

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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Georgia 6 Special: Down to the Wire

By Nathan L. Gonzales

It shouldn't have been a surprise when Democrats lost two special elections in districts Donald Trump won by over 20 points, but explaining away a loss in Georgia's 6th District, where Hillary Clinton narrowly lost to Trump would be much more difficult. Thankfully for Democrats, Jon Ossoff is well within striking distance and may even have a slight advantage heading into the marquee matchup on June 20.



A majority of the public and private evidence in the race suggests that the 30-year-old former Capitol Hill staffer has at least a slight advantage over Republican Karen Handel.

There's been limited public polling. A recent Landmark Communications poll for WSB-TV, conducted May 30-31, showed Ossoff with a slight 49-48 percent edge. An automated SurveyUSA poll, conducted May 16-20 showed Ossoff with a 51-44 percent advantage. On their own, those surveys are not enough to make projections, but they are only the tip of the polling iceberg and just one part of an analysis.

It's important to avoid drawing dramatic conclusions from a single special election result or event, but when taken collectively, it's hard to ignore a pattern.

Hundreds of thousands of people marched in opposition to Trump after the inauguration, abnormally large crowds loudly protested GOP Members of Congress at town halls, and Democratic candidates have overperformed in special elections.

In the 4th District of Kansas, Democratic attorney James Thompson outperformed Clinton by more than 12 points (46-33 percent) and in the more recent Montana special election musician Rob Quist outperformed Clinton by more than 8 points (44-36 percent). In both cases, the Democratic nominee was dramatically outspent.

Ossoff needs to outperform Clinton by a little more than 3 points to win later this month, considering Clinton lost the suburban Atlanta district 48.3-46.8 percent. The young Democrat came close to winning the seat outright in April with a 48.1 percent performance and combined with four other Democrats to get close to 49 percent.

Georgia's 6th District has become the cause celebre for Democrats nationwide looking to regain their footing after the 2016 election results, and Ossoff continues to enjoy a financial advantage after raising at least \$20 million in just a few months, dwarfing Handel's money.

Comparing combined Democratic and Republican spending in the race can be deceiving. Ossoff is carrying the weight of the television campaign for Democrats but, as a candidate, he is paying a lower rate for his ads

Continued on page 2

2018 Senate Ratings

Toss-Up

Donnelly (D-Ind.)

Manchin (D-W.Va.)

Heitkamp (D-N.D.)

McCaskill (D-Mo.)

Tilt Democratic

Baldwin (D-Wis.)

Nelson (D-Fla.)

Tester (D-Mont.)

Tilt Republican

Lean Democratic

Brown (D-Ohio)

Casey (D-Pa.)

Lean Republican

Heller (R-Nev.)

Likely Democratic

Kaine (D-Va.)

Likely Republican

Flake (R-Ariz.)

Solid Democratic

Cantwell (D-Wash.)

Cardin (D-Md.)

Carper (D-Del.)

Feinstein (D-Calif.)

Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)

Heinrich (D-N.M.)

Hirono (D-Hawaii)

King (I-Maine)

Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

Menendez (D-N.J.)

Murphy (D-Conn.)

Sanders (I-Vt.)

Stabenow (D-Mich.)

Warren (D-Mass.)

Whitehouse (D-R.I.)

Solid Republican

Barrasso (R-Wyo.)

Corker (R-Tenn.)

Cruz (R-Texas)

Fischer (R-Neb.)

Hatch (R-Utah)

Strange (R-Ala.)

Wicker (R-Miss.)

	GOP	DEM
115th Congress	52	48
Not up this cycle	43	23
Currently Solid	7	15
Competitive	2	10

Georgia: Not Quite Tilt D

Continued from page 1

compared to GOP outside groups trying to make up the spending gap.

"You have to have the environment or the money," according to one GOP strategist. "We have neither." Of course, that doesn't mean Handel can't win.



Karen Handel

"The only way this thing goes sideways is if the GOP is successful getting out hard core Republicans who did not vote in the first round, which is tough considering there was record turnout already and for once Dems have

higher enthusiasm," according to one Democratic strategist. "The June 20 election is all about us getting those people back out versus the GOP trying to get those who did not come out in April out."

That's exactly what Republicans are trying to do. Congressional Leadership Fund, a GOP-aligned outside group, has 100 paid staff in the district focused on get-out-the-vote efforts, specifically targeting 38,000 high-propensity Republicans who didn't vote in the initial round of balloting.

