

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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Iowa 3: Axne on the Front Lines

By Jacob Rubashkin

What a difference a few years makes.

In 2018, Democrats barnstormed Iowa, flipping two congressional districts, holding another, and nearly winning the deeply Republican 4th District and the governor's mansion for the first time in over a decade.

But in 2020, Republicans stormed right back, flipping two districts, replacing their own controversial 4th District representative, beating back a well-funded Democratic Senate candidate, and handing President Donald Trump a resounding victory for the second cycle in a row.

The only Iowa Democrat who survived 2020 was Cindy Axne, a first-term congresswoman from Des Moines who represents the state's 3rd District and won re-election by the skin of her teeth.

Now, Republicans are champing at the bit to finish what they started in 2020. That would give the GOP complete control of the state's House delegation for the first time since 1994, and — if venerable Sen. Chuck Grassley returns for an 8th term — it would be the first time since the 1940s that Iowa sends no Democrats to Washington at all.

Axne and her allies have other plans, and are already deploying significant financial resources to make sure she can buck a poor political environment and return to DC next year.

The Lay of the Land

The 3rd District sits in the southwest corner of the state, where it is anchored by Polk County, home of Des Moines, the state's capital and largest city. By population, 62 percent of the district lives in Polk County, and in the 2020 presidential election, Polk County cast 61 percent of all of the votes in the 3rd District.

During redistricting, the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency made significant geographic alterations to the district. Most notably, the district no longer includes Fremont, Mills, and Pottawattamie (Council Bluffs) counties along the Nebraska border, or Warren County (Indianola) south of Des Moines.

Instead, the district now extends further east along the state's

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2022 House Ratings

Toss-Up (10D, 7R)

CA 22 (Valadao, R)	KS 3 (Davids, D)	NM 2 (Herrell, R)	PA 8 (Cartwright, D)
CA 27 (Garcia, R)	ME 2 (Golden, D)	NY 19 (Open; Delgado, D)	VA 2 (Luria, D)
CA 45 (Steel, R)	MI 3 (Meijer, R)	OH 1 (Chabot, R)	WA 8 (Schrier, D)
CO 8 (Open, New)	NC 13 (Open, R)	OH 9 (Kaptur, D)	
IA 3 (Axne, D)	NJ 7 (Malinowski, D)	PA 7 (Wild, D)	

Tilt Democratic (7D, 1R)

IL 17 (Open; Bustos, D)	NV 3 (S. Lee, D)
MI 7 (Slotkin, D)	NY 22 (Open; Katko, R)
MI 8 (Kildee, D)	PA 17 (Open; Lamb, D)
MN 2 (Craig, DFL)	VA 7 (Spanberger, D)
NH 1 (Pappas, D)	

Tilt Republican (4D, 1R)

AZ 6 (Open; Kirkpatrick, D)
MI 10 (Open; Levin, D)
NY 1 (Open; Zeldin, R)
OH 13 (Open; Ryan, D)
TX 15 (Open; V. Gonzalez, D)

Lean Democratic (7D, 1R)

CA 47 (Porter, D)	OR 5 (Open; Schrader, D)
IL 13 (Open; Davis, R)	
NC 1 (Open; Butterfield, D)	
NV 1 (Titus, D)	
NV 4 (Horsford, D)	
NY 3 (Open; Suozzi, D)	
NY 18 (Open; Maloney, D)	

Lean Republican (2D, 3R)

AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
AZ 2 (O'Halleran, D)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NY 2 (Garbarino, R)
WI 3 (Open; Kind, D)

Likely Democratic (18D, 1R)

AZ 4 (Stanton, D)
CA 13 (Open; Harder, D)
CA 49 (Levin, D)
CO 7 (Open; Perlmutter, D)
CT 5 (Hayes, D)
GA 2 (Bishop, D)
IL 6 (Newman, D/Casten, D)
IL 14 (Underwood, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
MD 6 (Trone, D)
NC 6 (Manning, D)
NC 14 (Open, New)
NH 2 (Kuster, D)
NM 3 (Leger Fernandez, D)
NY 4 (Open; Rice, D)
NY 17 (S. Maloney, D)
OR 4 (Open; DeFazio, D)
OR 6 (Open, New)
RI 2 (Open; Langevin, D)
TX 34 (Flores, R/Gonzalez, D)*
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)

Likely Republican (5D, 9R)

AK AL Special (Vacant, R)
CA 3 (Open; McClintock, R)
CA 40 (Kim, R)
CA 41 (Calvert, R)
FL 5 (Lawson, D)
FL 7 (Open; Murphy, D)
FL 13 (Open; Crist, D)
FL 15 (Open; Franklin, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
GA 6 (Open; McBath, D)
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)
IA 2 (Hinson, R)
MT 1 (Open, New)
NY 11 (Malliotakis, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
TN 5 (Open; Cooper, D)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	187	168
Likely/Lean/Tilt	25	37
Total	212	205
Toss-up	18	
Needed for majority	218	

moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics

Texas 34: Competitive Race After Special Election Result

By Nathan L. Gonzales

While it's wise not to overreact to special election outcomes, don't dismiss Republican Mayra Flores' special election victory in Texas 34th District.

There are some reasons to qualify the outcome, including the fact that Republicans outspent Democrats by a sizable margin, and the seat is going to be different (and more Democratic) in the November election because of redistricting.

But that doesn't tell the whole story.

On the most basic level, Flores flipped a seat previously held by a Democrat (Rep. Filemon Vela) that Joe Biden won in 2020. (He did it by 4 points.) Her victory changes the math for Republicans trying to win back the House. Now, the GOP needs a net gain of four seats, instead of a net gain of five seats, for a majority in November.

Flores' victory also pulls a seat that Democrats were supposed to win without too much difficulty onto the list of competitive races. The newly-drawn 34th District was rated Solid Democratic before the special election (in part because Biden would have won it by 16 points) but is now rated Likely Democratic.

Flores has an uphill climb against Democratic Rep. Vicente Gonzalez — who will run in the 34th rather than the 15th, which he currently represents — but she'll enjoy some momentum and advantages of incumbency including fundraising and gaining significant national attention after her special election victory.



Mayra Flores

Courtesy Flores Campaign

The special election result should not be a complete surprise. *Inside Elections* had Tuesday's race rated as a Toss-up and the potential fallout was foreseeable.

