2018 Election Outlook
- Gubernatorial and State Legislative Races -

September 14, 2018
The GOP controls 33 governorships to Democrats 16. In Alaska, the governor is an independent. Republicans reached a historical high in August of 2017 when West Virginia Governor Jim Justice switched parties giving the GOP control of 34 seats, the most since 1922. However, in November of that year, Republicans lost the governorship in New Jersey formerly controlled by term-limited Chris Christie.

Republicans control 67 of 99 state legislative chambers.

Combined with governorships, 26 states have all three power bases for state government — both chambers and the governorship — in GOP control. Democrats have “trifecta” control in just eight states (CA, CT, DE, HI, NJ, OR, RI, WA). 16 states have split government.
Overall, the GOP holds a 33-16 edge in gubernatorial offices and will have more governorships to defend this year -- 26 to the Democrats’ nine.

23 of the 36 gubernatorial races this year are in Republican-held states, 12 of which (FL, GA, ID, ME, MI, NM, NV, OH, OK, SD, TN, WY) are open seats and additional four states (AL, IA, KS, and SC) have incumbents who took office without an election. Four Democrat seats (CA, CO, CT, MN) are open seats.

In state legislatures, 6,066 state legislative seats (82 percent of all seats) are up for regular elections with 46 states having scheduled legislative elections, and 87 out of 99 state legislative chambers. Overlapping with competitive gubernatorial contests, chambers in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, New York, and Wisconsin will be in play.

This year’s gubernatorial and state legislative races are especially critical, as Republicans now hold a record 26 state trifectas — meaning they control the executive branch and both state legislatures — and governors will play a role in their state’s congressional redistricting following the 2020 Census.

State Chambers in the Crosshairs: Among Republican-held state legislative chambers this year, the state Senate in Arizona, Colorado, Maine, New York, and Wisconsin are considered toss-ups while the Connecticut Senate, currently tied, is expected to go Democratic in November. The Arizona House and New Hampshire Senate are battlegrounds. Democrats have majorities that are at least theoretically endangered in the Maine House as well as the state Senates in Nevada and Washington State.
The GOP’s dominance at the state level over the past 10 years combined with this cycle’s challenging political environment underscores the assumption is that Republicans will be on the defensive looking to prevent widespread losses.

Like U.S. House and Senate races, governors’ races are not immune to mid-term election trends. In the 29 mid-term elections that have taken place since 1902, the party in power has lost seats in 26 of them, or 90 percent of the time. The average loss is 4.5 seats.

State legislative races also follow trends during midterm elections. The party holding the White House has lost state legislative seats in 27 out of the last 29 midterm elections with the losses averaging 375 seats nationwide. The GOP has already lost 43 state legislative seats since Trump took office in January 2017, the latest coming in Wisconsin.

One cause for optimism for the GOP, Democrats start off in a deep hole, in part because of Republican maps drawn in the 2011 redistricting, as well as population sorting—with Democratic voters naturally concentrated in urban areas and GOP voters more efficiently allocated around the country and within most states.

Consider: Even in the big wave years of 2006 and 2010, the net change in governorships was only six in favor of the wave-aided side (Democrats in 2006, Republicans in 2010).

What to Watch: Looking for a “blue wave” in November? Pay attention to gubernatorial races in MI, OH, IA, and WI – all states Trump carried in 2016. Looking for a big blue wave? Watch AZ and KS.

Consider: In 2010, Barack Obama’s first midterm, 23 chambers shifted from Democrat to Republican and another switched from Democratic-held to tied; no chambers flipped the other direction from Republican to Democrat.
State Primary Calendar

Last Updated: September 8, 2018

2018 calendar

- General election

November

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Nov 6: Election Day (& LA Primary*)

*All candidates are put on the same ballot regardless of party, and the top two candidates in vote share advance to the December 8th general. If a candidate wins a majority of the vote, that candidate wins the election outright.
### Cook Political Report: Race Ratings

**Last Updated: September 14, 2018**

#### Democrats | 9 Held Seats

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#### Republicans | 26 Held Seats

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**Notes:**
- (l) indicates a strong likelihood for the party in parentheses.
Races in Focus: The Toss-Ups
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Alaska is considered a top takeover target for Republicans with incumbent Independent Governor Bill Walker underwater in the polls – he is considered one of America’s least popular governors, according to Morning Consult. The race is becoming increasingly complicated with former U.S. Senator Mark Begich entering the race and filing to run on the Democratic ticket. Begich, a former Anchorage mayor, eked out a win over longtime Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens in 2008. He served one term in the Senate, losing a hard-fought, high-profile race to Republican Dan Sullivan in 2014. With Begich’s move, Walker will run as an independent. The move does allow him to run again as a team with Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott, a Democrat (winners of the party primaries for governor and lieutenant governor get paired up for the general election). Walker changed his party affiliation from Republican to undeclared in 2014 in joining forces with Mallott as part of a so-called unity ticket to upset then-Gov. Sean Parnell, a Republican. Former state Sen. Mike Dunleavy, who is known for his conservative views, won the Republican nomination. Looking ahead, Walker appears to be in a tough spot. Not only are his approval ratings underwater, he is also unlikely to receive any official Democrat backing – from the state party or otherwise – with Begich running as a Democrat. This was key to his upset over Parnell in 2014. Additionally, both parties nominated very credible candidates to run against him. Taking it all together, the door is open for a new governor in Alaska.

Republicans

- Mike J. Dunleavy
  (fmr. State Senator)

Democrats

- Mark Begich
  (former U.S. Senator)

Independents

- Bill Walker
  (incumbent)

State Legislature: With Alaska’s Senate safely in Republican hands, the Democrats look to maintain control of the House. In order to prevent a Republican supermajority, Democrats must not lose more than 5 seats across both chambers. Republicans are determined and motivated to obtain a supermajority.
Connecticut Toss-Up/Lean Democrat

Last Updated: September 5, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: This is one of the most Democratic states in the nation, but Republicans have a shot at winning this seat being vacated by two-term Democratic Gov. Dan Malloy. The state is in difficult financial shape; the budget deficit is significant enough to trigger a law requiring the Governor to take cost-cutting measures, and major employers like General Electric and Aetna are decamping for more business-friendly states with lower taxes. Not surprisingly, Malloy’s job approval numbers are underwater, which is why he chose not to seek a third term. For Democrats, Ned Lamont ran away with the Connecticut Democratic Party’s endorsement during the party’s convention and easily won the primary. Lamont, the former owner of a cable television company, also ran for governor in 2010, losing the Democratic nomination to Malloy. In 2006 he defeated then-US Senator Joe Lieberman in the Democratic primary election but lost the general election to Lieberman, who continued his campaign as an independent candidate. Businessman Bob Stefanowski won the republican primary. Stefanowski became the first petition candidate in Connecticut history to win a major party’s nomination for statewide office, besting the endorsed Republican, longtime Mayor Mark Boughton. The former UBS Investment Bank chief financial officer skipped the state GOP convention in May and most of the party-organized debates earlier this year. He instead saturated the television airwaves early to introduce himself to Republicans and won the five-way primary. Republicans have some momentum, but anti-Trump sentiments are high within the state – 67% of Connecticut voters disapprove of the President.

Republicans

• Bob Stefanowski
  (businessman)

Democrats

• Ned Lamont
  (nominee for U.S. Senate in ’06 and candidate for Governor in ’10)

State Legislature: There is a current tie in the State Senate (18-18) and Democrats hold an 8-seat lead (79-71) in the House. There are 4 open seats in the Senate with Republicans and Democrats going to-to-toe for the majority. Republicans gained 3 seats in 2016 to even the playing field and are determined to win the Senate majority and the governor’s seat. The House is rated as “Lean D” and Democrats feel comfortable with keeping the chamber. The key question about Connecticut voting patterns this fall will be who the electorate dislikes the most: Trump or two-term Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy.
Florida Toss-Up

Last Updated: September 6, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: This open-seat contest looks very different than it did just six months ago when the majority of polls showed the general election would be between former Democratic U.S. Rep. Gwen Graham and Republican state Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam. Both lost their respective primaries on August 28. Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum won the Democratic nomination, despite being heavily outspent. He is the state’s first African-American gubernatorial nominee. He beat Graham and Miami Mayor Phil Levine, who were consistently tied for the lead in the polls. Levine had much greater name recognition and was able to self-fund a significant portion of his campaign. Gillum announced primary rival Chris King will be his running mate – a choice that is appealing to the progressives who voted for Gillum. Democrats have not held the governor’s mansion since Buddy MacKay, who assumed the seat following the death of Lawton Chiles in 1998. The Republican nominee is U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis, whose endorsement from President Trump vaulted him ahead of Putnam, who had been the clear frontrunner for months.