After the first few days of early voting, Republicans are encouraged that the race is falling in line with the district's traditional GOP lean, while Democrats are expressing some concern about the early numbers. But it's not completely clear whether Republicans are expanding the electorate enough from the first round or merely getting their voters to vote early. **IE**



Jon Ossoff

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Introducing the Expanded Inside Elections Team

By Nathan L. Gonzales

I hate press releases, but I'm delighted to introduce a few new members of the Inside Elections team, so this brief will have to suffice.

Later this month, Leah Askarinam will start as a full-time Reporter & Analyst for Inside Elections, covering all of the key House, Senate, and gubernatorial races. She was most recently an Assistant Editor with The Atlantic, where she worked closely with veteran columnist Ron Brownstein to analyze data that demonstrates the demographic trends that shape politics and policy.

Leah grew up in Bethesda, Maryland and moved to New Orleans to attend Tulane University, where she was editor-in-chief of the student-run newspaper. She stayed nearby for another few years as a middle school English teacher in Chalmette, through the Teach for America program.

I'm also excited to welcome Nathaniel Rakich as a Contributing Analyst. He'll be working on long-term data projects that we'll unveil later in the cycle.

Nathaniel's writing and analysis has been published in The New Yorker, FiveThirtyEight, the Boston Globe, and Grantland, and he previously worked as a senior political analyst at a prominent data and research firm. In his spare time, the Harvard University graduate runs Baseballot, a blog about baseball and politics. In past lives, Nathaniel has worked as a front-office assistant for the Boston Red Sox and still lives in the Boston area.

We're also adding Robert Yoon as a Contributing Reporter & Analyst. For more than 17 years, Rob was Director of Political Research at CNN, where he was one of the network's principal authorities on elections, debates, the presidential nomination process, voting procedures, and money in politics.

Over the course of five presidential campaign cycles, Rob has helped prepare eight different moderators for 30 presidential debates dating back to 2000. He has received two Emmy Awards, five total Emmy nominations, a Peabody Award, and a Headliner Award for his contributions to CNN's election coverage. Most recently he was on the ground in Montana providing special election coverage for Inside Elections.

That's in addition to our Production Artist Will Taylor, who is invaluable in making each issue coherent and completed on time, and of course Stuart Rothenberg, Senior Editor and Founder who continues to write his column and provide guidance. **IE**

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Montana At-Large: Dems Eye 2018 in Wake of Gianforte Victory

By Robert Yoon

MISSOULA, MONTANA – Republican Greg Gianforte's six-point win last week over musician Rob Quist to fill Montana's lone U.S. House seat continues the GOP's 20-year stranglehold on state congressional races. But given the chaotic manner in which the race ended, as well as long-standing political trends in midterm elections, state Democrats are now shifting their sights to 2018.

Gianforte enters office with more personal baggage than usual for a typical House freshman. He faces a June 7 deadline to appear in a Gallatin County courthouse for a misdemeanor assault charge stemming from an Election eve incident in which the Republican allegedly "body-slammed" a reporter during a meet-and-greet event at the campaign's headquarters in Bozeman.

The incident thrust the race into the national spotlight in the final 24 hours, and Gianforte ultimately apologized for his behavior in his victory speech, saying he had made a "mistake." Next year will mark the first time since the incident that Gianforte will face the nearly two-thirds of voters who cast their ballots early, and Democrats will be quick to remind them as often as possible.

No Democrats have yet announced their candidacies for 2018, but early speculation so far has focused mostly on individuals who have previously sought the seat. State Reps. Amanda Curtis of Butte and Kelly McCarthy of Billings both lost the 2017 nomination to Quist in a contest that was decided by local party members instead of a primary. Curtis was also the 2014 nominee for U.S. Senate against then-U.S. Rep. Steve Daines, who won the seat 58-40 percent.

"I would say there will be a strong push to get Amanda Curtis to run again. I think elements of those who want to take the more progressive national-party approach really were drawn to her," said Lee Banville, an Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Montana in Missoula and also the former editor-in-chief of PBS's Online NewsHour. "She's a pretty aggressive progressive, and I think they think she might have been able to mount a stronger campaign against Gianforte in 2017, and I think they'll try to get her to run in 2018."

McCarthy told *Inside Elections* he has not made any decisions about 2018 but expects that any Democratic hopeful would need to announce within the next two months in order to mount a credible campaign.

"Congressional campaigns are never-ending," said McCarthy. "Gianforte is going to be off and running, so whoever we have running against him will have to be in the game as well. And we'll have a statement I'm sure by then."

Other previous House hopefuls mentioned as possible 2018 contenders are John Lewis, a former aide to Sen. Max Baucus who lost the seat to Republican Ryan Zinke in 2014, and Dan West, a former Capitol Hill staffer and Barack Obama administration appointee at NASA who sought the 2017 nomination. After winning the party's nod, Quist said of West in a tweet, "Keep your eye on [West,] Montana. He's a brilliant young leader."