"A win by Republicans here — even if the seat flips back in a few months — would be a thunderclap across the United States," wrote Jacob Rubashkin in our May 6 issue. He noted it would be "a sure sign that the gains Republicans made among Hispanic voters in 2020 are more durable and less Trump-specific than Democrats had hoped."

"And even if she is only in Congress for a short time, Flores is primed to be a breakout GOP star at a time when the party is working to move

2022 Senate Ratings

Toss-up

Cortez Masto (D-Nev.)
Kelly (D-Ariz.)

Warnock (D-Ga.)

Tilt Democratic

Hassan (D-N.H.)

Tilt Republican

PA Open (Toomey, R)
Johnson (R-Wisc.)

Lean Democratic

Likely Democratic

Solid Democratic

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

Lean Republican

NC Open (Burr, R)

Likely Republican

Rubio (R-Fl.)

Solid Republican

AL Open (Shelby, R)
MO Open (Blunt, R)
OH Open (Portman, R)
OK Open (Inhofe, 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.)

moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics

past its white and male image," Rubashkin continued, "It may not matter to the cold math of majority-making, but Democrats need to reset the increasingly dire narrative heading into the fall. A Flores win would have the opposite effect."

Even if someone wants to diminish Flores' victory, it's just another piece of evidence that we're headed for a typical midterm election in which the president's party is punished by voters.



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with

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Nonpartisan Analysis



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Report Shorts

Alabama

Senate. Rep. Mo Brooks was left for politically dead after former President Donald Trump rescinded his endorsement. But he still managed to revive his campaign enough for a second-place finish, with 29 percent to Katie Boyd Britt's 45 percent. Veteran Mike Durant's once-high-flying effort finished third with 23 percent. Britt and Brooks will face off in a runoff next week, and this time, Trump has endorsed Britt. Solid Republican.

5th District. Madison County Commissioner Dale Strong won 45 percent, and former Assistant Secretary of the Army Casey Wardynski won 23 percent, so they'll face each other in the June 21 runoff for the GOP nomination to succeed Brooks. Solid Republican.

California

Governor. With votes still being counted, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom is at 56 percent in the state's all-party primary. Less than a year ago, 62 percent voted against recalling the governor. Newsom will face GOP state Sen. Brian Dahle in the November general election and win a second term. Solid Democratic.

3rd District. GOP State Assemblyman Kevin Kiley will face Democratic physician and veteran Kermit Jones in this GOP-leaning district that could be competitive later in the decade. Likely Republican.

9th District. Democratic Rep. Josh Harder shifted over to this Stockton district after Rep. Jerry McNerney decided not to run for re-election. Harder will face GOP San Joaquin County Supervisor Tom Patti, who was once Mike Tyson's boxing coach. Solid Democratic.

13th District. Harder's decision to move districts leaves this Central Valley seat open. Democratic state Assemblyman Adam Gray will face Republican farmer John Duarte. Likely Democratic.

15th District. State Assemblyman Kevin Mullin overcame a slow start to place first in the primary with 41 percent. Fellow Democrat David Canepa, a San Mateo County Supervisor, finished second with 25 percent. Solid Democratic.

22nd District. Democrats spent late money boosting former Fresno City Councilman Chris Mathys, who ran to the right of GOP Rep. David Valadao after Valadao voted to impeach Trump. Valadao currently leads Mathys by less than 2,000 votes, but this area is notoriously slow at counting ballots. Democratic state Assemblyman Rudy Salas will face one or the other in the fall. Toss-up.

27th District. Some Democrats wanted Navy veteran Quayle Quartey as their standard bearer against GOP Rep. Mike Garcia in this LA-area district. But Quartey (6 percent) didn't come close to former state Assemblywoman Christy Smith (37 percent), who will get her third shot at Garcia (48 percent) in three years. Toss-up.

34th District. In 2020, Rep. Jimmy Gomez had an unexpectedly close general election race against fellow Democrat David Kim. Kim is back for

the rematch this fall, though redistricting should help Gomez this time around. Solid Democratic.

37th District. State Sen. Sydney Kamlager will compete for her mentor Rep. Karen Bass's seat this fall, but her opponent is still unknown: it will be either Culver City Mayor David Lee or former LA City Councilor Jan Perry. All are Democrats. Solid Democratic.

40th District. After Democrat Asif Mahmood started spending money to boost 2020 45th District nominee Greg Raths, perceived as a weaker GOP candidate than incumbent Rep. Young Kim, McCarthy-affiliated Congressional Leadership Fund and Kim's campaign itself started spending heavily against Raths. In the end, Kim outpaced Raths, 34-24 percent and will face Mahmood in the fall. Likely Republican.

41st District. Democrats believe they have a shot at a sleeper pickup with former federal prosecutor Will Rollins, against longtime GOP Rep. Ken Calvert in this redrawn district. Likely Republican.

42nd District. Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, a Democrat, placed first in the primary for this new district drawn from retiring Reps. Alan Lowenthal and Lucille Roybal-Allard. Because a Republican, 2020 nominee John Briscoe, placed second, Garcia should have no problem in the fall. Solid Democratic.

45th District. Rep. Michelle Steel pulled in 49 percent, Democratic Navy veteran/President of the board of trustees at Mt. San Antonio College Jay Chen won 42 percent, and one of the top matchups in the state was made official. Toss-up.

47th District. Progressive favorite Rep. Katie Porter won 51 percent, while GOP former state House Minority Leader Scott Baugh won 31 percent. Baugh has given Republicans hope of winning back this Orange County district, but it's an uphill climb. Lean Democratic.

49th District. Rep. Mike Levin, a Democrat, will face 2020 nominee Brian Maryott for a rematch this fall, after Maryott edged out Orange County Supervisor Lisa Barlett and Oceanside City Councilor Christopher Rodriguez. Likely Democratic.

Florida

27th District. After a few weeks of rumors, Democrat Annette Taddeo switched from the race for governor to challenging GOP Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar. The district is competitive, but with GOP gains in the Hispanic community and the current national political environment, Salazar will be tough to beat in South Florida. Likely Republican.