Looking ahead, the general election outcome is uncertain if for no other reason than the fact that Florida is a notorious swing state. The primaries set up what will be one of the most polarized races in the country as DeSantis is as conservative as Gillum is progressive. Both candidates will energize their bases, but the ultimate victor in this race may be the candidate who can win over some of the voters in the middle. Something to consider is Florida’s growing Puerto Rican population. Over 200,000 Puerto Ricans have arrived in Florida since Hurricane Maria, and they overwhelmingly skew Democratic (Trump lost this voting bloc by 20+ points in 2016). This could play a significant role given the continued negative press of the Trump administration’s handling of the recovery and the last two presidential and gubernatorial campaigns in the state being decided by about 1 percentage point. It is worth noting, though, that Gov. Scott has aggressively looked to make inroads with the Puerto Rican community visiting the island multiple times. Whether this will benefit GOP gubernatorial nominee DeSantis is yet to be seen.

Republicans

- Ron DeSantis
  (U.S. Representative)

Democrats

- Andrew Gillum
  (Tallahassee mayor)

State Legislature: For the first time in a quarter-century, Florida Democrats have a genuine chance of seizing control of a state legislative chamber - and they're acting like it, contesting more seats than they have in recent election cycles. While the Democrats stand a good chance of picking up seats in both chambers, they'd have to make up too much ground in the House to make it genuinely competitive. The much closer Senate, though, should be in play. That said, the higher-profile Florida races on the ballot -- for governor and U.S. Senator -- could drain money and attention away from legislative races. It's also not clear that the Democratic nominee for either office will have strong enough coattails to bring a new legislative majority with them. Not even Barack Obama was able to pull that off when he won the state twice. With that being said, Republicans have a modest edge to keep control of the Senate. Florida's House is projected "Likely" for Republicans and the Senate is projected "Lean" toward the GOP in November.
Georgia Toss-Up

Last Updated: September 14, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp defeated Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle in a July 24th runoff for the GOP nomination for Georgia governor. Cagle and Kemp beat three GOP rivals in the May 22nd primaries in a race characterized by strong support for gun rights and tough talk on immigration. But no candidate got more than 50 percent of the vote as required to win the nomination outright. Kemp will face former state Rep. Stacey Abrams, who easily won the Democratic primary race over State Rep. Stacey Evans. Abrams is the state’s first woman nominee for governor from either major party, and if she wins the general election in November, she will become the first black female governor in the U.S. Abrams has garnered major party endorsements including Hillary Clinton, U.S. Rep. John Lewis and U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders. Abrams’s candidacy will test Georgia politics and perhaps national politics as well. While Evans ran a more moderate campaign, Abrams staked her fortunes on maximizing minority turnout—a tactic she will look to replicate come November. Georgia has favorable demographics for such a strategy (it is 47 percent non-white). However, most pundits believe that the governor’s mansion is the GOP’s to lose despite the national media attention Abrams has and continues to generate. That and her fundraising abilities—Abrams reported raising roughly $2.75 million in the latest quarter and has about $1.5 million cash-on-hand, a figure nearly double the amount her campaign previously reported. To date, Abrams has taken in over $6 million, with out of state money pouring in. Recent polls show the candidates deadlocked at 45 percent, with just eight percent undecided and two percent supporting Libertarian Ted Metz. While Democrats have made inroads in the state, largely in suburban areas, and have performed well in a handful of recent statewide races, the state’s changing demographics have not necessarily represented a shift to people likely to vote Democrat. It cannot be discounted that no Democrat has won a gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, or presidential contest in Georgia since 2000. It is worth remembering that Georgia still holds general election run-offs. If no candidate gets 50 percent of the vote, the top two will proceed to a run-off on December 4th.

Republican

- Brian Kemp (Secretary of State)

Democrat

- Stacey Abrams (former U.S. Congresswoman)

Independent

- Ted Metz (Libertarian)

State Legislature: It’s reasonable to expect some Democratic gains this fall, especially in the Atlanta suburbs. Still, the margins in Georgia are too wide for Democrats to be optimistic about flipping either chamber in 2018. Republicans hold a large majority in the house (115 – 64) and the Senate (37 – 19). Both Georgia’s House and Senate are projected as “Likely” Republican.
Iowa  Toss-Up/Leans Republican

Last Updated: June 18, 2018

Analysis: Republican Kim Reynolds was sworn in as Iowa’s first female Governor on May 24, 2017 after long-time Gov. Terry Branstad resigned to become the U.S. Ambassador to China. She had served as Lieutenant Governor since 2011. Running for her first full term, she ran unopposed and secured the Republican nomination. Fred Hubbell, a wealthy 67 year-old businessman who continues to devote significant personal resources to his campaign, secured the Democratic nomination edging out several contenders, including Nate Boulton, the State Senate Minority Leader who was forced to suspend his campaign over sexual misconduct allegations. Many expect a competitive general election given that this is Reynolds’ first run for governor combined with the perception of Hubbell as a moderate problem solver, a fact highlighted by the Des Moines Register’s endorsement of Hubbell in the Democratic primary. Both Reynolds and Hubbell have proved they can be prolific fundraisers, and pundits expect that the race will shatter spending records. Reynolds, though, starts the general election fundraising race with a significant head start ($4+ million cash-on-hand) because she did not face a primary challenge. One disadvantage for Hubbell and Democrats, who are also looking to make gains in the state legislature, is the fact that the Hawkeye State has been trending Republican since 2012. Entering that year, Iowa was a classic battleground state, with one senator from each party, a governorship that had gone back and forth since 1998, a legislature with control divided between the two parties, and a three-Democrat, two-Republican House delegation. Much has changed since then – in he 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, the state had the largest shift in popular votes from D +6 to R +9. One x factor to consider, though, is ongoing trade disputes with China and elsewhere. A heavy agricultural exporter, a protracted trade war could significantly influence this election. Some estimates show Iowa farmers could lose upwards of $600 million depending on how long tariffs and other retaliatory measures are in place.

Republicans

- Kim Reynolds  
  (*incumbent*)

Democrats

- Fred Hubbell  
  (*businessman*)

Libertarian

- Jake Porter  
  (*Nominee for Sec. of State*)

State Legislature: Iowa is one of the 26 states that have a Republican trifecta. Republicans currently hold a 28-20 lead in the Senate and a 59-41 margin in the House. While this may look like a monumental margin, Republicans should not be conceited with their lead. The GOP remains favored in the House -- the more vulnerable of Iowa's two chambers -- but Democratic enthusiasm and several retirements could make it interesting. While Republicans gained 2 House seats in 2016, they now look like they are playing defense.
Maine Toss-Up

Last Updated: June 27, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Maine became the first state to use ranked-choice voting statewide, and while there was some confusion who the Democrat nominee would be, the race is set now. Shawn Moody, a Republican businessman who previously ran as an independent in 2010, will square off against Democrat Attorney General Janet Mills. While Moody easily captured the GOP nomination defeating two state lawmakers and a former member of Governor Lepage’s inner circle, Mills initially fell short of the 50 percent threshold to claim the Democratic nomination. After days of scanning, downloading and certifying ballots, the Secretary of State’s Office ran all of the results from the June 12 election through the ranked-choice voting tabulation software, and Mills came out on top of the seven-person primary with 54.1 percent of the vote followed by veteran and attorney Adam Cote with 45.9 percent (the margin was just 9,500 votes). Looking ahead, Democrats believe that Maine is a prime pick-up opportunity with voters desiring a change after eight years of Republican control under outgoing governor Paul LePage. LePage won both of his gubernatorial races with just a plurality of the vote – 38.1 percent in 2010 and 48.2 percent in 2014. An optimistic sign for them, about 30,000 more voters cast their ballot in the Democratic primary compared to the Republican one. Still, Democrats face a complicated hurdle with the presence of a very credible independent candidate in state Treasurer Terry Hayes. If elected, Hayes would become the third independent to be elected governor of Maine in the past half-century. In the past two gubernatorial contests, a credible left of center independent candidate hurt Democrats’ chances in the general election.

Republicans

• Shawn Moody
  (independent candidate for Governor in ’10)

Democrats

• Janet Mills
  (ME Attorney General)

Independents

• Terry Hayes
  (State Treasurer)

State Legislature: Republicans currently hold a 18-17 lead in the State Senate while Democrats hold a 74-70 lead in the House. Democrats are quite optimistic of flipping the Senate and keeping the House. What's complicated is that there are several credible third-party contenders. Given the uncertainty, Maine's Senate is considered a tossup and the House is leaning Democratic. Maine's chamber flipped party control three times between 2010 and 2014. It flipped from Democratic to Republican control in 2010, back to Democratic control in 2012, and then to Republican control in 2014. With that being said, Maine is up for grabs and both parties are trying to take full control of the chamber.
General Election: November 6, 2018

**Analysis:** Democrats have this Republican-held open seat high on their list of targets this cycle. The establishment favorite, former state Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer won the democratic primary. Whitmer beat former Detroit health official Abdul El-Sayed by a large margin, despite El-Sayed’s national attention and endorsements by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Bernie Sanders. On the Republican side, Attorney General Bill Schuette, who President Trump endorsed in the primary, won the nomination over Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley. Michigan’s current republican Governor, Rick Snyder, has not backed Schuette. Recently asked if Schuette would be the best choice, Gov. Snyder said, “Voters should look at which candidate would maintain the changes the governor has made in Michigan.” This is not too surprising, as Schuette filed criminal charges against much of Snyder’s administration in connection with the Flint water crisis. With the two gubernatorial candidates officially decided, many macro factors in play (like President Trump’s approval rating, which has fallen in the state) still make it too difficult to call the race. Moreover, polling shows that over 20 percent of registered voters remain undecided. Schuette selected Lisa Posthumus Lyons as his running mate. Lyons represented state HD 86 from 2010-2016 and is the daughter of former Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus. Democratic opponent Gretchen Whitmer announced her running mate will be Detroit activist Garlin Gilchrist. It is worth noting that Michigan voters have not typically given one party control of the governor’s office for three consecutive terms. The last time that occurred was with former governor William Milliken, who served four consecutive terms before term limits were adopted.