Also focused as a possible candidate is Brian Ohs, a rancher and coordinator for Montana Trout Unlimited, a statewide conservation group. He is also the son of the late Karl Ohs, a former Republican lieutenant governor and state GOP chairman.



Greg Gianforte delivers his victory/apology speech on Election Night.

Ohs has not indicated that he is considering a 2018 run but said to *Inside Elections*, "Like a lot of my neighbors in Montana, I was troubled by Mr. Gianforte's behavior at the end of the campaign, and I'll be watching him closely in Washington. He certainly doesn't represent the Republican Party my father was so proud to be a part of."

As for Quist, the songwriter and small businessman has not made any statements about his plans for next year, but if he is considering a rematch, he may face a difficult time convincing state Democrats that he can improve upon his 2017 showing, where he underperformed in key areas throughout the state.

Although Quist seemed to gain considerable traction in the final weeks of the campaign and, with 44 percent of the final vote, ended up with the best showing of any Democratic U.S. House candidate in the state since the 2000 election, county-level special election results indicate the party still has a lot of work to do in state battlegrounds, most notably in Yellowstone, Montana's most populous county and the home of Billings. Quist received only 37 percent of the Yellowstone vote, which was only slightly higher than the 32 percent Hillary Clinton received there in the 2016 presidential race. In comparison, Democratic incumbents Gov. Steve Bullock and Sen. Jon Tester never dipped below 47 percent in their combined four successful bids.

Quist did well in Missoula and Gallatin Counties, the second and third largest in the state, posting sizable margins of victory, but in most of the counties where he won, namely Lewis & Clark, Silver Bow, Hill, Glacier, Big Horn, Roosevelt, Deer Lodge, and Blaine counties, he was far off the benchmarks set by Bullock and Tester in their successful bids. Quist also failed to hold the state's fifth largest county, Cascade, the home of Great Falls, even though Bullock and Tester each won there twice, as did Obama in 2008, albeit narrowly.

"Quist would have been an excellent congressman, but being a good public servant doesn't necessarily make you a great candidate," said Matt McKenna, a Quist adviser who also worked on both successful Tester campaigns, as communications director in 2006 and as an adviser in 2012.

Banville says that without a clear frontrunner for 2018, state Democrats

Continued on page 4

Montana: 2018 Race Starts as Lean Republican

Continued from page 3

will have to wage an internal debate over the direction of the party.

"There's a real struggle in the Montana Democratic Party. Are they going to lean more towards the national party, more liberal, more progressive, or develop more of a 'Yellow Dog' strategy? Are they going to focus on local issues or try to go national?" he asked. "They have to choose a path. Are they going to try to bring people up like Tester who was a farmer, or are they going to try to build their traditional base from places like Missoula, Billings, Helena and Bozeman? They haven't quite picked a strategy yet."

One ray of hope for Democrats: In the past century, the president's party has lost an average of 30 House seats in midterm elections. Although Bill Clinton and George W. Bush bucked that trend when their parties gained seats in the 1998 and 2002 midterms, generally, the president's party faces a tough time at the ballot box when the race for the White House is not at the top of the ticket. Montana Democrats hope that an anti-Trump midterm cycle could lift the tide for Democratic candidates nationwide and boost their chances to defeat Gianforte.

In addition, Tester is up for a third term in 2018, and his presence at the top of the ticket could only help the eventual Democratic House candidate.

"The full weight of the Tester organization will be on the ballot in 2018," said McKenna. "The Tester organization is a big headwind for Gianforte. He's not running against Jon Tester, but he is sort of running against Jon Tester."

As for Gianforte, the incoming freshman can expect to be under considerable scrutiny on Capitol Hill in the aftermath of the alleged "body-slam" incident, both for his interactions with the congressional press corps as well as his approach to policy issues.

"It's going to depend on how he behaves in Congress. Although they're fairly conservative, Montanans tend to like people who get the job done, not people who are overtly partisan," said Banville. "Max Baucus would get elected again and again and was very much the worker guy in the Senate. Is he going to take that approach or is he going to be a strident Trumpian?"

As the dust settles from the special election, the regular general

election won't get started for at least another few weeks. We're starting the 2018 race as Lean Republican and will re-evaluate as the Democratic field and the national environment solidifies.