Georgia

Governor. A Trump endorsement couldn't save former Sen. David Perdue from getting his hide tanned by Gov. Brian Kemp in the GOP primary. Kemp romped to a 74-22 percent victory over Perdue, and will

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Courtesy Mahmood Campaign

Asif Mahmood



David Valadao

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

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face Democratic nominee Stacey Abrams in the fall in a rematch of 2018. Tilt Republican.

Senate. Republicans nominated football legend Herschel Walker to take on Sen. Raphael Warnock. A story a day seems to come out about Walker; most recently about his false claims of being a law enforcement agent, and three previously undisclosed children out of wedlock. Toss-up.

6th District. Rich McCormick, the physician who narrowly lost the 7th District race in 2020, and Jake Evans, a former Georgia Ethics Commission chairman and the son of a prominent Trump donor and ambassador, will advance to a runoff. McCormick led Trump-endorsed Evans, 43-21 percent, in the first round. Solid Republican.



Jake Evans

Courtesy Evans Campaign

7th District. A GOP-drawn gerrymander forced Reps. Lucy McBath and Carolyn Bourdeaux into the same suburban Atlanta district. In the Democratic primary, McBath routed Bordeaux, 63-31 percent. Solid Democratic.

10th District. Trucking company owner Mike Collins, the son of former Rep. Mac Collins, placed first in the GOP primary, but with just 26 percent. So he'll have to face Vernon Jones, a former Democratic state legislator who reinvented himself as a Trump supporter, in a runoff. Jones won 22 percent of the vote. Solid Republican.

Idaho

Governor. Gov. Brad Little faced a challenge in the GOP primary from his own lieutenant governor, Janice McGeachin. Trump endorsed McGeachin, who rose to national prominence for her anti-covid restriction stance. But Little won comfortably, 53-32 percent. Solid Republican.

Idaho

2nd District. Rep. Mike Simpson faced a familiar foe in attorney Bryan Smith, who he had dispatched in a bitter 2014 primary. Simpson won the second round as well, 57-31 percent. Solid Republican.

Iowa

Senate. Retired Admiral Mike Franken won a minor upset over former Rep. Abby Finkenauer in the Democratic primary, 55-40 percent. Finkenauer was the initial frontrunner but nearly didn't make it on the ballot and struggled with staff turnover, and Franken significantly outspent her on paid media. GOP Sen. Chuck Grassley, 88, is one step closer to an eighth term after turning back state Sen. Jim Carlin, 73-27 percent, in the GOP primary. It was the first time since 1980 Grassley had a primary opponent. Solid Republican.

Iowa

Governor. GOP Gov. Kim Reynolds will face 2018 secretary of state nominee Deidre DeJear after both won their primaries unopposed. DeJear has struggled to fundraise but an early March J. Ann Selzer poll found her trailing Reynolds by just 8 points, 51-43 percent. Solid Republican.

1st District. There weren't primaries on either side of the aisle, but the general election is officially set between Democratic state Rep.

Christina Bohannon and GOP Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks. Likely Republican.

2nd District. Similar to the 1st District, there was no suspense in the primaries and Democratic state senator / former local TV news anchor Liz Mathis will face former local TV news anchor / U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson, a Republican, in the general election. Likely Republican.

Kentucky

3rd District. State Sen. Minority Leader Morgan McGarvey defeated state Rep. Attica Scott, 63-37 percent, in the Democratic primary to succeed retiring Rep. John Yarmuth. Solid Democratic.

Maine

Governor. Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, will vie for a second term against GOP nominee Paul LePage, who served two terms as governor in the 2010s. Lean Democratic.

2nd District. Former GOP Rep. Bruce Poliquin won an uninspiring 60-40 percent victory over a no-name challenger who he outspent by a factor of 35 in the GOP primary. That was good enough to earn him a rematch against Rep. Jared Golden, who ousted him in 2018. A third-party candidate will complicate this race, which is decided via ranked choice voting. Toss-up.

Michigan

Governor. Half of the GOP primary field was disqualified after it emerged that each had submitted thousands of forged signatures when petitioning for ballot access. Most notably, former Detroit Police Chief James Craig and wealthy businessman Perry Johnson failed to make the ballot. Craig has said he'll mount a write-in campaign, while Johnson looks like he won't, after losing a federal court case on the issue. Among the remaining candidates, polling frontrunner Ryan Kelley was recently arrested by the FBI for his role in the mob that overran the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. He told Steve Bannon the arrest would help his campaign

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Candidate Conversations

Candidates recently interviewed by *Inside Elections*

- Anthony D'Esposito (R) New York's 4th District (June 15, 2022)
- Jennifer-Ruth Green (R) Indiana's 1st District (June 13, 2022)
- Steve Roberts (D) Missouri's 1st District (June 1, 2022)
- Jay Chen (D) California's 45th District (May 19, 2022)
- Brittany Pettersen (D) Colorado's 7th District (May 19, 2022)
- Christina Bohannon (D) Iowa's 1st District (May 19, 2022)
- Hillary Scholten (D) Michigan's 3rd District (May 19, 2022)
- Greg Landsman (D) Ohio's 1st District (May 19, 2022)
- Yadira Caraveo (D) Colorado's 8th District (May 17, 2022)
- Liz Mathis (D) Iowa's 2nd District (May 17, 2022)
- Tony Vargas (D) Nebraska's 2nd District (May 17, 2022)
- Gabe Vasquez (D) New Mexico's 2nd District (May 17, 2022)
- Emilia Sykes (D) Ohio's 13th District (May 17, 2022)
- Chris Dargis (R) Illinois' 8th District (May 11, 2022)

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against Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. The race has been rated as Tilt Democratic, but Republicans are at risk of this takeover opportunity falling out of the list of competitive races.

Mississippi

3rd District. Rep. Michael Guest nearly lost in his primary outright against unheralded opponent Michael Cassidy, who actually outpaced the incumbent, 48-47 percent. Guest and Cassidy will progress to a June 28 runoff. Cassidy has attacked Guest over his vote for a bipartisan Jan. 6 commission. Guest is now on TV with an anti-Cassidy ad. Solid Republican.

4th District. Rep. Steven Palazzo's myriad ethics issues may finally be catching up to him. He placed first in a crowded GOP field with just 32 percent, while Jackson County Sheriff Mike Ezell placed second with 29 percent. The two will go head-to-head in a runoff in two weeks. Solid Republican.