**Republicans**

- Bill Schuette  
  *(MI Attorney General)*

**Democrats**

- Gretchen Whitmer  
  *(fmr. Minority Leader of the Michigan Senate)*

**State Legislature:** The Republicans currently hold a 27-10 lead in the Senate and a 63-46 lead in the House. Democrats need to gain two seats in 2018 to break up the Republicans’ veto-proof majority in the Senate. The Michigan House was recently rated as "Lean Republican" and the Senate was rated "Likely Republican". In the House, a smaller percentage of seats are open, but there are about an equal number of seats that are marginally Democratic and marginally Republican, boosting the Democrats’ odds of seizing the lower chamber. In the Senate, 27 of 38 seats will be open due to term limits, most of them Republican.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Republican state Attorney General Adam Laxalt will face Democrat Steve Sisolak in November's election to replace Nevada's term-limited Gov. Brian Sandoval. The 39-year-old Laxalt, who was the youngest attorney general in the U.S. when elected in 2014, defeated state Treasurer Dan Schwartz along with a handful of other lesser-known candidates to secure the GOP nomination. Sisolak, who had the backing of influential former U.S. Senator Harry Reid, edged out Chris Giunchigliani, who had the backing of Hillary Clinton, after a bitter primary to win the Democratic primary. The Democratic nominee, who has pledged to stand up to President Trump and the National Rifle Association. Though Republicans have held the governorship since 1998, Democrats believe they are poised for a pickup opportunity. Additionally, Governor Sandoval recent publicly stated that he does not plan to make an endorsement in the race to succeed him as governor. Since 2016, Democrats have flipped both Houses of the state legislature. And national democrats are investing significant resources to flip the U.S. Senate seat – held by Republican Dean Heller – this fall. Heller faces a competitive challenge from Democrat Jacky Rosen in a race that is drawing national attention and resources to the state. Voting demographics also appear to favor Democrats. The number of active registered Democratic voters in Nevada is now 38.3 percent compared to 34.2 percent for Republicans.

Republicans

- Adam Laxalt  
  (NV Attorney General)

Democrats

- Steve Sisolak  
  (Chair of the Clark County Commission)

Non-Partisan

- Ryan Bundy  
  (Rancher & state's rights activist)

State Legislature: While Democrats have only a one seat lead on Republicans in the State Senate, they feel very comfortable with keeping the majority. The State Senate is rated as "Likely D". In the House, Democrats have a demanding 27-15 lead over the Republicans. Despite this lead, Republicans are looking to gain back some seats, but it will most likely be insufficient in taking the majority.
Ohio Lean Republican
Last Updated: September 7, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: This is yet another open Republican-held seat that is high on both parties’ target lists. By the time incumbent Gov. John Kasich leaves office in January of 2019, Republicans will have held the governorship for 24 of the last 28 years. In the era of Trump, Democrats believe they have a shot at breaking Republicans’ streak. Richard Cordray, former Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and former OH Attorney General beat out his five Democratic opponents by winning 62.3% of the primary vote. Cordray is something of a hero to progressive Democrats as the first director of the agency established as part of the Dodd-Frank financial services reform law, although his tenure will provide Republicans with plenty of fodder. The roll out of his campaign was less than smooth, leading some observers to question whether he would be the strongest general election candidate. Republican Ohio Attorney General, Mike DeWine, defeated his primary challenger, Lt. Governor Mary Taylor, setting up another head-to-head matchup with Cordray. General DeWine knocked Cordray out of his AG position in the 2010 election, which led to Cordray’s appointment at the CFPB. DeWine has the advantage of better statewide name ID and also has the backing of U.S. President Donald Trump, who endorsed DeWine a day after the primary. He also has a large financial advantage with $4.1 million more cash-on-hand than Cordray ($11 to $7.1 million), according to the most recent fundraising reports. Despite these advantages though, polling shows a tight (and costly) race. One study estimates that the cost of the race will hit $28.7 million before it’s over. Polls conducted by both Quinnipiac University and the University of Cincinnati give leads to Rich Corday.

Republicans

- Mike DeWine
  (OH Attorney General)

Democrats

- Richard Cordray
  (fmr. CFPB Director and OH Attorney General)

State Legislature: Heading into the 2018 elections, Republicans have a longstanding majority in the Ohio General Assembly, controlling both chambers in most years from 1990 to 2017. A three-fifths majority — 20 Senate seats and 60 House seats — allows for an override of a gubernatorial veto. Republicans have a projected “Safe” majority in the Senate with a 24-9 lead over Democrats. In the House, the Republicans have a projected “Likely” majority with a 66-33 seat advantage over the Democrats. While this margin looks substantial, the House is more vulnerable because of recent scandals and leadership squabbles. But the GOP edge in the House is wide and should be able to survive even a sizable Democratic wave.
Wisconsin Toss-Up

Last Updated: September 14, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Republican Gov. Scott Walker is seeking a third term. Between his first gubernatorial election in 2010, a recall election in 2012, the race for a second term in 2014 and his unsuccessful bid for the GOP presidential nominee, Walker is about as tested a candidate as any incumbent Governor seeking re-election in 2018. He is a strong fundraiser and, as evidenced by his party’s successes in 2016, has built and maintained a solid grassroots organization. Democrats lined up a large field of candidates to take him on in November. State Superintendent Tony Evers won the primary, and while he was the most familiar face of the Democratic candidates, name recognition is perhaps the Democrat’s biggest problem. According to a June Marquette poll, 61% of voters hadn’t heard enough about Evers to decide what to make of him. But while President Trump carried the state in 2016 – the first time since 1988 that Republicans got the state’s electoral votes – results for the GOP have not been positive since then with Democrats flipping two state legislative seats and a seat on the State Supreme Court. In January, Democrats flipped a rural Trump +17 state district with a comfortable 10-point margin of victory — a loss Gov. Scott Walker called “a wake-up call for Republicans in Wisconsin.” Democrats also won a seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court by a huge margin in April. More recently, Democrats picked up a State Senate seat that the GOP had controlled for more than 40 years. Heavily focused on education, this race is expected to be one of the closest gubernatorial contests in country in November, and the Democratic and Republican governors associations have each reserved millions of dollars of television ad time. More than $7 million in advertising had flooded into the Wisconsin governor’s race in the week following the primary. The spending shows the race is living up to expectations that it will be one of the most expensive and hardest fought in the country, as Democrats try to knock off one of their top targets in an Upper Midwestern state that was integral to President Donald Trump’s victory in 2016. Organizing for Action (OFA), a non-profit aligned with Barack Obama and driven by former Attorney General Eric Holder, has identified Walker’s office as a priority takeover target.

Republican

• Scott Walker
  (Incumbent)

Democrat

• Tony Evers
  (State Superintendent)

State Legislature: Republicans currently hold a trifecta in the Badger state, the GOP holds a 18-15 lead in the State Senate which has been projected as "Lean Republican". Democrats remain optimistic about their chances. By contrast, the GOP’s margin in the Assembly should be large enough to hold, despite the possibility of some modest losses.
Races in Focus: Competitive
Arizona Likely Republican

Last Updated: September 5, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Incumbent Republican Governor Doug Ducey officially launched his reelection campaign on June 18th following a tumultuous legislative session highlighted by extended teacher protests. The “Red for Ed” movement and corresponding teachers strike that closed schools across the state were new for Ducey. As he was working to ink a budget deal, tens of thousands of crimson-clad educators protested outside his office. Ultimately the governor was able to hammer out a deal to boost Arizona’s average teacher pay by 19 percent over the next three years; but in doing so, he drew a primary challenge from former Secretary of State Ken Bennett, who called Ducey’s plan “fiscally irresponsible.” However, Ducey easily won the primary with 71 percent of the vote.