IE

2018 House Ratings

Toss-Up (4R, 3D)

AZ 1 (O'Halleran, D)	MN 2 (Lewis, R)
CA 49 (Issa, R)	NJ 5 (Gottheimer, D)
GA 6 (VACANT, Price, R)	TX 23 (Hurd, R)
MN 1 (Open; Walz, DFL)	

Tilt Democratic (3D)

FL 7 (Murphy, D)
NH 1 (Shea-Porter, D)
NV 3 (Rosen, D)

Tilt Republican (4R)

CO 6 (Coffman, R)
FL 26 (Curbelo, R)
NY 19 (Faso, R)
VA 10 (Comstock, R)

Lean Democratic (3D, 1R)

FL 13 (Crist, D)
FL 27 (OPEN; Ros-Lehtinen, R)
MN 7 (Peterson, DFL)
MN 8 (Nolan, DFL)

Lean Republican (13R)

AZ 2 (McSally, R)
CA 10 (Denham, R)
CA 25 (Knight, R)
CA 39 (Royce, R)
CA 48 (Rohrabacher, R)
IA 1 (Blum, R)
KS 3 (Yoder, R)
MN 3 (Paulsen, R)
MT A-L (Gianforte, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NY 22 (Tenney, R)
PA 8 (Fitzpatrick, R)
PA 16 (Smucker, R)

Likely Democratic (5D)

CA 7 (Bera, D)
CA 24 (Carbajal, D)
IA 2 (Loebsack, D)
PA 17 (Cartwright, D)
WI 3 (Kind, D)

Likely Republican (17R)

CA 21 (Valadao, R)
CA 45 (Walters, R)
CA 50 (Duncan, R)
IL 6 (Roskam, R)
IL 13 (Davis, R)
IA 3 (Young, R)
KS 2 (Open; Jenkins, R)
ME 2 (Poliquin, R)
MI 8 (Bishop, R)
MI 11 (Trott, R)
NJ 7 (Lance, R)
NJ 11 (Frelinghuysen, R)
NY 24 (Katko, R)

	GOP	DEM
115th Congress	241	194
Currently Solid	202	180
Competitive	39	14
Needed for majority	218	

moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans
Takeovers in Italics

CALENDAR 2017

June 6	California's 34th Special General Election
June 6	New Jersey Gubernatorial Primary Elections
June 13	Virginia Gubernatorial Primary Elections
June 20	Georgia's 6th Special Runoff Election
June 20	South Carolina's 5th Special General Election
August 15	Alabama Senate Special Primary Election
Sept. 26	Alabama Senate Special Runoff Election
Nov. 7	Virginia, New Jersey Gubernatorial Elections
Dec. 12	Alabama Senate special general election

Minnesota House Races: Majority at Stake

By Nathan L. Gonzales

Donald Trump came close to breaking Republicans' presidential losing streak in Minnesota that has spanned over four decades, though he didn't need the 10 electoral votes anyway. Next year, the North Star State will be one of the most critical battlegrounds in the fight for the House.

At least a handful of districts are competitive, including three vulnerable seats Democrats need to hold to maximize their gains elsewhere in the state and around the country.

The Democratic Party (more precisely Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, as it is called in the state), has two serious takeover opportunities and the party probably needs to gain at least a seat or two in Minnesota to net the 24 seats they need nationwide for a majority. But it won't be easy since Trump carried four out of the five seats

in play, and some by a significant margin.

House candidates and incumbents will also be competing for time, money, and television ad space next year with DFL Sen. Amy Klobuchar's re-election bid (on her way to a potential future presidential run) and a wide open race for governor, since DFL Gov. Mark Dayton isn't running for re-election.

Similar to their challenge nationwide, Democrats will need to harness the energy from the base that has erupted since Trump took office, but understand he isn't toxic in many of the areas they need to win to gain seats.

1st District

DFL Rep. Tim Walz is running for governor, leaving behind a difficult open seat for Democrats to defend. Trump defeated Hillary Clinton 53-38 percent in the 1st District, which stretches along the southern part of the state and includes Rochester (home to the Mayo Clinic), Mankato, Austin (home of the SPAM museum) and Winona.

Walz was first elected in 2006 when he defeated GOP Rep. Gil Gutknecht in the Democratic wave and has been re-elected ever since, including presidential years when Barack Obama won the seat narrowly and in good Republican years.

Former state Rep. Terry Morrow (who managed Walz's 2016 campaign) was one of the first names mentioned, but the UC-Davis graduate hasn't received much attention in Washington. Public school teacher and coach John Austinson, who lost a 2016 race to GOP state Rep. Nels Pierson, is also running.

The two biggest potential DFL contenders are state Sen. Nick Frentz and former Department of Defense official Dan Feehan.