Montana

1st District. As the former at-large member of Congress for the entire state and with the endorsement of former President Donald Trump, Ryan Zinke was expected to cruise to the GOP nomination. Instead, Zinke received 41.7 percent and a 2-point victory. He'll face former Olympic rower/Democratic nominee Monica Tranel in the general election in a seat that could be competitive later in the decade. But Zinke probably cleared his toughest hurdle this cycle and is likely to return to Congress. Likely Republican.

Nevada

Senate. Former state attorney General Adam Laxalt won the GOP primary 56-34 percent over wounded veteran Sam Brown. That sets up Laxalt against Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto in one of the most competitive Senate races in the country. Toss-up.

Governor. Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo won the GOP primary 38 percent atop a crowded field that included former U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, who finished third with 14 percent. Lombardo faces Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak in a race that is rated Tilt Democratic but could get more vulnerable for Democrats.

1st District. Retired Army colonel Mark Robertson won the GOP primary with 30 percent and will face Democratic Rep. Dina Titus in the general election. Even though Democrats drew the new congressional map, they may have made themselves vulnerable here in a poor environment. Lean Democratic.



Dina Titus

2nd District. GOP Rep. Mark Amodei gave Danny Tarkanian yet another loss with his 55-33 percent primary win. The congressman shouldn't have trouble in the general election. Solid Republican.

3rd District. Attorney April Becker won the GOP primary with 65 percent and will face Democratic Rep. Susie Lee in the general election. This is regarded as Republicans' best pickup opportunity in the

state, but they could win all three seats they don't currently hold. Tilt Democratic.

4th District. After finishing second in the 2020 primary, insurance agency owner/Air Force veteran Sam Peters won the 2022 GOP primary with 48 percent and will face Democratic Rep. Steven Horsford in the general election. The congressman lost re-election in 2014 in President Barack Obama's second midterm and it's certainly possible he loses in Joe Biden's first. Lean Democratic.

New Jersey

3rd District. Republicans nominated yacht tycoon/retired punk rocker Bob Healey, who won 53 percent to controversial gym owner Ian Smith's 38 percent. Healey was the preferred candidate of national



Andy Kim

strategists but still faces a tough climb against Rep. Andy Kim, whose district got a lot more Democratic in redistricting. Solid Democratic.

after he voted for the bipartisan infrastructure bill and his district was made more Republican. Conservative pundit Mike Crispi was a real threat but was never endorsed by Trump. He finished with 37 percent to Smith's 58 percent. Solid Republican.

5th District. Investment banker Frank Pallota won the GOP primary with 50 percent. But considering Pallota lost to Democratic Josh Gottheimer by 7 points in 2020, some Republicans thought Nick De Gregorio would give them a better shot this fall. Solid Democratic.

7th District. The rematch is officially set between GOP state Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr. and Democratic Rep. Tom Malinowski. The congressman won their 2020 matchup by a little more than a point but the political environment is much better for Kean this time around. Republicans fully expect to win this race. Toss-up.

New Mexico

Governor. Republican Mark Ronchetti, the Albuquerque weatherman who lost a close race for U.S. Senate in 2020, is his party's nominee for governor after winning the primary with 58 percent. Likely Democratic.

2nd District. Former Las Cruces city councilor Gabe Vazquez won the Democratic primary with 76 percent and will face GOP Rep. Yvette Herrell in the general election. Democrats redrew the district to be more Democratic, but the midterm dynamic trending against Biden and his party will still make the congresswoman difficult to defeat. Toss-up.

3rd District. The rematch is set between GOP environmental engineer Alexis Martinez Johnson and Democratic Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez. The congresswoman was upset that Democrats made her district less Democratic in order to defeat Herrell in the neighboring 2nd. But Fernandez won the first round in 2020 by 17 points, and Martinez Johnson had less than \$5,000 in her campaign account on May 18, so the congresswoman has the early edge. Likely Democratic.

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Oregon

Governor. Republicans got the candidate they wanted in former state House Minority Leader Christina Dragan, who won the GOP primary with just 23 percent of the vote. Democrats nominated state House Speaker Tina Kotek over more moderate state Treasurer Tobias Read, 58-32 percent. Rounding out the general election will be former state Sen. Betsy Johnson, running a credible campaign as an independent. Likely Democratic.

4th District. State Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle won the Democratic nomination and will face Republican Alek Skarlatos in the general election. The Afghanistan War veteran lost to retiring Democratic Rep. Peter DeFazio by 6 points in 2020 but has a better national environment this time and doesn't have to defeat an incumbent. The Southern Oregon district would have voted for Biden by 12 points so it's still an uphill climb for Republicans. Likely Democratic.

5th District. Attorney Jamie McLeod-Skinner defeated Rep. Kurt Schrader in the Democratic primary, 55-45 percent. The congressman faced twin challenges of criticism for opposing key Democratic legislation and having to introduce himself to a swatch of new voters in Central Oregon because of redistricting. Some Democrats (including Schrader) believe McLeod-Skinner will make it more difficult for the party to hold the seat, but McLeod-Skinner is a self-described pragmatic progressive who has legitimate rural connections. Former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer gives Republicans a credible contender. Biden would have won the district with 53 percent. Lean Democratic.

6th District. Democratic state Rep. Andrea Salinas will face 2006/2008 5th District GOP nominee Mike Erickson in the general election. Salinas and allies were significantly outspent by economic development advisor Carrick Flynn and his supporters. Erickson has considerable baggage he'll have to answer for, but Biden's 55 percent performance in the district is within reach for the GOP under these circumstances. Likely Democratic.

Pennsylvania

Senate. It will be Lt. Gov. John Fetterman versus celebrity surgeon Mehmet Oz in one of the cycle's marquee matchups. Fetterman easily swatted away a once-promising opponent, Rep. Conor Lamb, 59-26 percent. Oz eked out a razor-thin victory of a few hundred votes against former hedge fund CEO Dave McCormick. Insurgent candidate Kathy Barnette placed third. A recent Suffolk Univ. poll indicates Oz has work to do to repair his image after facing millions of dollars in attack ads. But he'll have the national environment in his favor. Tilt Republican.



John Fetterman

Governor. State Sen. Doug Mastriano easily won the GOP primary with 44 percent, even as the field consolidated slightly in the closing weeks as some Republicans attempted to stop his nomination. Mastriano has lots of baggage, including being on video crossing police lines as part

of the Capitol mob on Jan. 6, 2021. He'll face state Attorney General Josh Shapiro in the fall. Tilt Democratic.