For Democrats, who see a potential upset opportunity by building on the unrest this past legislative session, U.S. Army veteran David Garcia won the party’s nomination and the right to challenge Ducey in the fall. The big question in this race is whether the anticipated “blue wave” will be enough to topple Ducey, who is well-outpacing his Democrat challengers in fundraising. Democrats argue that Arizona is becoming a blue state, pointing to close races, like Donald Trump’s four-point victory in 2016 and U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake’s three-point win in 2012. Democrats don’t think Ducey has done nearly enough for education funding; that will be a central issue in Garcia’s campaign. Republicans argue that Ducey has a solid record on which to run and that Garcia is far too liberal for the state, citing is positions on immigration (abolishing ICE) and health care (universal). Also running in the gubernatorial race is Libertarian candidate Kevin McCormick. This race may become competitive in the coming months, but currently it remains in the Likely Republican column.

Republicans
- Doug Ducey (Incumbent)

Democrats
- David Garcia (U.S. Army Veteran)

State Legislature: Democrats are three seats away from flipping the Arizona Senate, and they feel good about Democratic voter enthusiasm. But to take control, they would have to unseat some battle-tested Republican lawmakers. They may be able to do it by seizing on education and teacher pay, an issue that Democrats have found resonant in states even redder than Arizona. The House, on the other hand, is projected as "Likely" Republican because of their 5-seat lead. Look for Democrats to try and take the Arizona Senate and eat away at Republican majority in the House.
Colorado Lean Democrat

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Colorado’s primary delivered a left-versus-Trump showdown for this year’s gubernatorial election - Democratic U.S. Rep. Jared Polis will square off against Republican state Treasurer Walker Stapleton for a seat that Republicans have not held in this purple state in more than a decade. Polis is a liberal five-term congressman, who has been a fierce critic of the Trump administration’s immigration policies and efforts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. He defeated several other candidates, including former State Treasurer Cary Kennedy, who many saw as a competitive candidate behind the backing of the state’s powerful teachers unions. Polis is outspoken in support of Medicare-for-All, a load-bearing pillar of universal health care. A similarly purposed Amendment 69, the so-called ColoradoCare single-payer plan, lost by a 4-1 margin, just two years ago. For his part, Stapleton, a distant relative of President George W. Bush, embraced President Donald Trump’s immigration and tax policies on the campaign trail and beat out three other candidates, including former state Rep. Vic Mitchell, who invested nearly $5 million in his own campaign. Looking ahead, the race will likely be the most expensive gubernatorial contest in the state’s history. In the primary alone, the eight contenders and the super PACs supporting them reached $35.5 million worth of spending. The $25 million spent personally by candidates is more than the total spent by candidates in both the 2010 and 2014 governor’s races combined.

As a Democrat, Polis is an early, though far from guaranteed, favorite to become the state’s next governor. Colorado’s last Republican governor was Bill Owens, who served from 1999 to 2007. Much, though, will depend on voter perceptions with President Trump, with whom Stapleton has strongly identified his campaign with. Problematic for Stapleton, polls show Trump underwater among Colorado’s independent voters, who comprise the state’s largest voting bloc. Of note, this was the first cycle allowing for the participation of independent voters in primary elections without having to declare affiliation with any major party. If elected, Polis would become the nation’s first openly gay governor.

Democrat

• Jared Polis
  (U.S. Congressman)

Republican

• Walker Stapleton
  (State Treasurer)

State Legislature: The Colorado State Senate is held by Republicans with a 18-16 lead over Democrat legislators. The election has been rated as a "Tossup" and Democrats are determined to take the Senate. Democrats currently hold a 36-29 lead in the House, which is projected as "Lean" Democratic.
Illinois  Likely Democrat
Last Updated: August 9, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

**Analysis:** There is little doubt that Republican Gov. **Bruce Rauner** is the most vulnerable incumbent up for re-election next year. Not only is he a Republican in a very blue state, but Rauner also spent most of the first three years of his term locked in a protracted battle with House Speaker Mike Madigan and the Democratic-controlled state legislature over the budget. In the Republican primary, Rauner eked out a 51-percent to 49-percent primary victory over state Rep. Jeanne Ives. Ives’ late surge in the primary can be attributed largely to a multi-million dollar contribution from conservative donor Robert Uihlein and Democratic Governors Association-sponsored television ads touting Ives as a true conservative in the primary. Billionaire **J.B. Pritzker** won the Democratic nomination with 45 percent of the vote in a seven-way field. That victory came with a $70 million price tag; $34 million of was spent on advertising. The Illinois Campaign for Political Reform already puts total raised funds between Rauner and Pritzker at more than $180 million and it is expected to be the most expensive governor’s race in US history. Looking ahead, most pundits consider this race Pritzker’s to lose given that its in a Democratic state in what is perceived to be a Democratic year. Polling seems to support this perception with some showing Rauner down double digits. Rauner’s path to re-election got more complicated on April 19th when Republican state senator **Sam McCann** launched a third party bid for governor as an “independent conservative.” Some have speculated that McCann’s entry was driven in part by longtime Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan, with whom McGann is close to. McCann, who represents a central Illinois district, enjoys the support of organized labor and has battled for years with the governor over union issues. Having a conservative on the ballot in the general election threatens to take Republican votes away from Rauner in an already difficult climate. This is the factor that moves this race into the **Likely Democrat** column.

**Republican**
- **Bruce Rauner**  
  *(incumbent)*

**Independent**
- **Sam McCann**  
  *(GOP State Senator)*

**Democrat**
- **J. B. Pritzker**  
  *(venture capitalist and philanthropist)*

**State Legislature:** Both chambers in Illinois are rated as "Safe" for Democrats. In Illinois, three-fifths of the state legislature is required to override a gubernatorial veto. The Democratic Party holds more than three-fifths of the seats in the Illinois State Senate with its 37-22 majority, but its 66-51 majority in the Illinois House of Representatives falls short of this threshold, so the Democratic party does not have the ability to override gubernatorial vetoes.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: The U.S. Senate confirmed Republican Gov. Sam Brownback as Ambassador-At-Large for international religious freedom in January 2018. As a result, he resigned on January 31, and Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer was sworn in as the new Governor. Colyer entered the governor’s race to win a full term with several other republican candidates. President Trump made a late endorsement of Secretary of State Kris Kobach which helped put him ahead of Colyer by 191 votes after the votes were counted in the August 7th GOP primary. By the end of the day on August 14th, Kobach’s lead had expanded to 345 votes. On August 15th, Colyer conceded the primary to Kobach.

Kobach, a law professor with degrees from Harvard, Yale, and Oxford, first went to work in President George W. Bush’s administration in 2001. While an early supporter of President Trump’s, he was passed over for cabinet jobs but made the vice chairman of a voter fraud commission that was later disbanded without finding proof of election rigging. Kobach’s victory concerns many GOP strategists who consider him to be a flawed candidate because of his controversial views on immigration and election integrity. Kobach was also been a vocal supporter of former Governor Sam Brownback who was deeply unpopular by the time he left office. State Senator Laura Kelly won the democratic nomination with 52% of the vote. Recently, former moderate Republican Governor Bill Graves (1995–2003) endorsed Kelly. There is uncertainty over the impact of Greg Orman, a businessman who is running as an independent, will have in the election. Orman previously ran for the U.S. Senate in 2014 in an unexpectedly close race against long-time incumbent Pat Roberts. While Orman could siphon votes away from Kelly, he is also likely to win over some Republican votes, especially from Colyer supporters looking for an alternative to Kobach. Although Kansas is a deep red state, Kobach is controversial enough to move this race to the Lean Republican or even the Toss-Up column.

Republicans

- Kris Kobach
  (KS Secretary of State)

Democrats

- Laura Kelly
  (State Senator)

State Legislature: Both houses are safe Republican.
Minnesota Lean Democrat
Last Updated: August 15, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton opted not to seek a third term, creating a free-for-all in both parties for the right to succeed him. For Republicans, Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson, the party nominee, defeated former governor Tim Pawlenty in the Republican primary. Pawlenty had been seen as the front-runner thanks to much higher name recognition and a vast fundraising advantage. According to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Pawlenty said, “The Republican Party has shifted – it is the era of Trump and I’m just not a Trump-like politician” after losing the primary. Pawlenty was critical of Trump during his campaign in 2016. U.S. Rep. Tim Walz won the Democratic primary. Looking ahead, Democrats say that they are confident that they can hold the seat given Dayton’s largely successful tenure; however, it would be unusual for Minnesotans to give Democrats a third consecutive gubernatorial term especially given President Trump’s surprisingly narrow loss in the state in 2016. Republicans contend that if the results of the 2016 election proved anything, it is that Minnesota remains a swing state and that voters are ready for change after eight years of Democratic leadership. At this point, neither party has a major advantage, but the race is in the Lean Democrat column.