Frentz, a personal injury attorney, was first elected to the state Senate in 2016, 56-37 percent, to an open seat that has been in DFL hands for 25 years. The 53-year-old potential candidate grew up in Davis, California, where his mother served in the state Senate. But his father is from Mankato and Nick moved to Minnesota (the St. Paul area specifically) for college and law school and eventually joined the law firm founded by his uncle and father.

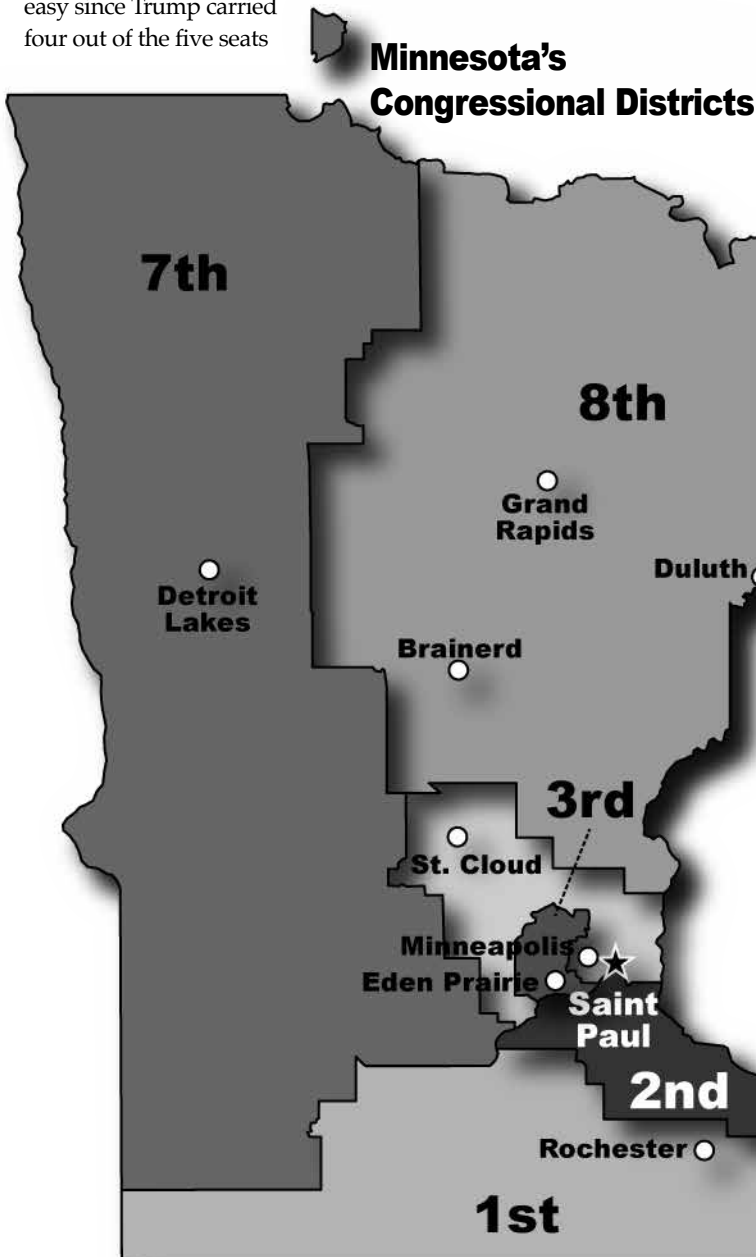
There is conflicting buzz about Frentz's intentions. According to sources he told some local DFLers that he was running but other strategists are more skeptical that he will run.

The newest name is Feehan, 34, who grew up in the district but hasn't lived there since he was 14, according to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* about the large number of veterans running for Congress.

Some observers believe he might have the profile most similar to Walz, considering the congressman served in the Nebraska National Guard and Feehan in the Illinois National Guard.

Feehan went to high school in the Land of Lincoln, graduated from Georgetown University, taught middle school math in Gary, Indiana through Teach for America, and later earned

Continued on page 6



Minnesota: Craig Readies Rematch Against Lewis

Continued from page 5

a Master's degree from Harvard. He served on active duty in the Army, including service in Iraq, and was most recently Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and has been living in Washington, D.C.

Each party will have an endorsement convention, but any candidate can run in the primary.

On the Republican side, two-time nominee Jim Hagedorn is back again and has support from Rep. Tom Emmer and former Sen. Rudy Boschwitz. Now that the state legislative session is complete, other GOP candidates could enter the race including Pierson, fellow Rep. Joe Schomacker, and state Sen. Carla Nelson, as well as Olmsted County Republican Chair Aaron Miller.