8th District. 2020 GOP nominee Jim Bognet won this year's primary with 69 percent and will face Democratic Rep. Matt Cartwright in November. The district got slightly better for the congressman through redistricting but it's still a seat Trump would have won in 2020, which will make it difficult to hold in this environment. Toss-up.



Courtesy Shaffer Campaign

Jeremy Shaffer

would have carried the redrawn district by more than 5 points, but with Democratic Rep. Conor Lamb leaving the seat for an ultimately unsuccessful Senate run and the political environment, this is a top takeover opportunity for Republicans. Tilt Democratic.

17th District.

Former Ross Town Commissioner Jeremy Shaffer won the GOP primary with 59 percent and will face attorney/Iraq War veteran Chris Deluzio, who won the Democratic primary with 64 percent, in November. Biden

South Carolina

1st District. Rep. Nancy Mace fended off a Trump-endorsed challenger, winning the GOP primary with 53 percent to former state Rep. Katie Arrington's 45 percent. Mace will face pediatrician Annie Andrews in the fall. Solid Republican.

4th District. There was some talk that Rep. William Timmons would be vulnerable in the primary, and he came less than 4 points away from being forced into a runoff. He should be fine in the general election. Solid Republican.

7th District. Rep. Tom Rice likely sealed his fate when he voted to impeach Trump following the Jan. 6 insurrection. State Rep. Russell Fry rode a Trump endorsement and a wave of voter anger over impeachment to a dominant 51-25 percent victory over Rice. Solid Republican.

South Dakota

Governor. Before GOP Gov. Kristi Noem can run for president, it's probably a good idea to win re-election. The governor won her primary 76-24 percent and shouldn't have any problems in November. Solid Republican.

At-Large District. GOP Rep. Dusty Johnson's television ads were evidence that he was taking his primary seriously. He won the nomination 59-41 percent, so Johnson's willingness to go up early could have been a key decision. Solid Republican. **IE**

CALENDAR

June 21	Virginia Primary
June 28	Illinois, Colorado, Utah, Oklahoma, New York (governor only) Primaries
July 19	Maryland Primary
Aug. 2	Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Washington Primaries
Aug. 4	Tennessee Primary

New Hampshire Redistricting: Finally

By Jacob Rubashkin

It was never supposed to be this difficult.

Following the 2020 Census, New Hampshire was apportioned two congressional districts: the same number it has had since 1883.

That means mapmakers had the job of drawing one single line, dividing the state into two seats. And for the past century, they have drawn that line straight down the middle, bisecting the Granite State into a western district anchored by Concord and including Coos County in the north, and an eastern district anchored by Manchester.

But after Republicans were unexpectedly swept back to full power in the state legislature in the 2020 elections, what appeared to be a straightforward task devolved into the longest-running redistricting battle of the cycle.

On two separate occasions, GOP mapmakers in the state legislature passed a congressional map that would have radically altered the status quo of two competitive districts, in favor of shoring up one district for Democratic incumbent Annie Kuster, while imperiling Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas by making the other district significantly more Republican.

The first proposal would have broken the east-west tradition by wrapping the western district south along the state's eastern border all the way to Dover, turning it into a reliably Democratic seat but making the eastern seat much more Republican.

The second proposal would have shifted Manchester into the western district, to the same effect.

GOP Gov. Chris Sununu refused to sign either plan, instead offering his own proposal that the legislature never acted upon.

Ultimately, the state Supreme Court was forced to step in and draw its own map. The result was a map of least change, with just a few thousand residents and five towns shifting from the 1st District to the 2nd District to balance the districts' populations

The overall partisanship of the two seats is also unchanged. Both seats are competitive but slightly favor Democrats. New Hampshire has been known to flow with the wave of a cycle. In 2006, Democrats took over both House seats. And in 2010, Republicans took both seats back.

With New Hampshire complete all 50 states have a congressional map in place for 2022 (though a federal judge just rejected Louisiana's map, a decision now on appeal).

1st District

The 1st, currently represented by two-term Democrat Pappas, was at the center of the fight between Sununu and the GOP-controlled state legislature. The 1st has been the more competitive of New Hampshire's seats for the past decade; GOP mapmakers hoped to make Pappas even more vulnerable, even at the expense of forfeiting any real chance at the 2nd District.

Sununu, on the other hand, hoped for a map that would give Republicans a good shot at sweeping both seats in the fall.

Under the map approved by the state Supreme Court, the 1st remains an eastern district, anchored by Manchester. In order to meet its target population, the 1st had to shrink by roughly 9,000 residents.

To that end, it surrendered five towns — Jackson, Albany, Sandwich, Campton, and New Hampton — to the 2nd District.

Because those five towns cast just over 3,000 votes in the 2020 presidential election, the overall partisanship of the 1st District is entirely

Rating New Hampshire's New Districts

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	INITIAL RATING
1st	Chris Pappas, D	Tilt Democratic
2nd	Ann McLane Kuster, D	Likely Democratic

unchanged. Joe Biden would have carried the new 1st by 6 points, 52.2-46.2 percent, the exact margin he carried the old 1st. Trump would have carried the district narrowly in 2016, 49-47 percent.

A crowded field of Republicans are vying for the chance to take on Pappas, who won his first election in 2018, 54-45 percent, and re-election in 2020 by a narrower 51-46 percent margin.

Former state GOP executive director Matt Mowers, who was the party's nominee in 2020, is running again. As is state Rep. Tim Baxter, who has support from the party's libertarian wing including Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul; former Trump campaign staffer Karoline Leavitt, who has backing from Trump-world figures such as Sean Hannity as well as from House GOP Conference Chairwoman Elise Stefanik; Gail Huff Brown, a former news anchor and the wife of former Massachusetts Senator/2014 New Hampshire U.S. Senate nominee Scott Brown; and former Executive Councilor Russell Prescott. Some GOP strategists would prefer Mowers — who was endorsed by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy — or Brown to Baxter or Leavitt.

Pappas begins the race with a handful of advantages. The partisan lean of the district is still in Democrats' favor, if just slightly. New Hampshire holds one of the latest primaries in the nation, on Sept. 13, so the large GOP field will be more focused on each other than they will on the incumbent for the next several months. And once Republicans do select a nominee, that person will likely have spent most of their cash and will have just five weeks to run a general election campaign. Pappas, on the other hand, had \$1.8 million in the bank on March 31 and is already in general election mode. Tilt Democratic.

2nd District

The 2nd picks up those five towns and 9,000 residents from the 1st District, and is otherwise unchanged.

That's not bad news for Kuster, who has held the seat since 2012, most recently winning by 10 points in 2020 over repeat GOP nominee Steve Negrón.

Biden would have carried the new 2nd by 9 points, 54-45 percent. In 2016, Hillary Clinton would have won it by just more than 2 points.

The GOP field is still taking shape, as many potential candidates were waiting to see if this district would become significantly more Democratic.

The highest-profile candidate thus far is George Hansel, the mayor of Keene (pop. 23,047) who secured a coveted endorsement from Gov. Sununu shortly after entering the race at the end of May. Former Hillsborough County treasurer Robert Burns is running (he defeated 1st District Rep. Pappas, 58-42 percent, for the treasurer position in 2010), as is Lily Tang Williams, who won 3.6 percent of the vote as the Libertarian nominee for Senate in Colorado in 2016.

Kuster had \$2.4 million in the bank on March 31 and Republicans won't know their nominee for another three months. Likely Democratic. **IE**

Continued from page 1

Missouri border, all the way to Wapello County (Ottumwa).

But because the district is so concentrated in Polk County, those changes did not alter the underlying composition of the seat significantly. According to *Daily Kos Elections*, 87 percent of the new 3rd's population previously lived in the old 3rd.

Polk, the only county in the state to have extensive suburbs, is also the source of most of the district's Democratic votes. It was the only county in the district Biden would have carried, and supplied 71 percent of the total Democratic votes in the district. Polk was also the only county Axne carried in either 2018 or 2020 in the old district.

Politically, the 3rd District is evenly divided, and in recent years has been Democrats' best in the state. Democrats hold a slight voter registration advantage in the new district — 35.3 percent to Republicans 33.6 percent as of June 1— and the number of registered Democrats is the highest of the state's four districts.

In 2020, Trump would have carried the 3rd by 0.4 points, 49.2-48.8 percent. That's down from 2016, when he would have carried it 48-45 percent.

In the 2020 Senate contest, GOP Sen. Joni Ernst would have won a similar 48.7-47.3 percent victory.

In 2018, a better year for Iowa Democrats, the party's gubernatorial nominee Fred Hubbell would have carried the new 3rd, 51-47 percent.



Cindy Axne

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

The Democratic Incumbent

Axne, 57, is in her second term representing the 3rd District. The Grand Rapids-born Axne grew up on the south side of Des Moines, near where her mother's family had a farm. She graduated from University of Iowa in 1987 and lived for 17 years in Chicago, where in 2002 she received an MBA from Northwestern. (In a harrowing incident, the 6-foot-tall Axne also fought off an armed would-be rapist in a Chicago alley in the late 80s.)

Axne worked in business management, including for Anne Taylor, Limited Express, and the *Chicago Tribune*. After a brief stint in Wisconsin, Axne moved back to Iowa in 2005 and worked various positions in the administrations of Democratic Govs. Tom Vilsack and Chet Culver. After, she founded a digital design firm with her husband that does work for clients including 5-Hour Energy.

In 2017, Axne announced she would take on Young in her first run for office. Another candidate, real estate developer Theresa Greenfield, had more money and establishment support. But Greenfield failed to qualify for the ballot (two years later she was the party's nominee for Senate).

Axne defeated community organizer Eddie Mauro and former Bernie Sanders staffer Pete D'Alessandro with 58 percent in the Democratic primary.

In the general election, she faced two-term GOP incumbent David Young in a race that was rated a toss-up on Election Day. Axne won narrowly, 49-47 percent. She initially trailed Young in fundraising, but after the primary zoomed by him, outspending him \$5.2 million to \$2.9

million. Democrats won three of four Iowa districts (and nearly the 4th) that year.

In 2020, Young returned for a rematch. Axne defeated him once again, by a narrower 49-48 percent margin, as Democrats lost their grip on both the 1st and 2nd Districts to the east. That left Axne, who outspent Young by an even greater \$6.3 million to \$3.1 million, as the sole remaining Democrat in the delegation.

In Congress, Axne sits on the Agriculture and Finance committees. She has a 72 percent lifetime rating from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which endorsed her 2020 re-election bid, and high scores from a battery of liberal groups including the NAACP, ACLU, Planned Parenthood, NEA and AFL-CIO.

Axne's campaign team includes media consultants Maura Dougherty and BJ Neidhardt of Prism Communications, pollster Brian Stryker of Impact Research, and direct mail consultants Gabby Adler and Jeff Gumbinner of GDA Wins.

Axne reported \$2.8 million in the bank on May 18.

The Republican Challenger

Zach Nunn, 43, is a state senator representing Polk County east of Des Moines and most of Jasper County. Born in Story City, Nunn graduated from Des Moines' Drake University in 2002. After briefly working for Grassley, he joined the Air Force as an intelligence officer in 2003, amassing several overseas deployments including three to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and time as a legislative affairs officer.

He received a master's in military operational art and science from Air University in Alabama in 2004, and a master's in international relations and national security from Cambridge University while stationed in the UK in 2007.

From 2008-2013, Nunn served in various staff positions within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, including two years as a staffer to the National Security Council.

After leaving active duty, Nunn worked for two years for a Boston cybersecurity company. He settled in Bondurant, Iowa, and ran for office in 2014, defeating Democratic state Rep. Joe Riding, 56-44 percent.

In 2016, Nunn defeated Riding again, 62-38 percent, as Trump carried the district by a narrower 55-39 percent.

