



# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

APRIL 23, 2020

VOLUME 4, NO. 8

## 2020 Gubernatorial Overview: Finally in the Spotlight

By Jacob Rubashkin

Coronavirus has governors across America adjusting to a role unfamiliar to most of them: national prominence. With the White House sending delayed, hands-off, and often contradictory messages on how to respond to the coronavirus, governors have become the leading players in politics and the media, wielding state power in ways not seen in decades.

While most governors, armed with the benefit of time, can afford to navigate the pandemic without feeling the full intensity of political considerations, a handful of governors will face voters this November, meaning the success or failure of their responses will be fresh in voters' minds.

If the coronavirus had hit two years earlier, or two years later, 36 states would have been in the final stretch of a gubernatorial race, with governors balancing elections and crisis. But just 11 states are voting for a governor this November, and fewer than five are hosting truly competitive races at this stage of the campaign.

The most vulnerable governor seeking re-election is Democrat Roy Cooper in North Carolina. Like many of his colleagues around the country, he has received high marks for his coronavirus response, and he enjoys a significant lead over his GOP opponent. But that could shift as the pandemic plays out.

Republicans are looking to take over the governorship in Montana for the first time in two decades. It's an open seat because Democrat Steve Bullock is term-limited. But the governor's job performance could boost the candidacy of his lieutenant governor and keep the office in Democratic hands even though Montana is a GOP-leaning state.

Controlling a majority of governors doesn't give a party additional powers, but Republicans do currently hold the top office in 26 states, compared to 24 for Democrats. Currently, it looks like Republicans might gain a governorship, but it is also possible this cycle could be a wash.

**DELAWARE.** John Carney (D), elected 2016 (58%). Delaware is still Biden country, and incumbent John Carney, who worked in Joe Biden's Senate office before serving three terms in Congress himself, is on a glide

## 2020 Gubernatorial Ratings

Toss-Up		
MT Open (Bullock, D)		
Tilt Democratic	Tilt Republican	
Cooper (D-N.C.)		
Lean Democratic	Lean Republican	
	Sununu (R-N.H.)	
Likely Democratic	Likely Republican	
	Parson (R-Mo.)#	
	Scott (R-Vt.)	
Solid Democratic	Solid Republican	
Carney (D-Del.)	UT Open (Herbert, R)	
Inslee (D-Wash.)	Burgum (R-N.D.)	
		Holcomb (R-Ind.)*
		Justice (R-W.V.)
	GOP	DEM
Current Governors	26	24
Not Up This Cycle	19	20
Currently Solid	4	2
Competitive	3	2

Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, \* moved benefiting Republicans

path to re-election after failing to draw any serious primary or general election opponents. *Inside Elections'* Baseline for Delaware is 58 percent Democratic vs. 40 percent Republican. Solid Democratic.

**INDIANA.** Eric Holcomb (R) elected 2016 (51%). In 2016, Democrats thought they were going to win this seat for the first time in a decade after GOP Gov. Mike Pence jumped to Donald Trump's ticket. Newly appointed Lt. Governor Eric Holcomb, just three months on the job, was selected by the state Republican Committee, beating out Reps. Susan Brooks and Todd Rokita for the nod. Democrat John Gregg, the former state House speaker, was running again after narrowly losing to Pence in 2012, and polls showed him ahead. But Trump's unexpectedly strong election night performance across the country and in Indiana helped push Holcomb to a six-point win, 51-45 percent, while GOP Rep. Todd Young handily defeated former Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh's comeback bid in the concurrent Senate election by 9 points.

Four years later, Democrats have all but written off the Indiana governor's race as the state rapidly becomes less favorable to the party. After Democrat Joe Donnelly lost his Senate re-election campaign by 6 points to Republican Mike Braun in 2018, the Republican Baseline in Indiana stands at 55 percent, compared to just 42 percent for Democrats.

Neither Gregg, Donnelly, nor Indiana's most famous politician, former South Bend Mayor and presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, chose to run this year. The only Democrat who qualified was Woody Myers, who served as state health commissioner from 1985-90. Myers struggled to turn

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# Presidential Battlegrounds: Florida

By Ryan Matsumoto

One of the first danger signs for Hillary Clinton on election night 2016 was when Donald Trump took and maintained the lead in Florida. As Democrats strategize about which states they can flip four years later, Florida is near the top of the list as a state with 29 electoral votes that voted for Trump by just 1 percentage point last time.

## Florida in Recent Elections

Florida has consistently voted slightly to the right of the nation in recent presidential elections. In 2008, Barack Obama won the state by 3 percentage points while winning nationally by 7 percentage points. In 2012, Obama won Florida by a 1 percentage-point margin while winning nationally by 4 percentage points. In 2016, Florida voted for Trump by 1 percentage point while Hillary Clinton won the national popular vote by 2 percentage points.

Put another way, Florida was 4 percentage points more Republican than the nation in 2008, 3 percentage points more Republican than the nation in 2012, and 3 percentage points more Republican than the nation in 2016.

Florida has also leaned Republican in recent downballot elections. The *Inside Elections* Baseline score, which measures average partisan performance in Florida over the past four election cycles, is 51.4 percent Republican and 46.9 percent Democratic.

## The 2018 Midterm Elections

Florida Republicans were encouraged by the results of the 2018 midterm elections, when they won elections for Senate, governor, attorney general, and chief financial officer.

In the Senate race, Republican Gov. Rick Scott defeated Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson by one tenth of a percentage point. In the gubernatorial race, Republican Rep. Ron DeSantis defeated Democrat Andrew Gillum by four tenths of a percentage point. These losses were especially heartbreaking for Florida Democrats since Nelson and Gillum had both narrowly led their Republican opponents in polling averages.

Republicans also won elections for attorney general and chief financial officer by 6 percentage points and 4 percentage points, respectively.

The only statewide victory for the Democrats was in the election for commissioner of agriculture. Nikki Fried won by just one tenth of a percentage point against Republican Matt Caldwell.

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## 2020 Presidential Ratings (Electoral Votes)

Toss-Up (66)			
Arizona (11)	Florida (29)	Nebraska 2nd (1)	North Carolina (15)
Wisconsin (10)			
Tilt Democratic (36)		Tilt Republican (1)	
Michigan (16)	Pennsylvania (20)	Maine 2nd (1)	
Lean Democratic (14)		Lean Republican (22)	
Minnesota (10)	New Hampshire (4)	Georgia (16)	Iowa (6)
Likely Democratic (8)		Likely Republican (56)	
Maine At-Large (2)	Nevada (6)	Ohio (18)	Texas (38)
Solid Democratic (210)		Solid Republican (125)	
California (55)	Alabama (9)	Tennessee (11)	
Colorado (9)	Alaska (3)	Utah (6)	
Connecticut (7)	Arkansas (6)	West Virginia (5)	
Delaware (3)	Idaho (4)	Wyoming (3)	
D.C. (3)	Indiana (11)		
Hawaii (4)	Kansas (6)		
Illinois (20)	Kentucky (8)		
Maine 1st (1)	Louisiana (8)		
Maryland (10)	Mississippi (6)		
Massachusetts (11)	Missouri (10)		
New Jersey (14)	Montana (3)		
New Mexico (5)	Nebraska At-Large (2)		
New York (29)	Nebraska 1st (1)		
Oregon (7)	Nebraska 3rd (1)		
Rhode Island (4)	North Dakota (3)		
Vermont (3)	Oklahoma (7)		
Virginia (13)	South Carolina (9)		
Washington (12)	South Dakota (3)		
270 needed to win		<b>GOP</b>	<b>DEM</b>
# moved benefiting Democrats,		2016 Results	304 227
* moved benefiting Republicans		<b>2020 Ratings</b>	204 268
		Toss-up	66



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It may be tempting to draw the conclusion that Florida has drifted to the right during the Trump era — if Democrats cannot win statewide elections in the context of a D+9 national environment, how can they expect to win the state in a competitive presidential year?

Still, it's important to note that midterm election trends do not necessarily indicate how the state will vote two years later at the presidential level. For example, Scott won very narrow elections in both 2010 and 2014, which were both Republican wave years. This might have led one to believe it would be difficult for Republicans to carry the state in a less favorable environment — and yet Trump did better in Florida than he did nationally in 2016.

## Demographics

One of the striking features of Florida politics is the clashing demographic trends that continually produce a very competitive state politically.

On one hand, it is one of the most diverse states in America at 54 percent Non-Hispanic White, 26 percent Hispanic or Latino, 17 percent Black, 3 percent Asian, 1 percent American Indian / Alaska Native, and 2 percent two or more races. On the other hand, 21 percent of its residents are 65 years or older, higher than any other state except Maine.

Florida has also experienced tremendous population growth in recent decades. According to Census estimates, Florida's population grew by about 13 percent from 2010 to 2018. This was the third-highest growth rate of any state nationwide, behind only Utah and Texas. Much of Florida's population growth is from interstate migration — *The New York Times* found that only about 36 percent of Florida residents were born there.

According to Election Data Services, Florida is currently expected to gain two congressional districts as a result of the 2020 Census, further heightening its importance in presidential politics.

## A Tour Through The I-4 Corridor

One of the most important areas politically in Florida is the I-4 corridor. The Interstate 4 highway crosses the center of the state from Tampa on the west side to Daytona Beach on the east side. This includes

most of the metropolitan areas of Tampa and Orlando, which are the third and fourth largest cities in the state.

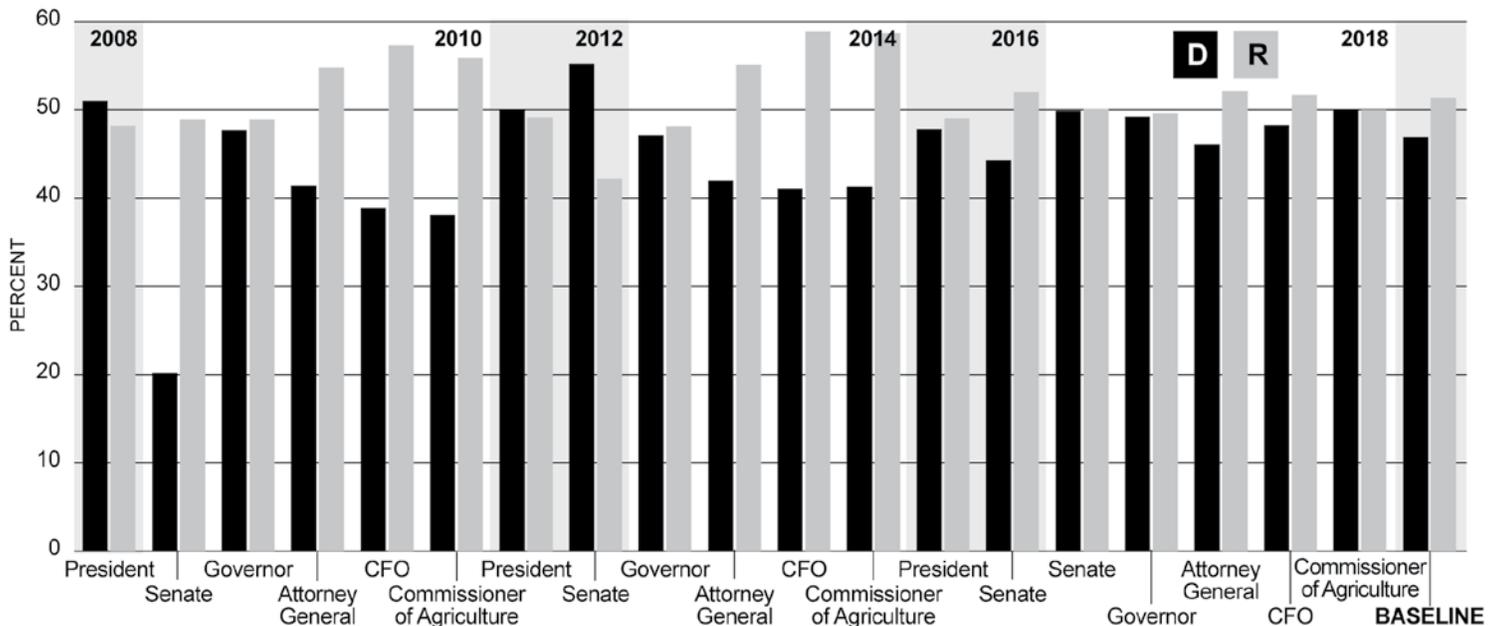
Six counties compose the I-4 corridor: Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola, Orange, Seminole, and Volusia. Until 2016, they had collectively voted for the winner of Florida statewide in every single presidential election under their current boundaries. The 2016 election was the end of the I-4 corridor's bellwether status — Clinton won these counties by 6 percentage points while Trump carried the state as a whole by 1 percentage point. Still, the I-4 corridor counties are known as a crucial swing region where presidential elections are won or lost. This is especially true since they cast 22 percent of the statewide vote in 2016.

Starting from the west is Hillsborough County, which encompasses the city of Tampa and is the fourth largest county in the state by population. It voted for Obama by 7 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Clinton by 7 percentage points as well in 2016. Directly to its east is Polk County, which is more conservative. It voted for Mitt Romney by 7 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Trump by 14 percentage points in 2016. Polk has actually voted Republican in every presidential election since 1976.

Moving further to the east is Osceola County. Most of its population lives in suburbs of Orlando such as Kissimmee and St. Cloud in the northwestern part of the county. It voted for Obama by 25 percentage points in 2012 and also voted for Clinton by 25 percentage points in 2016. The county was very Republican throughout the late 20th century, but has become Democratic-leaning with increased population growth and diversity. Osceola cast 29 percent more votes in the 2016 presidential election than the 2012 presidential election — the biggest increase of any of Florida's 67 counties. About 55 percent of its residents are Hispanic or Latino, the second highest in the state behind Miami-Dade. This was a place where Democrats struggled in 2018, significantly underperforming their presidential margins. Gillum carried the county by 21 percentage points while Nelson carried the county by 17 percentage points. It's a potentially troubling sign that Democrats could be slipping with Latino voters — Gillum and Nelson also underperformed Clinton in the other two majority Latino counties of Miami-Dade and Hendry.

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## Statewide Election Results in Florida



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Further north is Orange County, home to the city of Orlando and Disney World. It voted for Obama by 18 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Clinton by 25 percentage points in 2016. Many of its political and demographic trends have mirrored those of Osceola. Politically, it voted Republican for President in every election from 1948 to 1996 before flipping to the Democrats in the last five contests. Orange has also experienced massive population growth, casting 17 percent more votes in the 2016 presidential election than the 2012 presidential election — the sixth largest increase of Florida’s 67 counties. Demographically, it is also becoming increasingly racially diverse. According to Census estimates, its residents are 40 percent Non-Hispanic White, 32 percent Hispanic or Latino, 23 percent Black, 6 percent Asian, 1 percent American Indian / Alaska Native, and 3 percent two or more races.

Seminole County encompasses the northern suburbs of Orlando such as Altamonte Springs, Winter Springs, and Sanford. It voted for Romney by 6 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Trump by 2 percentage points in 2016. It is the I-4 county with the highest share of adults with a bachelor’s degree (38 percent) as well as the highest median household income (\$63,760). It was staunchly Republican for decades and hasn’t voted for a Democrat for president since 1948. But with high population growth, increasing diversity, and college-educated suburban voters voting more Democratic, margins have gotten much tighter in recent years. In 2018, Gillum and Nelson both carried the county by 2 percentage points even in their losing efforts. Additionally, Democratic Rep. Stephanie Murphy won this county by 8 percentage points after losing it by 5 percentage points in 2016. Democrats are hoping that they can continue to make gains here and flip the county at the presidential level in 2020.

The final county along the I-4 corridor is Volusia, which reaches the Atlantic Ocean and includes Daytona Beach. It voted for Romney by 1 percentage point in 2012 and voted for Trump by 13 percentage points in 2016. This was actually the third-largest raw vote margin shift from 2012 to 2016 among Florida’s 67 counties. In other words, there were likely many Obama-Trump voters in this county. Much of this can be explained by demographics. About 71 percent of its residents are Non-Hispanic White (higher than all five other I-4 counties) and just 24 percent of its adults have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Recent demographic trends may make it difficult for Democrats to win this county in 2020, but they will certainly want to cut into Trump’s margin of victory.

## The Cuban Vote

One big question mark for Florida Democrats heading into 2020 is the Cuban vote. In 2016, Clinton won non-Cuban Latino voters 71 percent to 26 percent according to the Florida exit polls. But among the subset of Cuban voters, Trump won 54 percent to 41 percent. Cuban-American voters have traditionally been very Republican-leaning because of their fierce anti-communism.

According to the U.S. Census, the three congressional districts in America with the highest Cuban percentage are Florida’s 25th District (43 percent), Florida’s 26th District (38 percent), and Florida’s 27th District (38 percent). All three districts are located in southern Florida, with most

of the population living in the Miami metropolitan area.

Each of these three districts moved to the left between the 2012 presidential election and the 2016 presidential election, according to Daily Kos Elections. Florida’s 25th District voted for Romney by 10 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Trump by 2 percentage points in 2016. Florida’s 26th District voted for Obama by 12 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Clinton by 16 percentage points in 2016. Florida’s 27th District voted for Obama by 7 percentage points in 2012 and voted for Clinton by 20 percentage points in 2016.

A potential worry for Democrats is that Clinton’s gains here in 2016 were temporary, and that Trump has made gains with many of these traditionally Republican voters. One example is results from the 2018 U.S. House elections. While Democratic candidates outperformed Clinton significantly in other suburban congressional districts around the country, Democratic congressional candidates did not do as well in south Florida. In fact, Florida’s 25th, 26th, and 27th Districts were all in the bottom five for Democratic performance relative to expectations based on partisanship.

In the 25th District, Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart won re-election by 21 percentage points in a district Trump only carried by 2 percentage points. In the 26th District, Democrat Debbie Mucarsel-Powell won by just 2 percentage points in a district Clinton carried by 16 percentage points. And in the 27th District, Democrat Donna Shalala won by 6 percentage points in a district Clinton carried by 20 percentage points.

One potential explanation for the Democratic underperformance here is that the Republican candidates were able to carve out separate political identities from Trump, allowing them to win over traditionally Republican voters who crossed over to vote for Clinton in 2016. The other potential explanation is that Trump gained popularity among those voters since the 2016 election, boosting Republican candidates downballot. If the second explanation is true, that would be bad news for Democrats’ chances of flipping the state in 2020.

## Early Polling

Early polling in Florida suggests the state will be competitive again in 2020. According to the RealClearPolitics average through April 21, Biden led Trump by 3.4 percentage points.

## The Bottom Line

If the Democratic nominee wins Florida’s 29 electoral votes, it will be very difficult for Trump to win re-election. Many factors can make a difference in a state Trump won by just 1 percentage point in 2016, but here are several keys to the race:

First, can Democrats recover from relatively weak performances among Latino voters (particularly Cubans) in the 2018 midterm elections? If the midterm trends extend to the presidential election, that may put the state out of reach.

Second, which side will benefit more from population growth? The two counties with the largest increases in votes cast from 2012 to 2016 were Osceola (+29 percent) and Sumter (+27 percent). Osceola, a largely suburban county outside Orlando, is heavily Democratic and Latino. Sumter includes The Villages (a large senior citizen community), is heavily Republican, and is a good example of the uncertainty about the size and shape of the electorate because of coronavirus.

Third, how will recent demographic trends play out? Democrats are hoping to continue to benefit from recent inroads among college-educated voters in the suburbs, but will also want to appeal to white working class Obama-Trump voters in places such as Volusia County.



### Presidential Battlegrounds Series

<b>Arizona</b> March 6	<b>Pennsylvania</b> February 7
<b>Florida</b> April 23	<b>Wisconsin</b> December 19
<b>Michigan</b> January 24	<b>North Carolina</b> TBD

# Illinois 14: The Underwood Overview

By Jacob Rubashkin

The 2018 race in this wealthy Illinois district just west of Chicago was one of the fastest-moving in the country. As late as September 13, the race was rated Solid Republican. But over the subsequent six weeks, the race broke against four-term Republican Rep. Randy Hultgren. On November 5, the race completed its long trek to Toss-up, and one day later Hultgren was ousted by Democrat Lauren Underwood, a 32-year-old nurse who became the youngest black woman elected to Congress.

What happened in the 14th mirrored dozens of districts across the country. Suburban backlash to President Donald Trump, fueled by intense opposition to Obamacare repeal, powered Democrats to victory in areas that had long been Republican strongholds. At the beginning of the decade, Democrats in the state capitol had packed GOP voters in this seat in order to make surrounding districts more Democratic.

In 2020, this race and others like it stand astests for Republicans, to see if they can stem their losses in suburbia before they become a party confined to rural America. Unlike nearly two dozen other districts Democrats flipped in the midterms, this district was won by Trump, and voted for GOP Gov. Bruce Rauner over Democrat JB Pritzker in 2018, so it should be naturally friendlier territory for Republicans looking to claw back to the majority.

If the GOP can't win in districts like this one, it will be nearly impossible to regain the majority in November.

## The Lay of the Land

Illinois' 14th District sits in the northeast corner of the state, beginning at the Wisconsin border and wrapping down around the Chicago suburbs west of the city. It encompasses parts of DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties, and is categorized as "sparse suburban" by the CityLab Density Index. With a median income of \$94,403 per household, it is the second-wealthiest district in Illinois after the 6th, according to ACS data. The district is 87 percent White, 4 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian. Thirteen percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino.

At the presidential level, Trump carried this district 49-45 percent in 2016 and Mitt Romney won it 54-44 percent in 2012, but former Chicago resident Barack Obama would have narrowly carried it in 2008 51-48 percent, according to Daily Kos Elections. At the gubernatorial level, the district was carried by Rauner 51-42 percent in 2018, even as he lost statewide 55-39 percent.

Hultgren easily won re-election in 2016 over Democrat Jim Walz, 59-41 percent. But two years later, he was defeated by Underwood 53-47 percent. Underwood overperformed Walz's margins in all seven of the district's counties, ranging from a 9 percent overperformance in Lake County to a 16 percent overperformance in Kendall County.

Democrats have reason to be optimistic about how this district is trending, especially because its shift began before Trump. The five "collar counties" that comprise much of this district — DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will — have slowly become more Democratic on the presidential level beginning in the 1990s. So while Trump may be an accelerant, he's certainly not the root cause.

## The Incumbent

Underwood, 33, was born in Mayfield Heights, Ohio, before moving to Naperville, the largest city in the district, at age three. She graduated cum

laude with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Michigan (2008) and received Masters degrees in nursing and public health from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (2009). After a brief stint as a research



Lauren Underwood

analyst at David Bradley's Advisory Board Company, she was hired as a policy coordinator at the Department of Health and Human Services in the Obama administration, working in the Immediate Office of the HHS Secretary on

the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. In 2014, during the Ebola epidemic, Underwood was appointed a senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, where she did public health work on infectious diseases and disasters including the Flint water crisis.

In 2017, Underwood left Washington and returned to Naperville, where she took a job as a senior director at NextLevel Health, a Medicaid managed care company.

That August, she announced her campaign against Hultgren, frustrated by his votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act and invoking her own pre-existing condition, supraventricular tachycardia. Underwood made healthcare the defining issue of her campaign and highlighted Hultgren's votes to repeal Obamacare.

As the subject of a front page *New York Times* article about minority candidates running in majority-white districts and with a Ben & Jerry's ice cream flavor named in her honor, "Lauren's Calling," Underwood received national attention during her run.

In Congress, Underwood is the vice chairwoman of the Homeland Security Committee, and also serves on the Veterans' Affairs, and Education and Labor committees.

Her campaign team includes campaign manager Raven McShane, a veteran political operative who previously served as finance director for Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin's successful 2012 campaign, and senior adviser Ronnie Cho, who managed Underwood's 2018 campaign. The campaign is also using The Win Company for media, Brilliant Corners for polling, and Wildfire Contact for direct mail.

## The Challenger

State Sen. Jim Oberweis, 73, beat out six other Republicans in the March 17 primary for the chance to take on Underwood. Oberweis, whose district is in the southern portion of the 14th, received a BA from University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, and later earned an MBA from the University of Chicago.

After a brief stint as a junior high school teacher, Oberweis entered the finance industry, and rose to prominence in the mid-1970s with his monthly newsletter *The Oberweis Report*. After founding an investment firm with his wife Elaine in 1978, Oberweis in 1986 purchased the family dairy business, Oberweis Dairy, from his brother (Oberweis' grandfather had founded the

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Aurora, Ill. business in 1927) and over the next two decades grew it from 50 employees to more than 1,200 employees and 40 locations, while also growing his investment firm and launching several successful mutual funds.

In the early 2000s, Oberweis decided to run for public office, and hasn't stopped running since, with limited success.

In 2002, Oberweis ran for the Republican nomination to take on Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin, but lost the primary by 13 points to Jim Durkin.

In 2004, Oberweis ran for Senate again, this time to fill the open seat left by retiring GOP Sen. Peter Fitzgerald. He finished second again, this time falling 12 points short of former Goldman Sachs partner Jack Ryan. In that race, Oberweis was fined \$21,000 by the Federal Election Commission for appearing in a commercial for his dairy business while campaigning.

In 2006, Oberweis ran for the GOP gubernatorial nomination, losing by 7 points to state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, who then lost to Rod Blagojevich.

In 2008, Oberweis ran for Congress in a March special election to fill Illinois' 14th District, which had been vacated by House Speaker Dennis Hastert. In a first, he won the GOP primary, but lost to Democrat Bill Foster by 5 points in the general election.

Oberweis also won the GOP nomination for the 2008 regular election in the 14th, and again lost to Foster, but by a wider 15-point margin.

In 2012, Oberweis finally won an election, beating Democrat Corinne Pierog 57-43 percent for Illinois' 25th district state Senate seat.

In 2014, Oberweis ran again for Senate against Durbin, winning the GOP primary but falling short in the general by 11 points.

In 2016, he won re-election with a 55-45 percent win over Pierog again.

In 2019, after mistakenly filing to run against Durbin for a third time (Oberweis claims a staffer checked the wrong box on the form), Oberweis announced he would challenge Underwood. He won the primary with 26 percent of the vote over fellow state Sen. Sue Rezin (23 percent), former US Commerce Department adviser Catalina Lauf (20 percent), former Notre Dame kicker Ted Gradel (13 percent), and former Kendall County GOP chairman Jim Marter (11 percent).

Oberweis' victory over the fractured field comes despite the Congressional Leadership Fund, the go-to GOP super PAC for House races, spending nearly \$1 million on anti-Oberweis ads in the last weeks of the race, a fact revealed after the election.

Oberweis' campaign team includes American Strategies for polling and consulting.

## How it Plays Out

At the start of the cycle, Republicans were excited about flipping this seat back. Hultgren was seen as having run a poor campaign and not taking Underwood seriously until it was too late, but Republican strategists generally believed this district was still friendly territory for them, as evidenced by Trump's win over Chicago-born Hillary Clinton, and Rauner's 9-point margin of victory over Pritzker in the 2018 gubernatorial race. This outlook led the NRCC to place Underwood on its initial list of 55 Democratic targets more than a year ago.

Republicans' ears also perked up when Underwood appeared in photos and stories with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has featured prominently as a boogeyman in GOP advertising. The NRCC even went out of its way to put out a press release when AOC endorsed Underwood on Twitter in April of 2019.

Underwood's relationship with AOC folds neatly into the larger

Republican argument against the congresswoman. Mainly, that Underwood is not the moderate, district issues-focused member that she portrays herself to be, and is actually a secret liberal firebrand out of step with her district's politics. Underwood was in reality closer aligned with a more moderate faction of the freshman class including Texas Rep. Colin Allred and Michigan Rep. Haley Stevens, and on issues such as support for Israel and "socialism", she often distanced herself from the positions of her more liberal colleagues.

Republicans also believe Underwood's vote to impeach the president — she was just the second Democrat in a Trump district to publicly support an impeachment inquiry — will come back to haunt her. While most GOP strategists agree that as a distinct issue impeachment will not be on voters' minds in November, they hope that if Trump voters are reminded of her vote, they will be less likely to split their ticket for Underwood.

But Republicans in leadership and elsewhere did not want Oberweis as their candidate — that's why CLF took the rare step of spending in the primary to stop him.

Oberweis is an unattractive candidate on several fronts. Firstly, he is a known loser after six unsuccessful and high-profile bids for higher office over the past 18 years. At one point local news took to calling him "the Milk Dud," in reference to his dairy business.

Beyond the stigma of a half-dozen loses, Oberweis' continuous campaigning, and his ubiquitous last name, have become something of an albatross around his neck. Even back in 2007, Oberweis had near-universal name ID in the area. With high, previous-existing name ID, including negative opinions about him, it will likely be tough for Oberweis to improve his image and dramatically increase his support.

Many voters are also familiar with his history of controversial statements and hardline conservative views on immigration, gay marriage, and women's issues. The laundry list of Oberweis' comments is long and growing: just last year he apologized for an email he sent announcing his bid where he listed the races and genders of several other candidates for Illinois office before asking voters if he could be "your token white male candidate." In 2017, during a state Senate hearing he tried to make the case that "wife beating and wage theft" were "ultimately results of differences of opinion" and "he-said, she-said" situations.

And in the midst of his 2014 Senate run, Oberweis apologized for his harsh rhetoric on immigration, in particular expressing regret for a widely-condemned 2004 ad in which he flew a helicopter over Soldier Field and claimed that every week enough people illegally immigrated to America to fill the stadium.

As one Democratic strategist familiar with the race said, "Oberweis is a dinosaur... he might have fit this district two decades ago, but not anymore." Oberweis also has lingering residency issues associated with a Florida property he owns with his wife and on which he takes tax exemptions.

Oberweis will run his same playbook, as a wildly successful businessman who's signed both sides of the paycheck. Some Republicans believe that, should coronavirus cause lasting economic damage, Oberweis could potentially argue that he has the financial acumen and experience to right the economy as a member of Congress. More than anything else, Oberweis has to hope that Trump can turn around his dismal image in the suburbs and give him a boost from the top of the ticket.

Beyond letting Oberweis' past statements catch up to him, the Underwood campaign will continue to make healthcare a central

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campaign issue. The pandemic in particular gives Underwood an opportunity to draw on her background as a public health official and experience combating infectious diseases. Underwood will also highlight a healthcare bill she sponsored that was signed into law by President Trump, aimed at lowering the price of insulin.

In 2018, Republicans accused her of being a “fake nurse” because she had “never specifically worked with patients,” yet her campaign materials featured her in scrubs and a stethoscope interacting with patients. Some Republicans anticipate a redux of that argument, again to further the broader message that Underwood is inauthentic. This is clearly a sore spot for Underwood, whose campaign site “Facts” page features a section titled “Is she really a nurse?” that includes her educational history and all three of her nursing licenses (Illinois, Maryland, and Washington, DC). Though the attack did not stop her from winning election in 2018, some Republicans believe it may be re-litigated in 2020, and the NRCC has referred to her as “Fake Nurse Lauren Underwood” in press releases. But attacking a nurse with an expertise in public health and infectious disease response during a pandemic may be a fraught strategy, especially when nurses, doctors, and other frontline responders are receiving universal praise.

Underwood enters the general election with a financial advantage. She raised \$989,000 in the first three months of the year and reported \$2.2 million cash on hand on March 31. Overall, Underwood has already raised more than \$3.5 million this cycle, compared to the \$5 million she raised and spent in 2018.

Oberweis reported raising just \$191,000 in the first quarter of 2020, including a \$100,000 loan, and had just \$222,000 on hand on March 31. Oberweis is personally wealthy, having made a fortune in the financial world and another in the dairy business, and has already loaned his campaign \$1.1 million. But even though it’s widely believed that he has the personal resources to match Underwood’s prodigious fundraising (last year Oberweis filed a financial disclosure form listing between \$11 million and \$39 million in assets), it’s not clear whether he plans to do so. He’s contributed \$8.5 million of his own money across five federal races over the last 18 years, but never more than \$3.5 million in any one race.

Between his personal wealth and his frosty relationship with the Republican establishment in DC, there’s no reason to expect that outside groups will spend on this race, particularly with the expensive Chicago media market. Unless Oberweis can whip his dormant fundraising operation into shape, he’ll have to rely on his own dime.

There isn’t any recent polling in this race. But last summer Oberweis released an internal survey conducted by GOP firm McLaughlin and Associates showing him down 8 points to Underwood, 47-38 percent. Private polling conducted later in the year showed Underwood leading by similar or larger margins.

### The Bottom Line

This could have been one of the more competitive races of the cycle. Underwood scored an upset victory in a district with some conservative fundamentals. With Democrats potentially nominating liberal Sens. Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders for president, and two well-regarded GOP women aiming to challenge Underwood, the congresswoman’s chances of winning didn’t look great.

But none of that happened. Underwood has stayed popular and visible in the district, and like much of her freshman class, she has fundraised at an impressive clip. Democrats settled on Joe Biden, who

plays well in the suburbs, as their nominee. Trump has continued to struggle with the voters who swung toward Democrats in 2018 and threw out their GOP congressman. And Republicans nominated a perennial candidate with serious baggage.

November is still more than six months away. But Underwood has at least a narrow advantage. Move from Toss-Up to Tilt Democratic. **IE**

## 2020 House Ratings

### Toss-Up (2R, 6D)

GA 7 (Open; Woodall, R)	NY 22 (Brindisi, D)
IA 3 (Axne, D)	OK 5 (Horn, D)
IL 13 (Davis, R)	SC 1 (Cunningham, D)
NY 11 (Rose, D)	UT 4 (McAdams, D)

### Tilt Democratic (10D)

CA 21 (Cox, D)
GA 6 (McBath, D)
IA 1 (Finkenauer, D)
IA 2 (Open; Loebbeck, D)
IL 14 (Underwood, D)#
ME 2 (Golden, D)
MN 7 (Peterson, DFL)
NJ 3 (Kim, D)
NM 2 (Torres Small, D)
VA 7 (Spanberger, D)

### Tilt Republican (7R, 1I)

IA 4 (King, R)
MI 3 (Amash, I)
MN 1 (Hagedorn, R)
NJ 2 (Van Drew, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
TX 22 (Open; Olson, R)
TX 24 (Open; Marchant, R)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	200	234
Currently Solid	170	199
Competitive	30	35
Needed for majority	218	

### Lean Democratic (7D, 1R)

CA 48 (Rouda, D)
KS 3 (Davids, D)
NJ 7 (Malinowski, D)
NV 3 (Lee, D)
TX 7 (Fletcher, D)
TX 23 (Open; Hurd, R)
TX 32 (Allred, D)
VA 2 (Luria, D)

### Lean Republican (5R)

MO 2 (Wagner, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NY 2 (Open; King, R)
NY 24 (Katko, R)
OH 1 (Chabot, R)

### Likely Democratic (12D, 2R)

AZ 1 (O’Halloran, D)
CA 10 (Harder, D)
CA 25 (Vacant, D)
CA 39 (Cisneros, D)
CA 45 (Porter, D)
FL 26 (Mucarsel-Powell, D)
NH 1 (Pappas, D)
MI 8 (Slotkin, D)
MI 11 (Stevens, D)
NC 2 (Open; Holding, R)
NC 6 (Open; Walker, R)
NY 19 (Delgado, D)
PA 8 (Cartwright, D)
PA 17 (Lamb, D)

### Likely Republican (13R)

AZ 6 (Schweikert, R)
FL 15 (Spano, R)
IN 5 (Open; Brooks, R)
MI 6 (Upton, R)
NC 8 (Hudson, R)
NC 9 (Bishop, R)
NY 1 (Zeldin, R)
OH 12 (Balderson, R)
TX2 (Crenshaw, R)
TX 10 (McCaul, R)
TX 21 (Roy, R)
TX 31 (Carter, R)
WA 3 (Herrera-Beutler, R)

# moved benefiting Democrats, \* moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics

*Continued from page 1*

in the required 4,500 signatures to qualify; another candidate, businessman Josh Owens, dropped out before the signature deadline.

Myers reported raising \$367,000 this quarter, compared to \$391,000 for Holcomb. But \$176,000 of that was loans made by Myers himself, and another \$99,700 was an in-kind contribution (an email list from the Donnelly for Senate campaign), so Myers' true fundraising haul is closer to \$91,300, of which another \$50,000 came from one individual donor. Myers reported \$22,100 in cash on hand on March 31, compared to \$7.1 million for Holcomb. Barring some major unforeseen event, Holcomb will win this race. Move from Likely Republican to Solid Republican.

*Change Research (D), April 10-13 (LVs) — General Election ballot: Holcomb over Myers 45%-25%, Donald Rainwater (L) 8%.*

### **MISSOURI. Mike Parson (R) ascended to governorship June 2018.**

In 2016, it looked like Democrat Chris Koster would win the governor's race, but he lost to Republican Eric Greitens. In 2017, it looked like Greitens was a rising star in the GOP, but a year later he was forced to resign due to accusations of sexual misconduct. In 2020, Gov. Mike Parson, a former sheriff and state legislator who was Greitens' lieutenant governor and then successor, will try to win election in his own right.

Despite Sen. Claire McCaskill's 6-point loss in 2018, Democrats are cautiously optimistic about this race. They're excited about their candidate, 37-year-old state Auditor Nicole Galloway. She's young, energetic, and Democratic strategists like that she's won statewide before, albeit against a severely underfunded opponent. In 2018, Galloway won her election by 6 points (aided by a \$1.3 million to \$26,000 spending advantage), and is the only Democrat serving statewide today. Democrats think her message of fiscal responsibility and her roots in the middle of the state — she's a CPA from Boone County — make her a strong candidate in this rightward-shifting state.

In addition to Parson's refusal to support Medicaid expansion, Democrats plan on making the governor's coronavirus response a major campaign issue, arguing that Parson is playing catch-up and isn't ready for the big leagues. Democrats point to his delay in effecting a stay-at-home order — he waited until April 6, the 42nd out of 43 governors to do so and after Missouri had over 3,000 cases — and believe he will be compared unfavorably to governors in neighboring Kansas and Illinois, which each share a major media market with Missouri. Voting issues may also feature prominently; Parson has attracted national attention for his hardline stance against increasing mail-in ballot access even as Democrats and Republicans in other states relax requirements.

Galloway nearly doubled Parson's fundraising haul last quarter, raising \$643,000 to his \$336,000, but still trailed him in cash on hand on March 31 — \$1 million to his \$1.4 million. Factoring in the major PACs supporting each, the disparity grows: the two major PACs supporting Parson reported \$5.2 million on hand, compared to \$2 million for the two pro-Galloway PACs. Republicans are unbothered by the Galloway candidacy, with one Republican describing it as "more appealing to DC consultants than Missourians" and "a shiny object Democrats can show to their donors." Republicans also note that Galloway faced a lackluster opponent in her 2018 race, and believe her self-portrayal as a corruption fighter is undermined by her office's audit of then-Attorney General Josh Hawley in the midst of his Senate campaign, which Republicans say was unmerited and politically motivated.

In early April, the Republican Governors Association made a \$550,000 contribution to Uniting Missouri, one of two major PACs supporting

Parson (under a new Missouri constitutional amendment, contributions to candidates are capped at \$2,600, but contributions to PACs such as Uniting Missouri are still unlimited). The RGA told the *St. Louis Dispatch* that the donation isn't reflective of any increased worry about the race. Nevertheless, it's a sign they're taking the race seriously enough to spend there before their Democratic counterparts do.

Coronavirus has created potential challenges to Parson, depriving him of the ability to run on a roaring economy and opening him up to new lines of attack by Democrats. And perhaps most importantly for Galloway, the top of the ticket will feature Joe Biden, and not Bernie Sanders, whose nomination would have likely doomed her candidacy. While Biden won't win Missouri, he's widely expected to perform better than Hillary Clinton, who in 2016 turned in the second-worst Missouri performance since George McGovern, winning just 38 percent and trailing Trump by 19 points. In that year, Democrat Jason Kander came within 3 points of winning his Senate race against GOP incumbent Roy Blunt, outrunning Clinton by almost 10 points. Galloway's path to victory is still quite narrow, but it's wider than it was last year, before coronavirus and when it looked like Democrats might put up Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, or another strident progressive. Keeping this race Solid Republican alongside the likes of Utah and North Dakota would not reflect those changes. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

**MONTANA. Open; Steve Bullock (D) term-limited.** Democrats haven't lost a Montana gubernatorial race in two decades, but Republicans believe this is the year that changes. Republicans have slowly wrested every state position except the governorship away from Democrats over the past decade, and are confident they will complete their sweep in this state Trump carried by 20 points in 2016.

The likely GOP nominee is Rep. Greg Gianforte, the wealthy tech executive who lost the 2016 gubernatorial race to Bullock by 4 points before winning the at-large House seat in a 2017 special election during which he physically assaulted a reporter. Gianforte, who won the special election by 6 points and again in 2018 by 5 points, faces state Attorney General Tim Fox and state Sen. Al Olszewski, who received 19 percent in the 2018 U.S. Senate primary, in the June 2 primary. Observers from both parties agree that Gianforte (\$366,000 in the bank on March 31 and personal money) has the clear upper hand against Fox (\$33,000) and Olszewski (\$50,000) in fundraising and name recognition.

Democrats have a competitive primary between sitting Lt. Gov. Mike Cooney (\$204,000) and businesswoman Whitney Williams (\$66,000), the scion of a prominent Montana political family. This race was initially expected to be quite close, but multiple Democrats say the coronavirus pandemic has shifted things in Cooney's direction. As a longtime public servant, Cooney began the race with higher name ID, and as a sitting official he can stay in the public eye as part of the state's coronavirus response, while Williams will struggle to break through the noise. One Democrat also noted that Williams, a member of the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations and former Hillary Clinton finance co-chair, was raising (and spending) major sums of money but could now see her fundraising advantage hampered by the pandemic.

In the general election, Democrats are eager to draw a contrast on "Montana values" between Cooney (a fourth-generation Montanan whose grandfather was governor) or Williams (a seventh-generation Montanan whose father was the state's congressman) against the New Jersey-born Gianforte, though they believe Cooney has a profile better suited for the state. Democrats also view Gianforte as uniquely unliked

by voters due to his brusque demeanor, are heartened by his narrow victories, and believe that Joe Biden at the top of the ticket means fewer voters will have to split their tickets to vote for a Democrat for governor.

Democrats also believe that the coronavirus pandemic helps their candidate, especially if it's Cooney. They reason that, if Bullock does a good job responding to the pandemic, Cooney will be able to make a strong continuity of leadership argument in his favor. Moreover, Democrats are hopeful that Bullock's Senate run, even if unsuccessful, will remind voters that Democratic governors have done well for the state.

This is the best GOP pickup opportunity on the map, but it's still anyone's game. Toss-up.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE. Chris Sununu (R) elected 2016 (49%), re-elected 2018 (53%).** This is Sununu's third election in four years — New Hampshire has two-year terms for governors — and he is in a good position for re-election. Morning Consult found him to be one of the most popular governors in America at the end of 2019, with a 59 percent approval versus 30 percent disapproval. A mid-March survey from the UNH Survey Center showed that 73 percent approved of Sununu's coronavirus response, including 61 percent of Democrats.



Chris Sununu

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Democrats had hoped to make an issue of Sununu's 2019 veto of a minimum wage increase from \$7.25/hour to \$12/hour, planning to contrast the veto with Sununu's decision to take \$22,000 more in salary than his predecessor. But they have since pivoted to attacking Sununu over his perceived slow response to the coronavirus and his repeated downplaying of the virus as "the flu" in March. Republicans countered by noting that Sununu's response has earned praise from Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (a former governor herself), and that Sununu shut down his state before several Democratic governors did theirs. It's still early to extrapolate long-term political consequences from the pandemic; how the state fares over the next several months will undoubtedly affect voters' opinion of his leadership.

Democrats have two potential candidates in Executive Councilor Andru Volinsky (\$93,554 in the bank on Dec. 4) and state Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (\$357,455), but won't select their nominee until the September 8 primary. This means that after several more months of intra-party competition, Volinsky or Feltes will only have eight weeks to wage a general election campaign against the better-funded Sununu (\$500,789). Democratic strategists believe either candidate would fare similarly against Sununu.

Some Democrats are hopeful that the national environment could sour enough against Republicans that the governor will not be able to hold on. Several Democrats pointed to Sununu's relatively scant overperformance of Trump in 2016 — Sununu received 48.8 percent, Trump received 47.3 percent — as evidence that a large anti-Trump wave could sink Sununu as well, and that Joe Biden could be the candidate to deliver those conditions (Biden currently leads Trump in New Hampshire by 5 percent in the RealClearPolitics average). Another Democrat posited that unlike Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker or Vermont Gov. Phil Scott, two other

New England Republicans, Sununu isn't so unequivocally adored by the "legitimately swingy" voters of New Hampshire, leaving him susceptible to defeat in a sufficiently anti-Trump environment.

The bottom line is that unless something fundamental about coronavirus or Trump changes, Democrats face an uphill climb against a popular incumbent. Lean Republican.

*UNH Survey Center, Feb. 19-25 (LVs) — General Election ballot: Sununu over Volinsky 54%-29%; Sununu over Feltes 56%-27%.*

**NORTH CAROLINA. Roy Cooper (D) elected 2016 (49%).** North Carolina will be the center of the political world this fall, playing host to competitive presidential, Senate, and gubernatorial races. Nearly \$50 million has already been spent in the state on advertising, with another \$75 million already reserved and potentially hundreds of millions more to follow. In 2016, then-Attorney General Roy Cooper beat Gov. Pat McCrory by 0.2 percent while Trump won the state by 4 points and GOP Sen. Richard Burr won by 6 points. In 2020, Cooper will face Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, who won the GOP primary against state Rep. Holly Grange in a landslide in early March, before the COVID-19 crisis really surfaced.

Cooper enjoys high approval ratings despite North Carolina's deeply entrenched partisanship, and has seen positive early ratings for his coronavirus response. He had more than \$9.4 million cash on hand on February 15, compared to Forest's \$753,000 on that date (Forest has since given \$200,000 in campaign money to COVID-19 relief efforts). The governor has led in every poll released over the last several months, by anywhere from 8 to 17 points.

North Carolina elections are never blowouts, but Cooper currently has the advantage and even Republicans say that Forest is at best down mid to high single digits. Republicans argue that voters who know Forest like him, and that his fundraising disadvantage will matter less because so much money will be spent in the presidential and Senate races that voters will be engaged regardless. But this cuts both ways: with Cooper and others so vastly outspending him, Forest will struggle to increase his name recognition, especially at a time when voters are less concerned with politics than coronavirus and the state's (and Gov. Cooper's) response.

Republicans hope a strong Trump performance will drag Forest over the finish line. But 2016 showed that Cooper can outrun the Democratic nominee by at least several points. Tilt Democratic.

*PPP (D), April 14-15 (RVs) — General Election ballot: Cooper over Forest 50%-36%.*

*Harper Polling (R) for Civitas, April 5-7 (LVs) — General Election ballot: Cooper over Forest 50%-33%.*

**NORTH DAKOTA. Doug Burgum (R) elected 2016 (77%).** Republican Doug Burgum is running for a second term in a state that hasn't put a Democrat in the governor's mansion since the 1980s. Both former Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, who lost by 11 points in 2018, and state House Minority Leader Joshua Boschee, who lost the 2018 secretary of state race by 9 points, passed up running, leaving Killdeer veterinarian Shelley Lenz as the only Democratic candidate. Solid Republican.

**UTAH. Open; Gary Herbert (R) not seeking re-election.** This race was almost thrown for a major loop when Utah's secretary of state threw out more than 20,000 signatures submitted by former Utah governor Jon Huntsman, imperiling his comeback campaign before it even got started. Had he not qualified via signatures, the former ambassador to Singapore, China, and Russia and one-time presidential candidate would have had to

seek ballot access at the April 25 state GOP convention, which tends to be less favorable to moderate candidates (Sen. Bob Bennett was jettisoned in favor of the Tea Party's Mike Lee at the 2010 convention). A maximum of two candidates can earn ballot access at the convention.

But Huntsman managed to qualify for the ballot with hours to spare, and so he is guaranteed a spot in the June 23 primary. Fighting to join them are Provo businessman Jeff Burningham, former state House Speaker Greg Hughes, and Salt Lake City Councilwoman Aimee Newton. Businesswoman Jan Garbett is not contesting the convention and failed to turn in enough signatures to automatically qualify, but is suing the state to relax the ballot requirements in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on the results of the convention and Newton's lawsuit, there will be between three and six candidates on the June 23 ballot.

While Republican operatives view all the candidates favorably, they agree that the contest will likely come down to Huntsman and Cox. Both Huntsman and Cox are well-liked in the state and have cultivated relatively moderate images, and both have high-profile endorsements from Utah's political elite: Cox is backed by outgoing Gov. Herbert (who had previously served as Huntsman's lieutenant governor) while Huntsman has the support of conservative favorite Sen. Lee (who once served as Huntsman's general counsel).

Despite a recent poll showing President Trump just five points ahead of Joe Biden in the state, whoever emerges victorious from the GOP gubernatorial primary will be the prohibitive favorite in the general election against any of the potential Democratic nominees: former state representative Neil Hansen, University of Utah professor Christopher Peterson, or businessman Zachary Moses. Solid Republican.

*Hinckley Institute of Politics for Deseret News, March 23-28 (GOP RVs)— GOP Primary ballot: Huntsman 26%, Cox 24%, Hughes 7%, Burningham 7%, Wright 2%, Newton 2%.*

*Y2 Analytics for KUTV-UtahPolicy.com, March 23-30 (GOP LVs)— GOP Primary ballot: Cox 40%, Huntsman 33%, Hughes 16%, Burningham 5%, Newton 4%, Wright 1%.*

*Dan Jones & Assoc. for Salt Lake Chamber, Feb. 28-March 11 (GOP RVs)— Cox 30%, Huntsman 27%, Hughes 12%, Burningham 6%, Wright 6%, Newton 4%.*

## **VERMONT. Phil Scott (R) elected 2016 (53%), re-elected 2018**

**(55%).** Scott, a Republican in his second two-year term, remains enduringly popular in the state that also elects progressive hero Bernie Sanders. Morning Consult found his approval/disapproval at 65/22 percent at the end of 2019, and a February Braun Research poll pegged his job rating at 57 percent approve/26 percent disapprove. While Scott has not yet filed to run (the deadline is May 28) and has only done minimal fundraising, he is widely expected to seek re-election.

Running for the Democratic nod are Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman, who reported \$105,838 cash on hand on March 15, former state education secretary Rebecca Holcombe (\$132,352), and Bennington attorney Patrick Wilburn, who has lent his campaign more than \$100,000 and reported \$35,133 in the bank in mid-March.

The primary isn't until August 11, and while Democratic operatives believe it will come down to Zuckerman or Holcombe, they are skeptical either will be able to prevail against Scott in November. Despite Vermont being reliably blue at the presidential level, Scott, who describes himself as fiscally conservative but socially liberal, and who called for President Trump's impeachment, is in a favorable position to win, as voters do not

see him in a partisan context. The race would fundamentally change, and drastically improve Democrats' chances, if Scott decides not to seek re-election. But for now, it's still Likely Republican.

*Braun Research for VPR-Vermont PBS, Feb. 4-10 (RVs)— General Election ballot: Scott over Zuckerman 52%-29%, Scott over Holcombe 55%-20%.*

## **WASHINGTON. Jay Inslee (D) elected 2012 (52%), re-elected 2016 (54%).** The day after he dropped out of the presidential race, Inslee announced his intention to run for a third term as governor. If he's successful, he will be just the third three-term governor in Washington's 130-year history, and the first since 1972.

Washington holds a "top two" primary where all candidates appear on the ballot, and the top two vote getters advance to the November general election. Inslee (\$1.4 million cash on hand on March 31) is the only Democrat running and should have no trouble placing first in the Aug. 4 primary.

Also running are Republic, Wash. (population 1,070) police chief Loren Culp (\$26,000 on March 31), former Bothell, Wash. mayor Joshua Freed (\$167,000), state Sen. Phil Fortunato (\$34,000), and anti-tax activist Tim Eyman (\$67,000), who is accused of laundering political donations in a long-running case brought by the state attorney general that is scheduled to go to trial in July.

Republicans say that if they have any shot at this race, they'll need their surprise candidate to jump in before the May 15 filing deadline. Inslee, who has received high marks from Washingtonians on his response to the coronavirus pandemic, is the heavy favorite. Solid Democratic.

## **WEST VIRGINIA. Jim Justice (R) elected 2016 (49%).** Justice, the richest man in West Virginia and a long-time registered Republican, was elected as a Democrat in 2016, defeating GOP candidate Bill Cole by 7 points even as Trump carried the state by 40 points. In 2017, Justice switched parties, and is running for re-election as a Republican. If he wins he'll be the first victorious Republican gubernatorial candidate since 1996. West Virginia isn't impossible territory for Democrats, as Sen. Joe Manchin showed with his 3-point victory in 2018. But Manchin may be the only Democrat left with a strong enough brand to carry the state.

Justice faces a primary challenge from his former commerce secretary, Woody Thrasher, and has already started airing a negative ad against Thrasher, indicating he takes the race seriously. Despite Thrasher running a legitimate campaign, observers from both parties expect Justice to win the primary.

Democrats are deciding between Kanawha County Commissioner Ben Salango (\$786,000 in the bank on March 31), who is endorsed by Manchin; community organizer Stephen Smith (\$185,000), who is endorsed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren; and state Sen. Ron Stallings (\$119,000). Democratic strategists say Salango has the inside track, with one Democrat saying "I don't bet against Manchin in West Virginia."

Democrats believe Justice's messy finances and business dealings with the Russians and Chinese will provide fodder for the general election, and believe that if Justice bungles the response to the coronavirus it could create an opening for Salango. Justice, and by extension this race, is highly unpredictable. One strategist said Justice could "drop out in August, be indicted, or win by 20" and nobody would be too surprised by any of the three. But with Trump at the top of the ticket, this race is a tough sell for Democrats, who would need something big to break their way. Solid Republican. **IE**