This is Hagedorn's fourth run for the seat. In 2014, he defeated Miller in the GOP primary and lost to Walz, 54-46 percent. Last cycle, Hagedorn came much closer, losing to Walz 50.3-49.6 percent in a race that didn't receive much attention until Election Night. He raised and spent a minimal amount of money for a competitive race (about \$369,000), but already had \$197,000 in his campaign account at the end of March for this race.

Hagedorn, whose father Tom served in Congress from 1975-1983, is hoping perseverance pays off, as it did for neighboring DFL Rep. Collin Peterson, who ran unsuccessfully for Congress three times before getting elected in 1990 by defeating GOP Rep. Arlan Stangeland, who Hagedorn used to work for on the Hill.

The NRCC doesn't get involved in open-seat primaries, but regards the seat as a top takeover opportunity, even without knowing their nominee.

Candidate Conversation



Thomas McKinless/CQ Roll Call

Jim Hagedorn (R)

Candidate for Minnesota's 1st District

Interview Date: May 24, 2017

Date of Birth: August 4, 1962; Blue Earth, Minn.

Education: George Mason Univ. (1993)

Political Office: None

Current Outlook: Hagedorn is

a leading contender for the GOP nomination in an open seat created by DFL Rep. Tim Walz's run for governor. Hagedorn lost to Walz in the last two elections, but the open seat creates a new opportunity. The open seat could also inspire other GOP candidates to run.

Evaluation: With a father who served in Congress, working for a Member on the Hill, and having run for this seat three times previously, Hagedorn knows how the game works. Hagedorn fits the "Minnesota nice" mold (he declined to talk about potential opponents, even on background) and is earnest (he ran unsuccessfully in 2010, 2014, and 2016) but he also won't be known for his charisma. Losing first was a viable path to Congress for DFL Rep. Collin Peterson and former GOP Rep. John Kline, so Hagedorn shouldn't be disregarded for his losses. But he'll also need to ramp up his campaign and fundraising from previous cycles as this race garners more attention because of the open seat.

The 1st District could be influential to balancing out a Republican loss elsewhere, such as Florida's 27th District where GOP Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is retiring from a district Hillary Clinton carried with 59 percent.

The Democratic field is still coming together, but it's in Walz's interest to get a strong nominee in order to boost his statewide prospects. Rating: Toss-Up.

2nd District

Republican talk radio show host Jason Lewis was first elected in 2016 and helped Republicans hold the seat of retiring Rep. John Kline. But Lewis won just 47-45 percent over Democrat Angie Craig and was buoyed by Trump's performance in the district (he won with 47



Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Angie Craig

percent) and a third-party candidate (Independent Paula Overby who received nearly 8 percent).

For much of the cycle, Democrats were convinced that Lewis was unelectable because of his provocative statements from years as a talk

radio show host, had an assumption that Clinton would do better in the southern Twin Cities suburbs, including Eagan, Burnsville, and Lakeville, and believed in the strength of Craig's fundraising (she raised and spent \$4.8 million). But the race obviously turned out differently than expected.

This time around, Craig looks poised to run again. She even recently hosted a town hall in the 2nd District, featuring Walz, in response to Lewis's lack of similar events. Craig, a former executive at St. Jude Medical, has proven fundraising skills but will also make key strategic and infrastructure adjustments to her campaign. As was the case last cycle, if elected, she would be the first openly gay mother in Congress.

Craig isn't likely to have the field to herself. Rosemount High School Football Head Coach/social studies teacher Jeff Erdmann is running, but it's unclear how he's going to keep up Craig's money pace.

Former police officer/state Sen. Dan Schoen was also mentioned as a potential challenger by Morning Take, a political tipsheet in Minnesota. According to local sources, Schoen is close with state party chairman Ken Martin, and if he runs it may be a sign of a lack of confidence in Craig's candidacy by some local officials.

After garnering comparisons to Trump during the campaign due to his outspoken nature on the radio, Lewis has been focused on issues that don't fit neatly into the partisan box, such as criminal justice reform. But that may not matter.

Republicans are confident they'd defeat Craig again after last cycle. But the national political climate could be different, Overby may not run and pull votes from the left, and Lewis will have two years of votes to be picked apart (including his vote for the Republicans' health care bill). Even though Trump narrowly won the district, Lewis is one of the most vulnerable Members of Congress. Rating: Toss-Up.

Continued on page 7

Minnesota: Paulsen Poised for Another Tough Race

Continued from page 6

3rd District

In 2016, Democrats saw the suburbs turn against Trump and believed the GOP presidential nominee would bring down Republican Rep. Erik Paulsen with him. But only part of that scenario came to fruition.