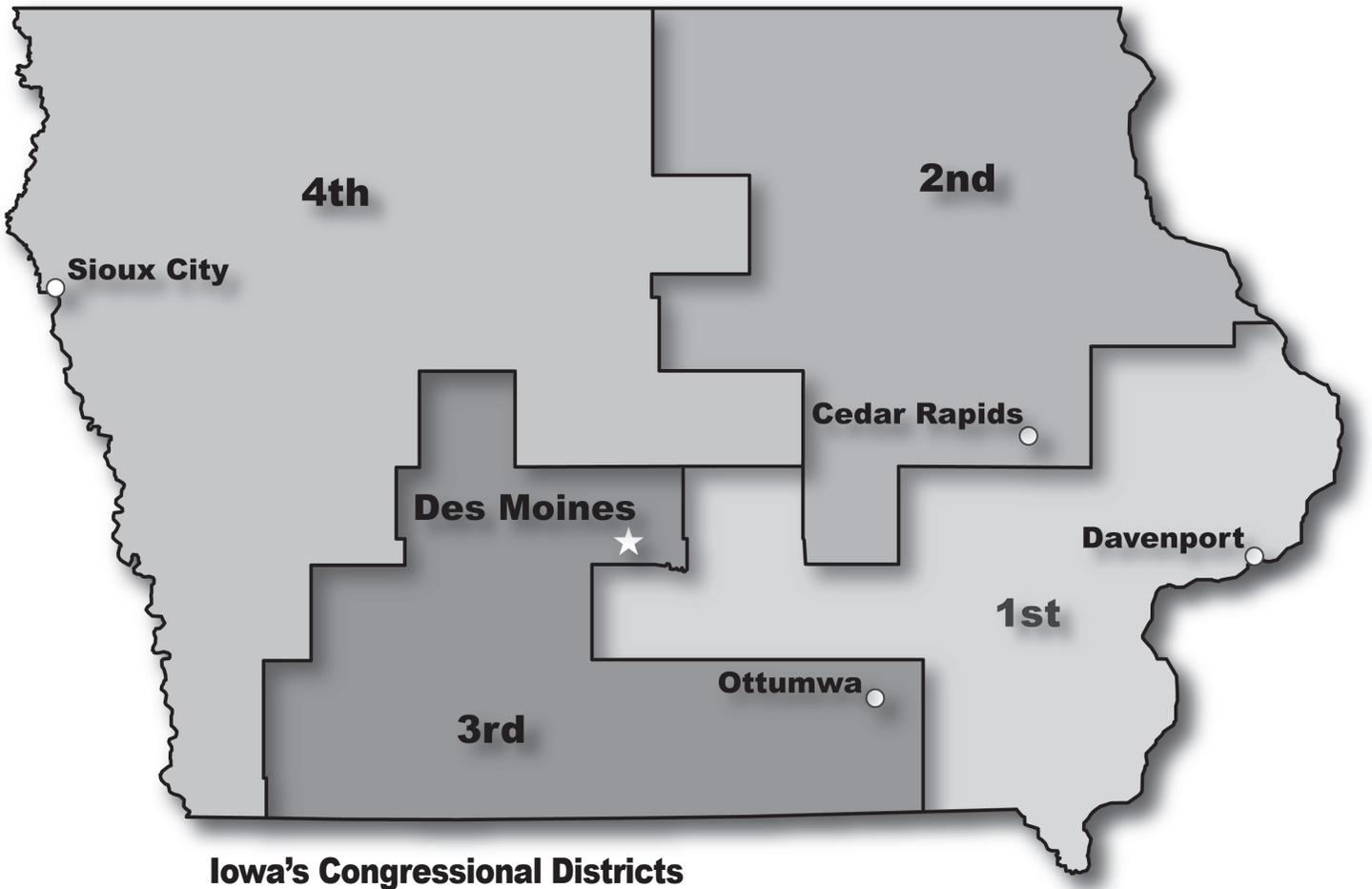
Nunn's elevation to the state Senate in 2018 was the last domino to fall in a chain of events that began with the surprise retirement of popular Democratic state Sen. Chaz Allen after the primary. With Allen's seat open, the unheralded candidate who won the GOP primary, Tim Shay, stepped aside to allow Republicans to run Nunn, a more formidable contender, instead.

Democrats, meanwhile, struggled to replace Allen. Their first choice, Democratic staffer Taylor Van De Krol, dropped out just eight days after accepting the nomination, citing personal reasons. The replacement nominee, Altoona rancher Dan Nieland, saw his campaign upended after his wife was indicted on federal fraud charges weeks before the election (she was later acquitted).

Nunn won, 57-43 percent, even as GOP Gov. Kim Reynolds carried the district by just 3 points, 50-47 percent.

After holding a district-wide "listening tour" in 2020, Nunn passed on challenging Axne that year. But in 2021, Nunn threw his hat in the ring and became the immediate frontrunner for the nomination, especially after his main opponent switched to the state auditor race. Nunn defeated financial planner Nicole Hasso, 66-20 percent in the recent

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Iowa's Congressional Districts

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primary even though Hasso proved a strong fundraiser and had an endorsement from Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

Nunn spent a considerable sum in the primary — \$660,000 — and reported \$223,000 in the bank on May 18.

In the state legislature, Nunn has an 82 percent lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union, a 100 percent from the NFIB-Iowa in 2020, and a 92 percent from the NRA in 2018.

Nunn's campaign team includes media consultant Annie Kelly Kuhle of FP1 Strategies, pollster Erik Iverson of Moore Information Group, Redwave Communications for direct mail, and Targeted Victory for digital.

How It Plays Out

Republicans see Axne as among the most vulnerable Democrats, as she's one of the handful of incumbents running in seats Trump would have carried and she won with just a plurality in both her contests. One national Republican strategist even chafed at the notion this was a "top race," as compared to more Democratic seats on the map, because of how confident the party is in flipping it.

To win, Axne will have to differentiate herself from Democrats' national brand, which is unpopular around the country and especially in GOP-leaning territory. Biden's approval rating is an abysmal 40 percent approve/54 percent disapprove nationally, and his statewide approval in Iowa is markedly lower, according to private and public partisan data.

One cautiously optimistic Democratic source not involved with the campaign said that being in Des Moines, a relatively inexpensive media market, created some opportunity for Axne: "She's got to differentiate

herself from the train wreck of the national party brand — she's got to jump out just in time... If you're in a media market where you can tell your story, you can disassociate yourself from the national environment."

Redistricting also made the district slightly more efficient from an advertising standpoint by removing most of the Omaha media market and only adding a sliver of the much less expensive Ottumwa market.

Democrats acknowledge that, at this point in the year, it's unlikely any more significant legislation, such as a pared down Build Back Better bill, passes Congress. Instead, they'll reach back to specific infrastructure projects in their respective districts funded by last year's bipartisan bill, as well as votes on legislation unlikely to become law. Specifically to this race, Democratic sources bring up the bill to cap insulin prices, and the upcoming "Lower Food and Fuel Costs" bill, which would authorize year-round sales of ethanol gasoline.

Axne's allies will point to elements of her record they say demonstrate bipartisan bona fides, such as her bill with Grassley and 4th District Rep. Randy Feenstra to restructure the cattle marketplace to help independent farmers, and her rating as one of the top 20 most bipartisan members of Congress as calculated by the Lugar Center.

Just as importantly, Axne's allies hope that her presence in the district — including her monthly tour of all 16 counties in the old seat, and 21 counties in the redrawn seat — will help differentiate her from the national party.

In particular, one Democratic source pointed to Axne's presence on the ground in Mills County and work with Gov. Reynolds to secure federal relief following severe flooding in 2019. In 2020, Axne was the

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strongest Democrat in the county, running ahead of Biden, Greenfield, and the party's state Senate nominee. Axne still lost by 32 points — and that particular county is no longer in the district — but she will need to replicate that feat of “losing by less” in much of the new district, while also winning big in Polk.

Attack Formation

As they plan to in districts around the country, Republicans will hammer Axne over inflation, cost of living, high gas prices, and crime. With Biden's approval as low as it is, Republicans are confident that independent voters will be predisposed against any Democrat, and that in an evenly divided district such as this one it will prove impossible for Axne to win over enough voters who disapprove of Biden to succeed.

Republicans also hope to make an issue of allegations, leveled by the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center, that Axne potentially violated the STOCK Act and House Ethics Rules by failing to report several dozen stock trades, valued between \$43,000 and \$645,000, in 2021.

Axne, who says she never personally directed trades, filed amended reports and her office blamed the omission on clerical issues. She later came out in support of a ban on members making stock trades, which Democrats say will insulate her and Republicans say only underscores her earlier culpability.

Nunn will have to introduce himself to most of the district's voters — his state Senate seat overlaps with roughly 5 percent of the new 3rd District — and even though he did run a few TV ads in the Des Moines media market in 2018 and during the primary this year, he begins with a significant name ID disadvantage to Axne.

Nunn's early ads and campaign materials center his military service, with photos of Nunn in his Air Force uniform displayed prominently on his website. His logo features stylized wings, a nod to his role as an aviator. And one of the recurring elements of his digital and television advertising is his role in co-founding Task Force Argo, a volunteer group that helped evacuate at-risk Americans and Afghan allies from Afghanistan following the fall of Kabul in 2021.

Nunn has also pointed to the state legislature's passage of a large tax cut earlier this year, and says he'll fight for lower taxes in Congress as well.

Democrats, conscious of the challenges posed by the poor national environment, are focused on disqualifying Nunn as an alternative, and have already started digging into opposition research on the state senator which they hope to deploy to portray him as a ingenuine power-seeker out for himself. (One such story they may dredge up involves Nunn using a baby monitor to spy on a student government rival in 2002, of which he later told the *Des Moines Register*, “It's something I'll have to live with for the rest of my life.”)

Axne's first advertisement following the primary was a negative spot. It linked contributions from the owner of an amusement park in Nunn's district and Nunn's vote on an April 2021 bill that loosened safety rules by allowing the park to hire minors, with the death of a child at the Adventureland park shortly thereafter.



Zach Nunn

Courtesy Nunn Campaign

Nunn's campaign called the attack “a desperate ad filled with lies and deception,” noting that several Democrats also voted for the bill, and that the operators of the Raging River ride in question were over 18.

Axne's decision to go on air earlier than in her previous two campaigns, and with a negative ad based on an explosive claim, underscores the heightened pressure she is under in this cycle's contest.

It's also a sign of Axne pushing her main advantages — money and name ID — while she still has them. Nunn's finances are depleted from the primary, while Axne's war chest is at full strength. Axne's allies believe her 2-to-1 spending advantages over Young in both 2018 and 2020 were integral to her successes.

Republican sources, however, see the move as a sign of desperation, and note that, while Nunn likely will not be on air countering Axne's claims in the near future, he did spend \$130,000 on positive TV spots during the primary.

Nunn's allies believe that in addition to the environment, he already begins in a better spot than Young did. As evidence they point to Nunn's overperformance of Young in the portions of his state Senate district that overlap with the 3rd District in 2018: Nunn won 1,038 more votes than did Young (who only lost district-wide by 7,709 votes). Several Republican sources spoke of Nunn as being a stronger candidate than Young, who they believed suffered from being old news when he tried to reclaim his seat in 2020.

One differentiator between this race, and the other two competitive Iowa races in the 1st and 2nd Districts, is the significant suburban population surrounding Des Moines. That may make Democrats more comfortable going on offense on abortion, especially with a looming Supreme Court decision striking down *Roe v. Wade*. Nunn supports banning abortion in all cases with no exceptions, while Democrats point to a September 2021 statewide survey from respected Iowa pollster Ann Selzer indicating that just 13 percent of Iowans hold that position, while 57 percent believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

The issue may have particular salience in Iowa, which, unlike other GOP-controlled states, does not have a so-called “trigger law” that will ban abortion should *Roe* fall. Instead, Republicans in the state legislature are in the process of amending the state's constitution to restrict abortion access, a move Democrats in the state hope will motivate their voting base in an otherwise-brutal cycle.

The NRCC has already announced \$1.04 million in TV ad reservations in the Des Moines media market earmarked for this race, while the McCarthy-affiliated Congressional Leadership Fund has booked \$975,000. The Pelosi-aligned House Majority PAC has reserved \$960,000 to support Axne. Des Moines was not included in the DCCC's initial ad buy announced in June. Buys may be augmented or canceled later in the cycle.

The Bottom Line

Even though Axne begins the general election with some advantages including fundraising and name ID, this is the type of race Republicans should win if the national political environment is as good as advertised. Nunn isn't the perfect candidate, but he should be a credible candidate for voters looking to send more Republicans to Washington to rein in the Democrats in power.

While this is a top-tier race now, there's the potential that the weight of Biden's job rating drags down Axne to the point that the race is seen as unwinnable for the congresswoman before the November elections, and both parties redeploy their financial resources to other competitive races.