Republicans
- Jeff Johnson
  (Hennepin Co. Commissioner)

Democrats
- Tim Walz
  (U.S. Representative)

State Legislature: Republicans hold a 1 seat lead in the State Senate, but the chamber will not be contested this year. In the House, Republicans have a sizeable margin over the Democrats and the chamber is projected as "Likely R". Republicans will focus most of their attention on winning the Governor's race and keeping the House.
New Mexico  Lean Democrat

Last Updated: September 7, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: As expected, U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham won the Democratic primary for governor. The most recent poll conducted before the election showed Lujan Grisham more than 40 points ahead of former television executive and son of a past New Mexico governor, Jeff Apodaca. Apodaca has since endorsed the GOP nominee. Grisham campaigned on making a clean break with the state's Republican administration to dramatically expand early childhood education, boost public and private investment in renewable energy, and make it easier for immigrants in the country illegally and others to obtain state driving credentials. U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce ran unopposed for the Republican nod and moved on to November's general election. In the general election, Democrats are hoping to reclaim the state’s top office after two terms of GOP control. If turnout during the primary is any indication, they may well be on their way. Democrats in the nation's most Hispanic state accounted for about two-thirds of Election Day balloting. Democrats also enjoy a +15 percentage margin among registered voters, and Hillary Clinton carried the state by 8 points in 2016. Still, Republicans believe that they can extend their party's tenure in the governor’s mansion for another term behind Pearce, a conservative U.S. Congressman who is a member of the House Freedom Caucus. Pearce has proven adept at fundraising, and his campaign currently leads that of Grisham. His campaign reported having $1.9 million cash-on-hand to Grisham's $870,000. Pearce also has a history of winning in heavily Hispanic and Democratic congressional districts. Moreover, Grisham emerges from the Democratic primary surrounded in controversy over her healthcare record. Already the Republican Governors Association has released a new ad and newly launched website targeting Grisham on her health care consulting work. Looking ahead, Grisham is still the favorite – a recent poll has her up 10 points – though much could change before election day.

Republican

- Steve Pearce
  (US Congressman)

Democrat

- Michelle Lujan Grisham
  (US Congresswoman)

State Legislature: Recent polling suggests voters in New Mexico will make the state a Democrat trifecta. Democrats currently control the State House and Senate with both projected as "Safe" for Democrats in 2018.
Oklahoma Likely Republican
Last Updated: September 7, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: On June 26, Oklahoma voters winnowed a crowded field of candidates seeking the state’s top job, but the race for the Republican nomination required an August runoff as none of the ten GOP candidates were able to get the 50 percent needed. Businessman Kevin Stitt won the runoff on August 28th with 55 percent to 45 percent for Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett. Governor Mary Fallin is very unpopular and a majority of voters are not happy with the direction of the state. In Stitt, they chose a conservative political outsider with a business background.

On the Democratic side of the race, former four-term state Attorney General Drew Edmondson, 71, secured the nomination over ex-state Sen. Connie Johnson, outspoken marijuana advocate and the party’s nominee for the U.S. Senate in 2014. Edmondson was the clear favorite having more than 20 times the campaign contributions than Johnson. Three Libertarian candidates also will be on the ballot, including Joe Exotic, a mullet-wearing exotic animal trainer from Wynnewood known for his videos featuring foul-mouthed criticism of Oklahoma elected officials. Looking ahead, Edmondson’s popularity is likely to make this a more competitive race for Democrats than Republicans are accustomed to. However, Republicans can rest assured that they will likely keep control of the governor’s mansion for another term. The state is among the most Republican states in the nation. President Trump took 65 percent in 2016, and Republicans dominate statewide offices, the congressional delegation, and the state legislature.

Republican
• Kevin Stitt
  (Businessman)

Democrat
• Drew Edmondson
  (former Attorney General)

Independent
• Joe Exotic
  (Animal trainer)

State Legislature: The Oklahoma Senate is certain to stay in Republican hands, with only 24 of 48 seats up this cycle and a big GOP edge. But dissatisfaction with GOP Gov. Mary Fallin has been brewing, and a battle over education funding has energized Democrats. If any Democratic gains are to materialize, it’s likelier to happen the House. Twelve Republican incumbents — 11 from the House — lost either a primary or runoff this summer. The most cited reason involves the House members who voted against House tax package that legislative leaders said was necessary to pay for teacher and public employee pay increases. Of the 19 to vote against it, at least 15 won’t be back next year. Still, Republican dominance does not seem to be seriously threatened. While the State Senate is projected “Safe” for Republicans, the State House is projected “Likely” for the GOP this Fall.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Incumbent Democrat Kate Brown cruised to an easy primary victory over nominal opposition. She is seeking her first full term after being elected in 2016 to serve the remainder of John Kitzhaber’s term. In the general election, Brown will face Knute Buehler, a moderate Republican from Bend, who handily beat back challenges from two more conservative opponents. This will be a rematch between the two who faced each other in the 2012 Secretary of State race, a contest Brown won. Patrick Starnes, running as an independent, will also appear on the ballot. Looking towards the general election, Oregon could well-be a pick-up opportunity for the GOP. Not only do Republicans tend to perform better in statewide races in this Democratic-leaning state in mid-term election years, the state’s fiscal woes, including a substantial budget deficit, have caused Brown’s approval numbers to drop precipitously from near 60 percent to the low 40’s. Therefore this race has recently moved into the lean democrat column. While Brown has a financial advantage over Buehler - $4.6 million to less than $1 million – Buehler has the backing of Phil Knight, the co-founder and chairman of Nike, and several other prominent donors in the state.

Republican
- Knute Buehler
  (Physician)

Democrat
- Kate Brown
  (Incumbent)

Independent
- Patrick Starnes
  (Cabinetmaker)

State Legislature: Democrats in Oregon are focused on securing the one seat in each chamber that they need to gain a three-fifths supermajority. Going in the Democrats’ favor is that the most competitive seats are in districts where Republican incumbents are leaving and where Democrats have been gaining ground. Both the Senate and House are projected as "Safe" for Democrats in 2018. Republicans are focused on keeping the seats they have and pulling off a miracle for the governorship.
Rhode Island  
Lean Democrat  

Last Updated: September 13, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Incumbent Democratic Governor Gina Raimondo Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo handily beat back a challenge from former Secretary of State Matt Brown, who ran to her left. The Governor has struggled with a low approval rating after winning a three-way race with just 41% of the vote in 2014. Raimondo has been highlighting the improving economy and a free college tuition program. Even so, many voters and public sector unions say they’re disappointed in her tough pension reforms as well as close corporate ties including using tax incentives to lure business to Rhode Island.

On the other side, Cranston Mayor Allan Fung won the Republican primary over state Rep. Patricia Morgan. The results set up a rematch of the 2014 gubernatorial election, in which Raimondo beat Fung by 4 points, with a third-party candidate drawing about 20 percent of the vote. The general election could very well be close, particularly if Brown decides to run as an independent. However, Raimondo is better equipped financially than her opponents and enjoys the advantages of incumbency in a year that is shaping up to be a good one for Democrats and women.

Republican
• Allan Fung
  (Cranston Mayor)

Democrat
• Gina Raimondo
  (Incumbent)

State Legislature: Despite a competitive gubernatorial race, the large Democratic majorities in the state legislature look solid for 2018. Democrats hold a 33-4 seat lead in the State Senate and a 64-11 seat margin in the House. Both of Rhode Island's chambers are projected "Safe" for Democrats this Fall.
Races in Focus: The Rest

[Map of the United States with states shaded in different colors indicating various election statuses.]
Alabama **Safe Republican**

*Last Updated: September 6, 2018*

**General Election: November 6, 2018**

**Analysis:** Gov. **Kay Ivey** clinched the Republican nomination in Alabama’s gubernatorial primary race on June 5th, and now she seeks to win the office outright after her appointment 14 months ago, when predecessor Robert Bentley resigned in the fallout of a scandal. She will face Tuscaloosa Mayor **Walt Maddox**, who won the Democratic nomination. Ivey’s election is a formality at this point despite some talks among Democrats that the state could be competitive based on the election of Democrat Doug Jones to the U.S. Senate. Jones defeated controversial GOP nominee Roy Moore in December 2017 to fill the seat vacated by now Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Like many states across the deep South, Alabama is a reliably conservative state where most of the political intrigue for statewide office rests in the GOP primaries. Republicans control both U.S. Senate seats and all but one of the seven Congressional seats, the governor’s mansion (which Democrats have not controlled since 1998), and both chambers of the state legislature. It is also worth considering that Ivey garnered more votes in the primary than all of the Democratic candidates combined and holds a distinct fundraising edge over Maddox. Ivey’s campaign took in over $4.3 million during the primaries per the most recent filings. Maddox’s campaign raised just under $850,000.