Clinton won the district 50-41 percent while Paulsen won re-election 57-43 percent over DFL state Sen. Terri Bonoff in a suburban Hennepin County district that includes Bloomington, Plymouth, and Brooklyn Park to the north, west, and south of Minneapolis.

Paulsen, a former business analyst for Target who was born in Bakersfield, California, was first elected to Congress in 2008 to an open seat left by retiring GOP Rep. Jim Ramstad. He faced energetic Iraq War veteran Ashwin Madia and prevailed 49-41 percent in a competitive race in a district Obama carried by 6 points.

Bonoff was touted as a top Democratic recruit last cycle and some Democratic polling even had her leading Paulsen at one point. But she lost handily and Democratic strategists now admit that her legislative voting record was problematic.

That's fueling part of the excitement over wealthy vodka and gelato tycoon Dean Phillips, who just got into the race against the congressman. The first-time

candidate won't have those votes to defend and has personal money he said he would use to even the financial playing field, if necessary. But unlike some wealthy candidates, such as Randy Perkins of Florida last cycle,



Dean Phillips

Phillips is planning to raise money (although he's not accepting PAC money). That can be an important way for a candidate to maintain a connection to a district.

But it remains to be seen how he will transition to a political candidate and if Republicans will find anything in his businesses that could become electorally problematic. At the beginning, Phillips and the family businesses have a good reputation, including significant philanthropic efforts in the community, according to local sources.

Phillips is heir to a third-generation liquor business and created and sold a gelato business, as noted by long-time Minnesota analyst and author Barry Casselman. Phillips is also connected to two of the nation's most famous newspaper advice columnists. Pauline Phillips (Dear Abby) is Dean's grandmother (the column is now written by Dean's aunt) and his great aunt Esther wrote the Ann Landers column for the second half of the 20th century.

This is Phillips's first run for office, but he isn't new to the political process. He's been a consistent donor to Democratic candidates over the years, including recent contributions to the state party and Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin's re-election committee. He previously contributed to Minnesota congressional candidates Patty Wetterling, Madia (against

Paulsen), Teresa Daly and Walz, and Senate candidates Al Franken, Amy Klobuchar, and Walter Mondale, as well as the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and John Kerry and Evan Bayh's presidential campaigns.

Some local DFLers have convinced themselves that they forced 2nd District Rep. Kline to retire last cycle and hope to do the same to Paulsen. But that seems unlikely. And Democrats have to find the balance between holding the congressman accountable and bullying a popular and inoffensive Member, according to local sources. Paulsen has positioned himself well as a moderate, as evidenced by Phillips' initial remarks that tying the congressman to Trump won't work.

As a member of the Ways & Means Committee, Paulsen should be able to raise more than enough money to defend himself. And Republicans have the utmost confidence in their incumbent's effort as a campaigner and his ability to outperform other Republican candidates in the district.

The initial reviews from local sources about Phillips are good — that in spite of his wealth, he is likable and down to earth. He responded well to initial criticism over his deep pockets. But it remains to be seen whether Phillips develops into a top-tier challenger and if liberal voters are willing to give him an ideological pass for striking a moderate tone.

The recent presidential result paints Paulsen into a difficult district. But election results further down the ballot in recent elections show the 3rd to be more favorable to GOP candidates than the reputation it has garnered. The congressman can't take anything for granted and Phillips could emerge as a top contender, but Democrats probably need a wave to win here. Rating: Lean Republican.

7th District

Republicans have been trying to scare DFL Rep. Collin Peterson into retirement, but efforts appear to be having the opposite effect. Trump carried the expansive 7th District with 62 percent, yet Peterson won re-election with 53 percent and appears to be running again.

The 7th District spans over 33,000 square miles in western Minnesota, bordering Canada to the north and within one county of Iowa along the district's southern edge. The predominantly white district includes lake resorts and farmland, Moorhead and Willmar. The 72-year old congressman was first elected in 1990 after a decade in the state House and three failed attempts to go to Congress.

In 2016, Peterson defeated Republican Dave Hughes 52-47 percent, in a close contest that didn't receive national attention, in part because the GOP nominee raised and spent less than \$20,000 on his campaign. Hughes is running again but Republicans believe state Rep. Tim Miller will be a much stronger contender.

Miller, 51, graduated from the University of Iowa and is in his second term in the state Legislature. In 2012, he challenged Democratic incumbent Andrew Falk and lost 54-46 percent. In 2014 he defeated Falk 55-45 percent. And in 2016, he defeated Falk again 59-41 percent.

