, D)  
Evers (D-Wisc.)

#### Republican-held (5)

AZ Open (Ducey, R)  
DeSantis (R-Fl.)  
Kemp (R-Ga.)  
MD Open (Hogan, R)  
Sununu (R-N.H.)

#### Solid Democratic (10)

Newsom (D-Calif.)  
Polis (D-Colo.)  
Lamont (D-Conn.)  
HI Open (Ige, D)  
Pritzker (D-Ill.)  
Walz (D-Minn.)  
Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.)  
Cuomo (D-N.Y.)  
OR Open (Brown, D)  
McKee (D-R.I.)

#### Solid Republican (15)

Ivey (R-Ala.)  
Dunleavy (R-Alaska)  
AR Open (Hutchinson, R)  
Little (R-Idaho)  
Reynolds (R-Iowa)  
Baker (R-Mass.)  
NE Open (Ricketts, R)  
Noem (R-S.D.)  
DeWine (R-Ohio)  
Stitt (R-Okla.)  
McMaster (R-S.C.)  
Lee (R-Tenn.)

### 2021 RACES

#### Likely Democratic

VA Open (Northam, D)

#### Solid Democratic

Murphy (D-N.J.)

Abbott (R-Texas)

Scott (R-Vt.)

Gordon (R-Wyo.)



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statewide contest since 2012, including the 2020 presidential race by 16 points and the 2020 gubernatorial contest by 34 points. Young had \$2.4 million in his campaign account at the end of the year, and the biggest name in Hoosier Democratic politics, Pete Buttigieg, looks firmly ensconced in Washington, D.C. as transportation secretary in the Biden Administration. Solid Republican.

**IOWA.** Chuck Grassley (R) elected 1980 (54%), 1986 (66%), 1992 (70%), 1998 (68%), 2004 (70%), 2010 (64%), 2016 (60%). Hawkeye

Democrats had a brutal 2020, losing a competitive Senate race, the presidential contest, two of three competitive U.S. House seats, and six seats in the state legislature. That does not inspire much confidence heading

into 2022, irrespective of what Grassley decides to do. If the 87-year-old runs for re-election, he'll likely win it easily. If he retires, there's a deep GOP bench headlined by state House Speaker Pat Grassley (the senator's grandson). Democrats will talk about 3rd District Rep. Cindy Axne and state Auditor Rob Sand, both of whom could also run against GOP Gov. Kim Reynolds. Retired Admiral Mike Franken, who placed second in the 2020 Democratic Senate primary, is mentioned for the Senate as well. Considering Trump won Iowa by 8 points in 2020, the burden of proof is on Democrats to demonstrate this is a viable contest. Solid Republican.



Chuck Grassley

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

**KANSAS.** Jerry Moran (R) elected 2010 (70%), 2016 (62%).

Democrats thought they had a shot at flipping Kansas' other Senate seat last cycle. Instead, state Sen. Barbara Bollier came up 11 points short of GOP Rep. Roger Marshall (despite outspending him 4-to-1) while Trump defeated Biden by 14 points at the top of the ballot. This cycle, Kansas Democrats will be focused more on re-electing Gov.



Jerry Moran

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Laura Kelly, and less on trying to oust a GOP incumbent in a midterm election with a Democratic president in a state that hasn't sent a Democrat to the Senate in a century. Moran had \$2.5 million in his account at the end of the year. Solid Republican.

**KENTUCKY.** Rand Paul (R) elected 2010 (56%), 2016 (57%).

Paul has faced credible challengers in both his runs for office — state Attorney General Jack Conway in 2010, Lexington Mayor Jim Gray in 2016 — and won both races by double digits. Polls show Paul more popular in the state than his GOP colleague, Minority Leader Mitch

McConnell, who just won re-election by 20 points. Former state Rep. Charles Booker, a Black attorney from Louisville who narrowly lost the 2020 Democratic Senate primary to Amy McGrath but captured the attention of progressives nationwide, has said he is seriously considering running against Paul in 2022. But it's on Democrats to prove they can be competitive in Kentucky with a candidate whose last name isn't Beshear. Trump won Kentucky by 26 points in 2020 and Paul had \$1.7 million in the bank on Dec. 31. Solid Republican.

**LOUISIANA.** John Kennedy (R) elected 2016 (60%). While Louisiana's other senator, Republican Bill Cassidy, celebrated his resounding 40-point 2020 victory by voting to convict former President Trump at his second impeachment trial, Kennedy has established himself as one of Trump's most vocal and quotable defenders in the Senate. In return, Trump, who won the state by nearly 20 points last fall, has already endorsed Kennedy in his 2022 race. Currently, there are no Democrats in the state's Congressional delegation — New Orleans Rep. Cedric Richmond took a senior White House role and the special election to fill his seat has yet to occur. Democrats in the state are gearing up for a redistricting battle in which they'll try to get a second majority-minority congressional seat (anchored in Baton Rouge), but that's just another indication of how inhospitable statewide races have become for ambitious Democrats. John Bel Edwards, the state's Democratic governor, won a narrow 51 percent re-election victory in 2019 but that result is a significant outlier given the state's overall partisan trend. Kennedy had \$5.7 million in his campaign account at the end of the year. Solid Republican.

**MARYLAND.** Chris Van Hollen (D) elected 2016 (61%). All the excitement in Maryland will be around the open gubernatorial



Chris Van Hollen

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

race, which could attract a half-dozen or more Democratic contenders. There is always the potential for term-limited GOP Gov. Larry Hogan to jump in the Senate race — a possibility Van Hollen's team takes seriously — but at the moment,

Hogan seems more interested in running for president in 2024 than he does launching what would be an uphill race against the senator. Hogan is popular, but even popular governors have struggled to win federal races when going against the partisan lean of the state, and Maryland just voted for Biden by 34 points, the largest margin of victory for any presidential candidate in state history.

In 2016, Van Hollen easily defeated state House Minority Whip Kathy Szeliga to replace retiring Democratic Sen. Barbara Mikulski. The incumbent had \$1.3 million in his campaign account at the end of the year. Solid Democratic.

**MISSOURI.** Open; Roy Blunt, R, not seeking re-election.

Blunt's decision not to run for a third term creates the possibility for a messy GOP primary. Former Republican Gov. Eric Greitens, who

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resigned from office in 2018 after allegations of sexual assault and financial impropriety against him led to an impeachment inquiry and several felony charges

(all of which were dropped), is running, and has some Republicans worried he could make an otherwise safe seat vulnerable due to his history. His main competition in the primary so far is state Attorney General Eric



Eric Greitens

Courtesy Missouri Governor's Office

Schmitt, who is working hard to present himself as the only candidate who can beat Greitens. Several members of the state's Congressional delegation, including Reps. Ann Wagner, Vicky Hartzler, Billy Long, and Jason Smith, are looking at the race as well. Wagner had wanted to run for the state's other seat in 2018 but was passed over in favor of Josh Hawley. She has just \$113,000 in her bank account following a competitive re-election campaign, but strong fundraising early this year is a likely indicator she's prepping to run for the Senate. Smith had more than \$1.5 million at his disposal at the end of the year and Long had \$475,000. 2016 gubernatorial candidate John Brunner, who famously feuded with Greitens that year, has been making noises about running as well. Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe says he wants to run for governor in 2024 instead.

Democratic state Sen. Scott Sifton was in the race before Blunt announced his retirement. Marine veteran Lucas Kuncie is running as a progressive Democrat. Former Sen. Claire McCaskill, who lost in 2018 to Hawley, has ruled out a bid, as has Jason Kander, the former state secretary of state who held Blunt to a 3-point victory in 2016. Nicole Galloway, the only statewide elected Democrat and the party's 2020 nominee for governor, has said she's running for re-election as auditor and had endorsed Sifton for Senate, though that was before Blunt's announcement. Former Gov. Jay Nixon may be Democrats' best hope at making this race competitive, and while he told the *St. Louis Times-Dispatch* that the Senate race is "not what I'm focused on right now," he did not rule out a run. Democrats have recruited several governors to run for Senate in red states over the last decade, with little success, so there's plenty of reason to be skeptical even if Nixon, who previously lost Senate races in 1988 and 1998, gets in the race. Solid Republican.

#### NEVADA. Catherine Cortez Masto (D) elected 2016 (47%).

Nevada is consistently close and competitive, although Democrats have won the recent elections that count (including Biden's 2-point win in November). Trump's gains with Hispanic voters could boost the GOP nominee if the president's coalition is transferable, and an angry midterm electorate focused on a Democratic president would boost Republican chances. The initial GOP frontrunner looks like former state attorney general Adam Laxalt, the son of former New Mexico Sen. Pete Domenici and grandson of former Nevada Sen. Paul Laxalt. Laxalt would be formidable in a primary because of his proximity to Trump, but it's unclear whether the 2018 gubernatorial nominee (he lost by 4 points) can outperform the former president enough to win. Other potential GOP candidates include former Lt. Gov. Mark Hutchison, Clark

County Sheriff Joe Lombardo, and state Sen. Ben Kieckhefer.

In 2016, Cortez Masto defeated GOP Rep. Joe Heck by 2 points while Hillary Clinton won by about the same margin. With \$3 million in the bank at the end of 2020, the senator starts this race in a strong position. It's unclear whether last month's fight for control of the state party will matter. In the race for party chairman, the candidate supported by Cortez Masto and former Senate majority leader Harry Reid lost to the candidate aligned with Bernie Sanders and the local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. Overall, the race is rated as a Battleground.

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE. Maggie Hassan (D) elected 2016 (48%).

The political world waits for GOP Gov. Chris Sununu to decide whether he will challenge the senator. If he does, the Granite State will host one



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Maggie Hassan

of the highest-profile Senate races in the country. While it looks like Sununu, who was just re-elected by 32 points in November to another two-year term, is better than a 50-50 chance to run, he doesn't appear to be in any hurry considering he has a

public platform already. Republicans are in the enviable position that if Sununu passes, they can try to convince former GOP Sen. Kelly Ayotte (who lost narrowly to Hassan) to try for a rematch. But it looks like the most likely scenario, at this early stage, is Sununu for Senate and Ayotte for the then-open governorship.

After a narrow Clinton win in 2016, New Hampshire was much better for Democrats in 2020, with a 7-point Biden win and Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's 15-point re-election victory. Democrats believe Sununu will struggle to make the jump to federal office as many governors have in the past. But New Hampshire could be different, considering Hassan was governor when she defeated Ayotte, the Granite State tends to swing with the national environment, and the midterms might not be friendly to the party in power in Washington. Hassan had \$2.3 million in the bank on Dec. 31, but this is going to be a competitive race. Battleground.

#### NEW YORK. Chuck Schumer (D) elected 1998 (55%), 2004

(71%), 2010 (66%), 2016 (70%). Talk of primarying the majority leader is not as loud as it once was on the left, for a few reasons. The focus in New York over the past month has been Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the ongoing investigation into sexual harassment allegations against him. With the embattled governor not just refusing to resign but indicating he will seek a record fourth term in office next year, finding a candidate to field against Cuomo is a higher priority for the left wing of the party than taking on Schumer (who could also be an important ally in a campaign against Cuomo, as he has called on the governor to step down).

Schumer is also coming off of a successful stretch in the Senate, having shepherded a \$1.9 trillion relief bill — which includes substantial expansions of the social safety net — through the evenly divided

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chamber. And while he may never score an invite to the weekly Brooklyn Democratic Socialists of America meeting, the Midwood native has been increasingly vocal on progressive priorities such as student debt cancellation and a \$15 minimum wage, and seems to appear at an event with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (a potential primary challenger) every other week. More to the point, Schumer had \$10.3 million in the bank at the end of the year, is a fearsome fundraiser, and carries more credibility across all areas of the state than any other Democrat. That should be enough to scare off most potential primary challengers, and in a state Biden won by 23 points last year, the Democratic primary would be the real contest. Solid Democratic.

**NORTH CAROLINA. Open; Richard Burr, R, not seeking re-election.** Democrats struck out in defeating GOP Sen. Thom Tillis in 2020 but that and

Trump's victory, is not deterring candidates from jumping into this open seat race. State Sen. Erica Smith, who lost the 2020 Democratic primary to former state Sen. Cal Cunningham, is running again but won't have

the field to herself. State Sen. Jeff Jackson, who is also a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, is in. And former state supreme court chief justice Cheri Beasley and retired astronaut Joan Higginbotham are seriously considering the race as well. Democratic sources don't believe Beasley and Higginbotham will both run, but in either case, a competitive primary looks inevitable. After Mark Kelly's election in Arizona in 2020, there's some Democratic excitement for space travelers running for office. But running for the Senate for your first election can be challenging and astronauts are not guaranteed victory; just ask Jose Hernandez of California.

On the Republican side, former Rep. Mark Walker is running but the race seems to be frozen by the potential candidacy of Lara Lea Trump. The president's daughter-in-law (she's married to Eric) is a North Carolina native, but has been living in New York. She was active on President Trump's campaign and just secured a contributor gig for Fox News. Normally, accepting a position like that might signal she's not running for the Senate. But it actually could be the best way to communicate to GOP primary voters. Former GOP Gov. Pat McCrory (who lost re-election in 2016) is considering the race as well. While it looks like there will be a Republican primary, and there's some questions about Lara Trump as a first-time candidate, there doesn't appear to be a toxic candidate who could torpedo GOP efforts to hold the seat. But Trump's and Tillis's narrow margins signal another close and competitive race next year. Battleground.

**NORTH DAKOTA. John Hoeven (R) elected 2010 (76%), 2016 (78%).** Hoeven had \$2.1 million in the bank on Dec. 31, Trump won the state by 34 points in November, and the senator appears to still be on the good side of the former president. That looks like a recipe for re-election. Solid Republican.

**OHIO. Open; Rob Portman, R, not seeking re-election.** Portman's announcement that he would not seek a third term caught Republicans in Ohio and D.C. by surprise. The GOP field has started to take shape,



Tim Ryan

with former state Treasurer / 2012 Senate nominee Josh Mandel looking like the early frontrunner. Mandel, who still has \$4 million in a federal account from an abandoned 2018 Senate run, is trying to reinvent himself in a Trumpian mold. He recently got

himself temporarily banned from Twitter after a tweet about "Muslim terrorists" and "Mexican gangbangers" violated the company's policy on "hateful conduct." But he doesn't have the field to himself. Former state GOP chair Jane Timken is running as well, and has been courting a Trump endorsement. Businessman / car dealership owner Bernie Moreno and investment banker Mike Gibbons are likely running as well. *Hillbilly Elegy* author JD Vance can count on \$10 million in Super PAC support from Paypal founder / Silicon Valley entrepreneur Peter Thiel if he runs, and a whole slew of current and former GOP officeholders could take a look at the race, from Reps. Steve Stivers and Mike Turner to former Rep. / 2018 Senate nominee Jim Renacci. One person not running: close Trump ally Rep. Jim Jordan.

On the Democratic side, the focus is on Rep. Tim Ryan, the Youngstown congressman who seems to consider a statewide bid every two years. With some key campaign hires, the congressman finally looks poised to make the jump. Former state health director Amy Acton is seriously considering the race as well. 314 Action Fund, which backs candidates with a science background, has committed \$5 million for an independent expenditure to boost her candidacy. Ryan had \$19,187 in his campaign account at the end of the year but says he raised \$1.2 million in the first quarter of 2021; he would be a strong contender for the nomination with support from organized labor.

While 2018 showed that at least one Democrat — Sen. Sherrod Brown — can win statewide, the burden of proof is on the party to show it can compete in a state that hasn't voted for a Democrat not named Sherrod Brown in a decade. Despite Biden looking competitive in the final stretch of the 2020 race, Trump won by 8 points. Solid Republican.

**OKLAHOMA. James Lankford (R) elected 2014 (68%), 2016 (68%).** After Trump's 33-point victory over Biden and GOP Sen. Jim Inhofe's 63-33 percent re-election win in 2020, any Lankford vulnerability would be in the primary. Jackson Lahmeyer announced his candidacy in March, arguing that the senator is not supportive enough of Trump. "I saw fear all over (Lankford) on Jan. 6, he caved in like an absolute coward and that let me know he is not the man to represent our state and the fight that our country is in right now," said Lahmeyer, lead pastor of Sheridan Church in Tulsa. Lankford planned to object to the ratification of the Electoral College votes on Jan. 6, and was speaking on the Senate floor when the chamber was evacuated because of the invasion. The senator dropped that objection when the Senate reconvened late that night. It remains to be seen whether Laymeyer can raise serious money

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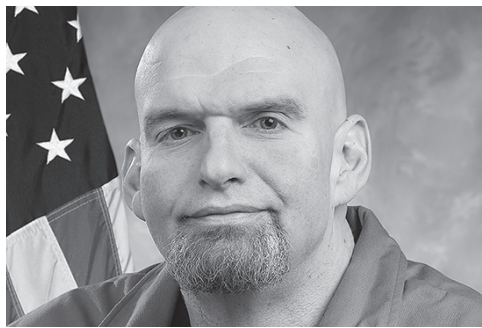


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and whether Trump gets involved — the former president has not paid much attention to Lankford lately. Lahmeyer has been endorsed by Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security advisor who is a favorite in the QAnon community. Lankford had \$913,000 in campaign funds on Dec. 31. Solid Republican.

**OREGON. Ron Wyden (D) elected Jan. 1996 (48%), 1998 (61%), 2004 (63%), 2010 (57%), 2016 (56%).** There's not much to say. Republicans haven't won a Senate race in Oregon in nearly 20 years. The most senior GOP member of the congressional delegation (Greg Walden) retired from the House last cycle and his successor just got started on the Hill. Republicans don't have any statewide elected officials and are in the minority in the state legislature. There just isn't a Republican bench. And Biden just won Oregon by 16 points in 2020. That means Wyden's 2022 vulnerability, if any, would be a primary. But the new chairman of the Senate Finance Committee had \$2.2 million in his campaign account on Dec. 31 and no clear enemies that might challenge him. Solid Democratic.

**PENNSYLVANIA. Open; Pat Toomey (R) not seeking re-election.** The race for Pennsylvania's open seat will help determine



John Fetterman

control of the Senate. Both parties appear destined for crowded primaries in the Keystone state, which Biden carried by less than a point and a half and Trump memorably won in 2016 en route to his upset victory.

So far, the

Democratic field includes Lt. Gov. John Fetterman and state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta; Val Arkoosh, the chairwoman of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and a 2014 13th District congressional candidate, is expected to join the field imminently. Fetterman, the 6'9" former mayor of Braddock, Pa. who previously ran for this seat in 2016, was the first to announce his candidacy and says he raised a massive \$3.9 million in the first quarter of 2021. Fetterman has a national following, but he'll have to answer for a 2013 incident in which he pulled a gun on an unarmed Black

jogger passing by his house he says he suspected of a crime. State Sen. Sharif Street, the son of former Philadelphia Mayor John Street, has filed paperwork for a run, and current Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney is also

considering it. The state has a deep Democratic congressional bench, and Reps. Conor Lamb, Madeleine Dean, Chrissy Houlahan, and Susan Wild are potential candidates. Since they all already have federal accounts that can be repurposed later for a Senate run, the sitting members have a little



Val Arkoosh

Courtesy Val Arkoosh

more time to see how redistricting plays out and understand what their 2022 options look like. State Attorney General Josh Shapiro looks set to run for governor.

On the Republican side, 2018 lieutenant governor nominee/former state party finance chair Jeff Bartos has announced his candidacy. He could be joined by any number of current and former officeholders, including former Rep. Ryan Costello, who would run as a more moderate alternative, former US Secretary of the Navy Kenneth Braithwaite, and former US Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania William McSwain. Reps. Mike Kelly, Dan Meuser, and Guy Reschenthaler look more likely to run for re-election or governor than the Senate at this point. But keep on an eye on former Army Ranger Sean Parnell, who lost a close race in the 17th District in 2020, and has ties to the Trump family.

There's a lot of race yet to be run, but there's little doubt this will be one of the most competitive races in the country this cycle. Battleground.

**SOUTH CAROLINA. Tim Scott (R) appointed 2013, elected 2014 (61%), 2016 (61%).** These days there seems to be more



Tim Scott

talk about Scott as a 2024 presidential or vice presidential contender than there is discussion about his re-election campaign. Last year, Democrats rallied behind Jaime Harrison in his race against Sen. Lindsey Graham, to the tune of \$130 million in

donations, but Harrison still lost by 10 points as Trump won by nearly a dozen points. Scott is better liked than Graham within the state, and inspires far less vitriol than Graham among Democratic donors and activists around the country. Democrats say to keep an eye on former Rep. Joe Cunningham, but of the various options he has (running for governor, trying to reclaim his old seat, running for Senate, or sticking with his new podcast), challenging Scott seems the least likely to happen. Scott had \$7.7 million in the bank at the end of the year, enough to ward off any potential primary challenge. Solid Republican.

**SOUTH DAKOTA. John Thune (R) elected 2004 (51%), 2010 (unopposed), 2016 (72%).** South Dakota's "Curse of Karl" holds that, ever since Sen. Karl Mundt refused to resign after suffering a debilitating stroke in 1969, no senator from the Mount Rushmore State has won four terms in office. Thune looks well-positioned to break that curse. The Senate Minority Whip drew sharp condemnation from Trump last year — the former president declared, "He will be primaried in 2022, political career over!!!" — but since then, no serious threat has emerged. Gov. Kristi Noem is running for re-election (with an eye to the 2024 presidential race), and Thune had \$13.4 million in the bank at the end of December, enough to scare off most GOP primary challengers. Trump won the state by 25 points, and Democrats haven't won a statewide race since 2008. Solid Republican.

**UTAH. Mike Lee (R) elected 2010 (62%), 2016 (68%).** The real contest in the Beehive State is for the GOP nomination — Trump

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defeated Biden by 20 points and Republicans held the governorship by 34 points — but Lee knows not to take anything for granted. The state’s senior senator himself ousted an incumbent, Bob Bennett, at the 2010 primary convention. Former state Rep. Becky Edwards, who served a decade in the state legislature, is seriously looking at running as a more moderate (read: less Trump-aligned) alternative to Lee. Unlike Bennett, Lee won’t be caught off guard, and his more conservative disposition makes him popular among the party faithful that are more likely to participate in conventions and primaries. Solid Republican.

**VERMONT.** Pat Leahy (D) elected 1974 (50%), 1980 (50%), 1986 (63%), 1992 (54%), 1998 (72%), 2004 (71%), 2010 (64%), 2016 (61%). If the 80-year-old Leahy seeks a ninth term, he’ll almost certainly win it. And if he serves just half of that term, he’ll be the longest-serving US Senator in history (he’s currently the fifth-longest tenured). Leahy had a health scare in January, when he was briefly hospitalized just hours after presiding over the first day of Trump’s second impeachment trial. Leahy has never had a close race, and Biden won Vermont last year by 35 points. Gov. Phil Scott, a liberal Republican who just won a third term, 69-28 percent, would be an intriguing candidate in an open seat race, but he’s shown little indication he’s interested, and Leahy appears to be headed for re-election at this point. Solid Democratic.



Patrick Leahy

Courtesy Lasry Campaign



Alex Lasry

Johnson, but it may be some time before we get an answer. Last time, Johnson waited until May of 2016 to announce he was running for re-election. He won a close race then against former Sen. Russ Feingold, a minor upset aided by Trump’s victory at the top of the ticket. This time, he has the distinction of being the only Republican running for re-election in a state Trump lost last year. Johnson has long been a target of Democrats’ ire, and his entertaining of discredited conspiracy theories in the wake of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection has only increased the antipathy toward the 65-year-old Wisconsinite. But Democrats haven’t yet landed a top-tier challenger. Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson, a former state Assemblyman who lost a 2016 race for Congress against Mike Gallagher, is running, as is Milwaukee Bucks executive Alex Lasry, the son of billionaire Bucks owner Marc Lasry. State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski is likely to join the field before too long. Rep. Mark Pocan ruled out a bid, but Rep. Ron Kind, one of the few Democrats left representing a district Trump won in 2020, is said to be thinking about it. And Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, a rising star in the state party, will continue to be mentioned until he makes clear his plans. But he looks more likely to forgo a Senate bid to stay a part of the gubernatorial ticket that is seeking re-election.

If Johnson doesn’t run, there could be a crowded GOP primary in his wake. Former Rep. Sean Duffy, Rep. Mike Gallagher, and 2018 Senate candidate Kevin Nicholson have all expressed interest. Regardless of whether the incumbent goes for a third term, this race will be a top contest for the duration of the cycle. Battleground.

IE

**WASHINGTON.** Patty Murray (D) elected 1992 (54%), 1998 (58%), 2004 (55%), 2010 (52%), 2016 (59%). The last Republican to win a Senate race in Washington was Slade Gorton in 1994. Since then, the GOP’s path to victory in federal statewide races has disappeared. Murray’s colleague Sen. Maria Cantwell was re-elected by 17 points in 2018, and Biden won the state by nearly 20 points in 2020. Republicans would need a heavyweight challenger and a great political environment to make this competitive. It is not clear who that challenger would be. Two of the three GOP members of the congressional delegation, Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler and Dan Newhouse, voted to impeach Trump after the Jan. 6 insurrection, and were admonished by the state Republican Party. The third, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, is in line to be chairwoman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee if Republicans take back the House in 2022. So there’s little incentive for her to risk that promotion for a difficult race. Washington conducts elections using a top-two primary system, so all candidates will appear on the same ballot, and the top two finishers will advance to the general election. Murray had \$3.5 million in her campaign account on Dec. 31 and looks set for re-election. Solid Democratic.

**WISCONSIN.** Ron Johnson (R) elected 2010 (52%), 2016 (50%). Will he or won’t he? That’s the question everyone is asking about

### Initial Senate Battlegrounds

Seats rated as vulnerable in January of the off-year

Cycle	Democratic held	Republican held	Total Battleground	Final Net Result
2022	4	4	8	
2020	4	6	10	D +3
2018	10	2	12	R +2
2016	2	10	12	D +2
2014	9	2	11	R +9
2012	11	3	14	D +2
2010	4	10	14	R +6
2008	2	5	7	D +8
2006	7	7	14	D +5
2004	7	4	11	D +4
2002	8	9	17	R +2
2000	6	10	16	D +4

Sources: The Rothenberg Political Report, The Rothenberg & Gonzales Political Report, Inside Elections