### Republican

- **Kay Ivey**
  *(Incumbent)*

### Democrat

- **Walt Maddox**
  *(Tuscaloosa Mayor)*

**State Legislature:** Alabama’s State House and Senate are projected "Safe" for Republicans in 2018. Alabama Republicans have a massive 27-7 lead in the Senate and a 70-33 lead in the House. Democrats are currently trying to tackle the GOP’s three-fifths supermajority in the House. Alabama Democrats will consider themselves victorious in November if they can defeat Republicans in 7 races and dispel the supermajority.
Arkansas *Safe Republican*  
*Last Updated: September 12, 2018*

**General Election: November 6, 2018**

**Analysis:** Incumbent Gov. Asa Hutchinson walked away with the republican nomination for governor over gun activist and Fox News personality Jan Morgan. The day before the primary election, President Donald Trump tweeted out his endorsement for the governor, a point Hutchinson made clear to voters. Hutchinson now looks ahead to the fall, when he will face off against Jared Henderson, who won the Democratic primary. Henderson, a former NASA scientist and the former state executive director of Teach for America, won with 64 percent of the vote over Leticia Sanders (36 percent). Despite some commentary that the race might be more competitive than expected because of Hutchinson moving to the right on a variety of issues in response to criticism from his primary challenger, the race will not be close and remains solidly in the Republican column. In 2014, Hutchinson won this open seat by defeating former Democratic U.S. Rep. Mike Ross by 13 points, while Tom Cotton was knocking off Democratic incumbent U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor by 17 points. In 2016, Donald Trump carried the state with 61 percent of the vote. Margins like this do not provide Democrats with any serious hope of making this race competitive. That and Hutchinson has over $2 million in the bank for his re-elect.

**Republican**
- Asa Hutchinson  
  *(Incumbent)*

**Democrat**
- Jared Henderson  
  *(former NASA scientist)*

**State Legislature:** Republicans hold a three-fourths supermajority in the chamber. In the 2016 elections, Republicans increased their majority in the chamber from 64-34 to 73-27. By December 2016, three Democratic representatives had switched to the Republican Party. Republicans currently hold a 23-9 seat lead in the Senate and a 75-24 lead in the House. Although Democrats are optimistic about regaining a few seats, both the House and Senate are projected "Safe" for Republicans in November.
California Safe Democrat

Last Updated: July 9, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Liberal Democrat Gavin Newsom and Trump-backed Republican John H. Cox will face off in the November general election to decide California's next governor. The gubernatorial primary election had the highest number of votes in the history of California midterms with 6,955,089 votes cast compared to 4,333,028 in 2014 (the previous record was 6,206,618 votes in the 1998 open primary). Newsom, the state's lieutenant governor and an ex-mayor of San Francisco, had been widely expected to be the top vote-getter in the state's jungle primary since he was the longtime frontrunner in the governor's race. Cox took the number two spot thanks in part to the backing of President Trump, who tweeted his endorsement of the conservative San Diego businessman. Cox's victory came as somewhat of a surprise in a state where not just registered Democrats outnumber Republicans but independents as well. Moreover, the state's top-two primary system, adopted in 2012, has had the effect of further shutting Republicans out of statewide office – no Republican has been elected to statewide office in California since 2006. While Cox's victory certainly adds a wrinkle to the election, his chances of claiming the state's top office remain marginal. Newsom, for example, took 62.6 percent of the total primary vote compared to just 36.1 for Cox – the margin represents the biggest gap in two-party turnout since 1998, which ended in a Democratic sweep. The bigger takeaway, though, could be Cox's impact on Republican turnout and down ballot races ranging from competitive U.S. Congressional seats to state legislative seats.

Democrat

• Gavin Newsom
  (Lt. Governor)

Republican

• John H. Cox
  (Businessman)

State Legislature: Democrats currently hold a two-thirds supermajority in the State House, and are 1 vote away from holding a two-thirds supermajority in the State Senate. Democrats may be able to expand their margins slightly this fall, due to President Trump's unpopularity in the state. Both chambers are projected "Safe" for Democrats in the upcoming elections.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Despite a challenging first time marked by both natural and manmade disasters, Hawaii Governor David Ige won the Democratic primary in his bid for a second term, defeating U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa. Polls consistently showed a close race and Rep. Hanabusa had picked up several high profile endorsements, including from Ige’s former Lt. Governor, Shan Tsutsui. Hanabusa, who gave up her seat in Congress to challenge Ige, once led Ige by 20+ points, likely due to Ige’s botched handling of the January 13 false ballistic missile alert that gained national notoriety. State Rep. Andria Tupola won the Republican primary, but does not have much statewide name recognition or support. The race is in the Safe Democrat column.

State Legislature: During the Trump era, Republican numbers have sunk to extreme lows in the Hawaii Legislature. In fact, the state House has already seen one of its few Republican lawmakers switch to the Democratic Party, specifically naming Trump as the reason for the move. These are two of the safest Democratic chambers in the nation. Currently, Hawaii has 0 Republicans in their State Senate and is the only legislative chamber in the country where one party controls every seat. In the lower chamber, Democrats hold a demanding 45-5 seat lead.
Idaho  *Safe Republican*

_Last Updated: July 9, 2018_

**Incumbent:** [OPEN] Butch Otter (R) – _Retiring_

_Partisan Voting Index: R+19_

_2016 Winner: Trump 59.2%_

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**General Election: November 6, 2018**

**Analysis:** The open seat in Idaho is being left by Republican Governor Butch Otter, who is finishing his third term. Republican Lt. Gov. **Brad Little**, a rancher who spent the past 16 years in elected office, will face off against former state Rep. **Paulette Jordan**. Little secured the GOP nomination in a crowded primary field that also included U.S. Representative Raul Labrador (who has yet to endorse Little). He did so by winning just 37.3 percent of the 194,247 votes cast in the GOP primary. Jordan, who is a member of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, is the first woman to be the Democratic gubernatorial nominee in Idaho. She captured 58.5 percent of the 65,785 votes cast in the Democratic primary. The combined primaries _broke previous spending records_ in the state with the 10 Republican and Democratic contenders shelling out nearly $11 million. In 2014, the total was less than $7 million. Barring something unexpected, Little is expected to become the next governor in a state where Republicans hold supermajorities in the legislature and where Trump carried nearly 60% of the vote in 2016. Polling shows that the majority of residents think the state is heading in the right direction with Republican leadership, due in part to a developing technology sector and a growing population. Moreover, registered Republican voters far outnumber registered Democrats – 403,000 to 90,000 – though some 300,000 registered voters are unaffiliated. It is also worth noting that Republicans have held the governor’s office for the past 24 years. This race is in the Solid Republican column.

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**Republican**

- **Brad Little** (Lt. Governor)

**Democrat**

- **Paulette Jordan** (State Rep.)

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**State Legislature:** There's a possibility of minor Democratic gains given the few GOP retirements and departures, but nothing big enough to change the makeup of either chamber. Republicans hold supermajorities in both chambers and don't expect that to change anytime soon. Both the House and Senate are projected "Safe" for Republicans in 2018. Republicans currently hold a supermajority in the Idaho legislature.
Primary Date: June 26, 2018

Analysis: Popular Republican incumbent Larry Hogan will face off against former NAACP chief Ben Jealous come November. Jealous secured his party’s nomination after a tumultuous, six-way primary that saw the death of one candidate – Kevin Kamenetz, the Baltimore County Executive. He defeated other notable candidate Rushern L. Baker III - Prince George’s County Executive - who was backed by the state’s political establishment. With an eye towards November, Hogan’s enduring popularity makes him a formidable opponent, even in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans two to one. Building on having governed from the center and developing good working relationship with the Democratic-controlled state legislature, Hogan has solid job approval numbers, and polls show as many as a quarter of Maryland Democrats intend to support his re-election. He even has the backing of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters marking the first time the union has backed a Republican governor in the state. For Jealous, he is running on a hard progressive agenda calling for free college tuition, the legalization of marijuana, and raising the state’s minimum wage to $15. This message propelled him to a primary victory but might not be enough given all of Hogan’s advantages, incumbency included. For Jealous and Democrats, they hope that 2018 will be a repeat of 2006 when the political environment was so bad for Republicans nationally that then-GOP Gov. Bob Ehrlich was swept out of office despite having job approval ratings over 50 percent. If elected, Jealous would become the state’s first African American governor (he is only the second African American nominee from a major party for the state’s top job).

Republican
• Larry Hogan *(Incumbent)*

Democrat
• Ben Jealous *(former NAACP Chief)*

State Legislature: Maryland operates under a divided government. Currently, Democrats have more than the 85 representatives and 29 senators they need to override Governor Hogan’s vetoes. Republicans would need to flip seven seats in 2018 to break up the Democrats’ veto-proof majority in the House. While both chambers are predicted "Safe" for Democrats in 2018; Governor Larry Hogan has made it his goal to oust enough incumbents to sustain vetoes.
Massachusetts Likely Republican

Last Updated: September 7, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: By most polls, Republican Charlie Baker is the most popular Governor in the nation which is an even higher compliment considering Massachusetts is a solidly blue state. He is also the most moderate of the nation’s 33 Republican Governors. Baker has worked well with Democrats and has not hesitated to break with the national Republican Party. He opposed the Congressional Republican health care plan and has spoken out against the travel ban and the President’s proposed immigration policies. All of this, combined with the fact that no one in the Democratic field is getting much traction (in fact, Setti Warren, a Democrat, recently dropped out of the race citing an inability to raise money), would indicate that Baker is well on his way to re-election. Former state budget director Jay Gonzales won the Democratic primary. Baker easily beat primary challenger Scott Lively, a pro-Trump pastor, who managed to grab a fourth of the GOP support at the state Republican convention. Lively, who ran for governor in 2014 as an independent, ran against Baker as an outspoken advocate for “religious freedom” and gun rights. Even with the expected high Democratic turnout in the general election, Baker should not have too much trouble winning a second term. It is worth noting that Deval Patrick is the sole Democrat to have won the governor’s office since Michael Dukakis left in 1991. The race is in the Likely Republican column.

Republican

• Charlie Baker  
  *(Incumbent)*

Democrat

• Jay Gonzales  
  *(former state budget director)*

State Legislature: The Democratic Party holds immense leads in both Massachusetts chambers. While both chambers are projected "Safe" for Democrats in 2018; the Republicans are looking to gain at least 10 seats in the State House or at least 4 seats in the State Senate. If the Massachusetts GOP reaches either of these targets in 2018, it would break the Democratic supermajority.
Nebraska Safe Republican

Last Updated: July 9, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts does not have much to worry about as he seeks re-election to a second term. He easily dispatched a challenge from Krystal Gabel in the GOP primary and enters the general election contest with more than $1.3 million cash-on-hand. Ricketts will face State Senator Bob Krist, a Democrat, who defeated two other candidates in the primary election. A relative newcomer to state politics, Krist entered to politics through an appointment to the Legislature in 2009 by then-Gov. Dave Heineman, one of Nebraska’s conservative standard-bearers. For the general election, the governor’s race is a foregone conclusion barring an unexpected event. Much of the focus will be on the Republican-controlled legislature (unicameral) where 24 of the chamber’s 49 seats are on the ballot. Republicans currently control 31 seats to Democrats 16 (and 1 independent + 1 Libertarian). Also on the ballot will likely be a measure to expand Medicaid in the state. Nebraska's Republican-dominated Legislature has rejected six previous attempts to expand Medicaid under former President Barack Obama's signature health care law, the Affordable Care Act. Ricketts opposes the measure.

Republican

• Pete Ricketts
  (Incumbent)

Democrat

• Bob Krist
  (State Senator)

State Legislature: Following the 2016 elections, Republicans kept control of the Senate by a 32-15 margin, but Democrats gained three seats in the election. Two-seats—one independent and one Libertarian—are held by third party members. The chamber is officially nonpartisan, but most members are affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican parties. As of July 2017, Republicans held 32 seats, two more than the 30 seats required for a supermajority. Democrats would need to gain three seats in 2018 to break up the Republican supermajority. A three-fifths supermajority is required to override gubernatorial vetoes and place proposed constitutional amendments on the general election ballot. Two-thirds of the chamber—33 members—is needed to pass a budget.
New York Safe Democrat

Last Updated: September 14, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo moves one step closer in following his father’s footsteps by seeking a third term as Governor. Gov. Cuomo won the state’s Democratic gubernatorial nomination, beating actress Cynthia Nixon in an election that tested his ability to counter a progressive challenge in one of the nation’s most liberal states. Gov. Cuomo topped Nixon by 31 points and was declared the winner about 30 minutes after polls closed. Democrats responded to Cuomo’s stance as Trump’s antagonist in chief, with 1.5 million votes cast – nearly three times as many votes cast during the 2014 primary. Furthermore, his lopsided victory may position Cuomo for a 2020 presidential race. Gov. Cuomo’s big victory allows him to continue his bid for a third term and sets up a sprint to November with Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro, the Republican nominee for governor. Molinaro was once the youngest elected mayor in the nation and is a moderate, but in a year likely to favor Democrats Molinaro’s bid is not seen as a top-tier race for Republicans nationally. Cuomo nationalized his primary race, focusing almost entirely on Trump. He has made it clear he will continue to try and tie the GOP nominee to President Trump, saying “the Republicans are all in lockstep now.” Besides Molinaro, the challengers of the Democratic primary winner are Howie Hawkins of the Green Party; the new Serve America Movement’s Stephanie Miner, who is a former Syracuse mayor and one time co-chair of Cuomo’s state Democratic Party; and Larry Sharpe on the Libertarian Party line. Despite the attention generated during the primary, Cuomo is in a strong position and the race is in the Solid Democratic column.

Democrat

- Andrew Cuomo
  *(Incumbent)*

Republican

- Marc Molinaro
  *(Dutchess Co. Executive)*

State Legislature: Special elections on April 24 gave state Senate Democrats -- long the chamber’s minority -- a numerical edge. But it didn’t matter, since one Democrat, Simcha Felder, said he would continue to caucus with the GOP. If Democrats run strong in November, his decision may be irrelevant. New York Democrats have nothing to worry about in the lower chamber as they are projected "Safe" for keeping the House in 2018. The State Senate is projected as a "Tossup" with Republicans frantically trying to maintain their current seats.
New Hampshire Likely Republican

Last Updated: September 12, 2018

Incumbent: Chris Sununu (R) - Running
Partisan Voting Index: EVEN
Last Election Win: 49% | 2016 Winner: Clinton 46.8%

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: With no presidential showdown or U.S. Senate contest in New Hampshire to divert attention, the race for the corner office; the battles over the Granite State’s two congressional seats; and the fights for control of the state’s Senate, House and Executive Council will take center stage in 2018. Incumbent Republican Governor Chris Sununu will be tough to beat. He has strong approval numbers, due in part to the state’s expanding economy, and New Hampshire voters are historically hesitant to oust a new governor after only their first two-year term. Only one Granite State governor in the last nine decades has failed to win a second term in office – Republican Gov. Craig Benson, who lost his 2004 re-election bid. For Democrats former state Senator Molly Kelly won the party’s nomination. She beat former Portsmouth Mayor Steve Marchand, the more progressive candidate who ran for governor in 2016. Kelly is the perceived Democratic establishment favorite with the backing of several prominent New Hampshire Democrats, including former House Speaker Terie Norelli and former Attorney General Joe Foster. One wild card in the general election, the Libertarian Party will have a candidate for the first time since 1996. Sandown businesswoman, Jilletta Jarvis, is running as the libertarian.

Republican

- Chris Sununu
  (Incumbent)

Democrat

- Molly Kelly
  (former State Senator)

Independent

- Jilletta Jarvis
  (Libertarian)

State Legislature: While Republicans currently have a trifecta in New Hampshire, both chambers are considered “Tossup's”. Republicans have a 14-10 lead in the State Senate and a 216-173 lead in the State House. In the State Senate, Democrats would need to gain three seats to take the majority and Republicans would need to gain two seats to gain a veto-proof majority. A two-thirds majority—16 seats in the state Senate—is required to override a gubernatorial veto.
Pennsylvania  Likely Democrat

Last Updated: September 12, 2018

Incumbent: Tom Wolf (D) - Running
Partisan Voting Index: EVEN
Last Election Win: 54.9%  |  2016 Winner: Trump 48.4%

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Gov. Tom Wolf’s defeat of GOP Gov. Tom Corbett was one his party’s bright spots in an otherwise bad election year. Wolf defeated Corbett 55 to 45 percent. A political newcomer, Wolf ran on the strength of his resume as a successful businessman and promised more transparency and ethics in government. Once in office, Wolf had to address a weak economy and stagnant revenues – he supported unpopular tax increases. Wolf also chose to expand Medicaid in the state under the Affordable Care Act, another move that drew sharp criticism. Having carried the left-leaning state in the 2016 presidential election, Republicans are targeting Wolf. He will face State Senator Scott Wagner, the establishment-backed candidate, who won the GOP primary. Ken Krawchuk, a libertarian, is also running. At this point in the race, Wolf, who continues to pick up endorsements from high-profile Democrats like Hillary Clinton, seems to be in good shape. Morning Consult places his approval rating at 45 percent, with 39 percent disapproval. A June poll showed Wolf with a 19-point advantage against Wagner, though 23 percent of voters were undecided. Wolf also has a significant 10:1 cash advantage over Wagner. According to the most recent filings, Wolf reported $15.2 million in his campaign account as of June 4, while Wagner reported $1.6 million in his. State voting demographics also fall in Wolf’s favor. Democrats account for 48 percent of the state’s 8.5 million voters while Republicans make up 38 percent of registered voters. Cook Political says the race leans toward Wolf, and Larry Sabato from the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics rates it as a Likely Democratic win.

Democrat

- Tom Wolf  
  (Incumbent)

Republican

- Scott Wagner  
  (State Senator)

Independent

- Ken Krawchuk  
  (Libertarian)

State Legislature: In Pennsylvania’s lower chamber, Democrats need to gain 20 seats to take control and Republicans need to gain 14 seats to have the two-thirds majority needed to override gubernatorial vetoes. In the State Senate, Democrats need to gain one seat to break the Republican two-thirds majority. It’s worth remembering that unlike the congressional district map, which was recently overturned by the state supreme court as an invalid partisan gerrymander, the lines in both state legislative chambers remain favorable to the GOP. Both chambers are projected “Likely” for Republicans in this upcoming election season.
South Carolina  Safe Republican  

Last Updated: June 27, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: The table is finally set in South Carolina. Incumbent Republican Henry McMaster will face Democrat State Representative James Smith, a veteran and an attorney, on November 6, 2018 (Martin Barry, the American party nominee, will also be on the ballot). McMaster, who was forced into a July 26th runoff, fended off a challenge from self-made millionaire John Warren to secure the Republican gubernatorial nomination. It did not come without help though. President Trump and Vice President Pence both made trips to the state to rally support behind McMaster, who was elevated to the governorship early last year following the departure of Nikki Haley to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. As lieutenant governor (elected in 2014), McMaster was the nation's first statewide elected official to back Trump, ahead of South Carolina's early presidential primary. McMaster’s campaign relied heavily on his relationship with the president while championing issues aligned with the White House’s priorities, such as clamping down on so-called sanctuary cities and sending National Guard troops to the border for immigration enforcement. Ultimately it was enough to defeat Warren, who had positioned himself as an outsider set on shaking up the status quo in Columbia, the state’s capital. With the primary out of the way, McMaster can count down the days until his election for a full four year term. South Carolina is about as Republican of a state as they come.

Since 2003, Republicans have controlled all three branches of state government, and voters have backed the GOP presidential nominee in every election since 1976.

**Republican**

- Henry McMaster  
  *(Incumbent)*

**Democrat**

- James Smith  
  *(Attorney)*

State Legislature: There are no races in the South Carolina Senate this November. In the lower chamber, the GOP will be in good shape to retain its sizable majority, with only modest, if any, erosion. The GOP has a 80-44 seat lead in the House and is projected "Safe" for Republicans.
South Dakota *Likely Republican*

Last Updated: September 14, 2018

**General Election: November 6, 2018**

**Analysis:** U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem won South Dakota's Republican primary for governor, defeating a host of Republican challengers, including Attorney General Marty Jackley, to emerge as the favorite to become the state's first female governor. GOP primary voters made Noem the only woman South Dakota Republicans have nominated for the state's top job. She advanced to face well-funded Democrat Billie Sutton, 34, the minority leader of the South Dakota Senate and former professional rodeo cowboy, in the November general election. While Democrats contend that they have the right candidate to win, Sutton has a steep challenge in a state where Democrats do not hold a single statewide office. GOP dominance is no surprise given that some 47 percent of all registered voters in the state are Republicans, and in raw numbers they outnumber Democrats by nearly 100,000 voters according to registration data from the secretary of state. History is also not on the side of Democrats. South Dakota has not elected a Democratic governor since 1974.

**Republican**

- Kristi Noem
  *(U.S. Congresswoman)*

**Republican**

- Billie Sutton
  *(State Senate minority leader)*

**State Legislature:** Republicans are in no danger of losing significant ground in this solidly red state. Following the 2016 elections, Republicans hold more than a two-thirds majority—47 House seats and 24 Senate seats—which is enough to override a gubernatorial veto. Both chambers are projected "Safe" for Republicans this Fall.
Tennessee *Likely Republican*

Last Updated: September 7, 2018

**General Election: November 6, 2018**

**Analysis**: In a governor’s race that is shaping up to be the most expensive in state history, businessman Bill Lee cruised to victory after his campaign spent less than $7 million. Most political insiders expected US Rep. Diane Black and former economic development commissioner and Knoxville entrepreneur Randy Boyd to battle for the republican nomination, as polling in early July showed Black and Boyd cumulatively taking nearly 50 percent of the vote. Negative television ads attacking each other seemed to hurt Boyd and Black, allowing lesser-known Lee to push through with a positive message. Lee called his win “a victory for Tennesseans who want an outsider.” On the Democratic side, former Nashville Mayor Karl Dean easily won the primary, with 75% of the vote. Democratic strategists are encouraged by Dean’s candidacy and believe he can make the general election competitive. Democrats are also encouraged by what is shaping up to be perhaps the most competitive race in the state – that to fill outgoing Senator Bob Corker’s seat. Though early, former Democratic Governor Phil Bredesen is locked in a virtual tie with U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn. Still, Tennessee remains a solidly conservative state, and voters are likely to send another Republican to the governor’s mansion.

**Republican**
- Bill Lee
  *(Businessman)*

**Democrat**
- Karl Dean
  *(Nashville Mayor)*

**State Legislature**: Republicans have a 28-5 lead in the State Senate and a 73-25 margin in the House. Both chambers are projected "Safe" for Republicans in 2018.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Democrats are once again hoping to turn the Lone Star State blue this cycle, just not in the gubernatorial contest. Incumbent Republican Greg Abbott, who won the Republican primary virtually unopposed, is the most popular politician in the Lone Star State and has a campaign war chest of more than $40 million. In November, he will face a second-tier candidate in Lupe Valdez, who secured the Democratic nomination for governor in a runoff. Though her chances to unseat Abbott are virtually non-existent barring some unforeseen occurrence, Valdez did make political history in becoming the first Hispanic female and first openly gay person to win a major party's gubernatorial nomination in Texas. Unlike the gubernatorial contest, the U.S. Senate race between incumbent Republican Ted Cruz and Democratic challenger Beto O'Rourke is increasingly becoming a very competitive race. A recent poll by a firm that has previously predicted several Texas races within a percentage point of accuracy, the race has tightened showing Ted Cruz leading 47 percent to Beto O'Rourke's 44 percent among likely Texas voters. The tight race is a reflection of changing demographics in Texas, but also of a Democratic candidate seizing on strong national support and working to convert that momentum toward turning out voters in November. Four years ago, Texas Democrats were disappointed when their chosen gubernatorial candidate, Wendy Davis, lost to Greg Abbott by 20 percentage points. It is worth noting that while there is a lot of talk about a pending "Blue Wave" across the country, it will be an uphill climb for Democrats in Texas. In the 2018 primaries, Texas Republicans outvoted Democrats by roughly 500,000 votes. That spread came even as Democrats more than doubled their primary turnout from 2014 to 2018.

Republican

• Greg Abbott
  *(Incumbent)*

Democrat

• Lupe Valdez
  *(former Dallas Co. Sheriff)*

State Legislature: Even though Democrats are excited about Beto O'Rourke's chances at knocking off Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, don't expect major Democratic gains in the legislature. In the Senate, only one seat is considered genuinely in play, and that district leans Republican. Democratic gains are likelier in the House, where Democrats are contesting an unusually large number of seats. That said, a double-digit increase seems like a stretch. The Texas State Senate is projected "Safe" for Republicans; the House is projected "Likely" for the GOP in November.
General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Along with New Hampshire, the state of Vermont is one of only two states where governors are elected to two-year terms. Incumbent Republican Governor Phil Scott defeated businessman Keith Stern in the primary. Scott, the lone Republican in statewide office, was elected in 2016 despite Hillary Clinton handily carrying the state. For Democrats, Christine Hallquist, a transgender and former CEO of Vermont Electric Co-Op won the Democratic primary. Hallquist, in an August 8 Democratic candidate debate on Vermont public radio, said she would consider implementing a carbon tax. She also supports paid family and medical leave insurance. A bill that would have created a payroll-tax funded paid family leave program was vetoed by Scott in May. Hallquist plans to tax and regulate recreational marijuana, which is now legal in the state, and would also take responsibility for separating property taxes from education funding. While Scott is expected to win a second term as governor, his polling numbers have dropped over the past several months due in significant part to a series of bills he signed that restrict firearm sales (note the poll did not compare head-to-head matchups). A recent Public Policy Polling survey found that while his approval remained over 50 percent, it was down from 70 percent in 2016. Scott has built up enormous goodwill in the state having governed as a moderate – bucking the GOP on gun control measures for example. History is also on his side. Incumbent governors who run for re-election have a good track record in the state dating back half a century.

Republican
- Phil Scott  
  (Incumbent)

Democrat
- Christine Hallquist  
  (former CEO of VT Electric company)

State Legislature: Democrats will hold on to both chambers in Vermont. The most pressing question is whether Republicans lose more than two seats in the House, a result that would leave them with too few votes to sustain a veto by GOP Gov. Phil Scott. Democrats hold a demanding 21-7 lead in the Senate and a 83-53 margin in the House. Both chambers are projected "Safe" for Democrats in November.
Wyoming Safe Republican

Last Updated: August 23, 2018

General Election: November 6, 2018

Analysis: Wyoming voters chose State Treasurer Mark Gordon over political mega-donor Foster Friess in the state’s Republican primary for governor. Throughout 2017, it looked like a two-man race between Mark Gordon and Secretary of State Ed Murray. However, Murray dropped out of the race earlier this year. The last entry was GOP-mega donor Foster Freiss, who announced his intention to run at the state convention. Freiss was able to self-finance his campaign and held a slight lead in polls. He was also endorsed by Donald Trump Jr. and film star Chuck Norris. For Democrats, Mary Throne, the former Minority Leader of the State House, got the nomination as she ran unopposed.

Republican

- Mark Gordon
  (State Treasurer)

Democrat

- Mary Throne
  (former Minority Leader)

State Legislature: The Republican majorities in Wyoming have nothing to worry about in 2018. Both chambers are projected "Safe" for Republicans in November.