Miller is expected to put together a quality campaign (including better fundraising than Hughes) and compete this cycle, but he is also willing to run again if he falls short in 2018, following his own path to the Legislature and Peterson's path to Congress. Peterson running for re-election may work for Miller in keeping the field clear of some other

Continued on page 8

Minnesota: Both Parties Wait for Nolan's Decision

Continued from page 7
aspiring Republicans.

Peterson's decision to run for re-election complicates GOP plans to take over the seat, but if Miller can put together a top-tier challenge and force the congressman into his most competitive race in years, and potentially some unforced errors, then the race could get more interesting. Rating: Lean D.

8th District

Rick Nolan has been one of Democrats' most valuable assets in the last two cycles by winning two congressional races against a wealthy businessman in a district that has gone Republican in the last two presidential contests. But now the congressman is seriously considering leaving his seat open to run for governor and his absence would leave Democrats with a difficult open seat to defend.

Nolan defeated Stewart Mills in 2014 and 2016 by a combined 2 points, the latter while Trump defeated Clinton by a considerable 54-38 percent margin. In 2012, Mitt Romney narrowly won the 8th District, which takes in Northeast Minnesota including Duluth and the Iron Range.

Nolan served in Congress from 1975-1981 with a liberal reputation but was elected again in 2012 over GOP Rep. Chip Cravaack, who defeated Democratic Rep. Jim Oberstar, then-chairman of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, in an upset in 2010. Cravaack didn't help himself when his family moved to New Hampshire in order to be closer to his wife's job in Boston. Now, Nolan has carved out a more moderate reputation and has proved to be a savvy politician.

It looked like Nolan was going to make his decision in the spring, but he has apparently pushed back an announcement until at least July. Publicly, House Democrats are hoping the congressman runs for re-election and aren't talking about potential successors, but there are plenty of potential candidates behind-the-scenes if he runs statewide or decides not to seek another term.

Potential DFL contenders include Joe Radinovich (who is currently managing Jacob Frey's campaign for mayor of Minneapolis), Nolan aide Jeff Anderson, state Rep. Jason Metsa, and Sen. Al Franken staffer Alana Petersen. There's also local talk about state Sens. Tony Lourey and Tom Bakk, who have more time now that the legislative sessions is over, and Homeland Security/Department of Justice aide Leah Phifer.

Cook County Commissioner Sue Hakes recently announced an exploratory campaign and it shouldn't be assumed that she will only run in an open seat, according to local sources. The congressman and his staff are not universally loved in the region.

On the Republican side, it looks like Mills has the right of first refusal and he might have a tough time turning down a run for an open seat

after coming so close to knocking off the incumbent. And we know from other neighboring districts that losing can lead to victory in Minnesota. State Sen. Carrie Ruud, state Rep. Sandy Layman, and attorney/St. Louis County (Duluth) Commissioner Chris Dahlberg should get some attention if Mills doesn't run.

Nolan's decision is important to Democratic chances of regaining the majority. Even if Democrats hold the 8th District, it will likely take time and money away from a takeover opportunity, particularly if Mills runs again and spends personal money. At the same time, DFL candidates have a strong track record of winning the district; it's Clinton and Obama who have struggled as of late. Rating: Lean D, pending Nolan's decision.

IE



Stewart Mills

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

2017-18 Gubernatorial Ratings

Toss-Up	
FL Open (Scott, R) MI Open (Snyder, R) NV Open (Sandoval, R)	
Tilt Democratic	Tilt Republican
Rauner (R-Ill.)	OH Open (Kasich, R)
Lean Democratic	Lean Republican
Wolf (D-Pa.) CO Open (Hickenlooper, D) CT Open (Malloy, D) ME Open (LePage, R) NM Open (Martinez, R) VA Open (McAuliffe, D)	Branstad (R-Iowa) Sununu (R-N.H.)
Likely Democratic	Likely Republican
NJ Open (Christie, R)	Ducey (R-Ariz.) Hogan (R-Md.) Walker (R-Wis.) GA Open (R-Ga.) KS Open (Brownback, R) OK Open (Fallin, R) TN Open (Haslam, R)
Solid Democratic	Solid Republican
Brown (R-Ore.) Cuomo (D-N.Y.) Ige (D-Hawaii) Raimondo (D-R.I.) CA Open (Brown, D) MN Open (Dayton, DFL)	Abbott (R-Texas) Baker (R-Mass.) Hutchinson (R-Ark.) Ivey (R-Ala.) McMaster (R-S.C.) Ricketts (R-Neb.) Scott (R-Vt.) ID Open (Otter, R) SD Open (Daugaard, R) WY Open (Mead, R)
Lean Independent	
Walker (I-Alaska)	
# moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics	