

# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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## 2020 Presidential Ratings (Electoral Votes)

### Toss-Up (32)

Georgia (16)# Maine 2nd (1)# North Carolina (15)

### Tilt Democratic (51)

Arizona (11)# Nebraska 2nd (1)# Iowa (6)# Texas (38)#

Florida (29)# Wisconsin (10)# Ohio (18)#

### Tilt Republican (62)

### Lean Democratic (40)

New Hampshire (4) Pennsylvania (20)# Alaska (3)# Montana (3)#  
Michigan (16)#

### Lean Republican (6)

### Likely Democratic (16)

Minnesota (10)#  
Nevada (6)

### Likely Republican (31)

Kansas (6)# South Carolina (9)#  
Missouri (10)# Utah (6)#

### Solid Democratic (212)

California (55) New Mexico (5) Alabama (9) South Dakota (3)  
Colorado (9) New York (29) Arkansas (6) Tennessee (11)  
Connecticut (7) Oregon (7) Idaho (4) West Virginia (5)  
Delaware (3) Rhode Island (4) Indiana (11) Wyoming (3)  
D.C. (3) Vermont (3) Kentucky (8)  
Hawaii (4) Virginia (13) Louisiana (8)  
Illinois (20) Washington (12) Mississippi (6)  
Maine At-Large (2)# Nebraska At-Large (2)  
Maine 1st (1) Nebraska 1st (1)  
Maryland (10) Nebraska 3rd (1)  
Massachusetts (11) North Dakota (3)  
New Jersey (14) Oklahoma (7)

### Solid Republican (88)

270 needed to win

# moved benefiting Democrats,

\* moved benefiting Republicans

	GOP	DEM
2016 Results	304	227
<b>2020 Ratings</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>319</b>
Toss-up	32	

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## Electoral College Outlook: Biden Has the Edge

By Nathan L. Gonzales & Jacob Rubashkin

A month ago, a public poll showed President Donald Trump leading Joe Biden by just 2 points in Arkansas. That would be easy to dismiss as an outlier, considering Trump won the state by 27 points four years ago, except for the growing mountain of data elsewhere that is evidence of the president's increasingly steep climb to a second term.

For three-and-a-half years, Trump's job rating was arguably the most stable part of his presidency. With a committed and loyal base of Republicans for the president and a slightly larger committed and loyal group of Democrats against him, the country was on a trajectory to experience a close and competitive Electoral College contest with both parties fighting over a half-dozen or so key states.

That outlook has changed.

While the precise cause can be argued, Trump's job rating has been on a precipitous decline over the last two months, not only putting a second term increasingly out of reach but potentially wreaking havoc on GOP candidates down the ballot.

On May 8, Trump's job rating was 45 percent approve/51 percent disapprove, according to the RealClearPolitics national average, a difference of 6 points. On July 23, Trump's job rating was 42 percent approve/56 percent disapprove, a difference of 14 points. It's a similar story on the ballot test. Biden led Trump 47-42 percent in early May in the national average compared with 50-41 percent in mid-July.

Of course we don't have national elections in this country. That should have been one of the biggest lessons from 2016, not that we should dismiss or distrust all polling data. But the survey data in individual states and districts are no better, and arguably worse, for Trump.

For example, the president won Montana by 20 points in 2016. Public and private survey data there show Trump and Biden are within a few points of each other. It's a similar story in Alaska, which Trump won by 15 points and looks like a competitive state today. That doesn't mean that Montana, Alaska, or Arkansas are swing states, or will even be close in November. But it does cast considerable doubt on the president's ability to win previously agreed upon swing states that have much less of a GOP cushion.

Four years ago, Trump narrowly won Michigan and narrowly lost Minnesota. He's likely down double-digits in both today. States he won by wider margins, such as Arizona, North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Iowa, and Ohio are all at considerable risk for the president. Biden probably just needs to win one of them to secure the White House.

Analyzing a combination of partisan and nonpartisan, public and

*Continued on page 10*

# New Jersey 2: The Van Drew Two-Step

By Jacob Rubashkin

After taking over a seat Donald Trump carried in 2016, Jeff Van Drew might have thought switching to the GOP was the best way to survive. But that path has become more complicated as support for the president slumps in New Jersey and nationwide.

In 2018, Democrats cheered when Van Drew, a longtime state legislator, wrested control of the 2nd District from Republicans. Despite often voting for Democrats at the national level, the 2nd District had been dominated by GOP Rep. Frank LoBiondo for more than two decades.

Democrats had never been able to come within striking distance of LoBiondo, but when the veteran representative announced he would not seek re-election, they knew they had an opening. With some help from a disastrous GOP nominee cut off by his own party, Van Drew won the district, one of four seats Democrats picked up when the Blue Wave crashed into the Garden State.

But a year later, it was Republicans who were cheering as Van Drew shook hands with Trump in the Oval Office and announced that he was becoming a Republican.

At issue was the House's impeachment proceedings against the president, which Van Drew did not support. Rather than face a primary electorate angry over his unwillingness to impeach Trump, Van Drew calculated it would be easier to win re-election as a Trump-endorsed Republican.

Van Drew's switch has earned him a special antipathy from national Democrats, who are angling to take him on this fall. But the party just recently concluded an acrimonious primary that pitted the South Jersey political machine against the most famous family in politics, and it remains to be seen whether Democrats will coalesce enough to win this seat for a second time in two years.

## The Lay of the Land

The 2nd District encompasses the lower half of South Jersey (excluding Camden, which is in the 1st District) and includes the cities of Vineland and Atlantic City, and the Jersey Shore.

The district is poorer, whiter, and less educated than the rest of the state. The population is 66 percent non-Hispanic white, 16 percent Hispanic, 11 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian, and just 10 percent of the district is foreign born, compared to 23 percent of the state; the median household income is \$63,000/year, significantly lower than the statewide median of \$81,000/year; and just 28 percent of the district has a bachelor's degree, as compared to 41 percent statewide, per American

Community Survey data.

The 2nd is an "Obama-Trump" district, voting for President Barack Obama in 2012, 54-45 percent, and for Trump in 2016, 51-46 percent. A previous but largely similar iteration of the district voted for President George W. Bush in 2004, 50-49 percent, and then Obama four years later, 53-45 percent.

In other statewide races, it has trended Republican, voting for Republican Steve Lonegan 53-46 percent in the 2013 Senate special election (he lost statewide by 11) and for Republican Jeff Bell 50-47 percent in the 2014 Senate race (he lost statewide by 13). It did vote for Democrat Phil Murphy in the 2017 gubernatorial race by 3 points, as he won statewide by 14 points, but swung hard toward Republican Senate candidate Bob Hugin in 2018. The wealthy Republican finished ahead of scandal-plagued Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez in the district 54-43 percent despite an 11-point loss statewide (Menendez won the district in 2012, 55-43 percent).

LoBiondo had little trouble holding the seat, never receiving less than 59 percent of the vote.

When LoBiondo retired in 2018, Van Drew easily won the Democratic primary and then defeated GOP nominee/former Atlantic County freeholder Seth Grossman, 52-46 percent. Grossman had been disavowed by national Republicans over the summer due to his history of bigoted remarks.

## The Incumbent

Van Drew, 67, had been a staple of South Jersey politics for nearly three decades by the time he arrived in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019. A graduate of Rutgers (1974), Van Drew has lived in Cape May County, the southernmost tip of New Jersey, since shortly after he received his DMD from Fairleigh Dickinson University Dental School (1979).

Van Drew, a dentist, served in a variety of local positions in Dennis Township and Cape May County, including fire commissioner, township mayor, and county freeholder, before winning election to the New Jersey General Assembly in 2001.

From his first venture into state politics, Van Drew demonstrated significant crossover appeal to Republicans, holding down his seat in the GOP-leaning 1st Legislative District via strength in conservative Cape May County. The legislator also prided himself on his ability to relate

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to constituents of all political stripes — in his office, he hung a portrait of Ronald Reagan next to images of JFK, FDR, Teddy Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.

Multiple veteran New Jersey political strategists describe Van Drew as a wily political operator who meticulously calculated his presentation and actions, at once frustrating the GOP by winning election after election but also becoming an ally of Republicans in Trenton, the state capital, and a key figure in Christie-era politics.

Van Drew, who jumped to the state Senate in 2007, repeatedly passed on challenging LoBiondo, but when the incumbent decided it was time to go, Van Drew entered the race with the backing of powerful South Jersey Democratic political boss George Norcross.

Van Drew easily dispatched two progressive challengers in the primary, winning 57 percent of the vote, and beat the ostracized



Jeff Van Drew

Grossman in the general, 52-46 percent.

The unexpectedly close margin against a flawed opponent was the first sign Van Drew's crossover appeal might not withstand exposure to the highly polarized national political environment. Case in

point, in his 2017 state Senate election, Van Drew won Cape May County, his conservative home base, by 10,000 votes, 67-23 percent. But in 2018, he carried the county by just 2,600 votes, 53-47 percent.

## The Switch

Van Drew's moment of reckoning came in late 2019, as Democrats prepared to impeach Trump. The congressman had been one of just two Democrats to vote against opening the impeachment proceedings in October, and continued to oppose impeachment through the fall. By late November, rumors swirled that Van Drew was planning to switch parties, the first member of Congress to do so since Alabama Rep. Parker Griffith switched to become a Republican a decade earlier.

Opposing impeachment was not an untenable position in South Jersey — October 2019 polling from the Hughes Institute at Stockton University found that just 33 percent of South Jersey voters supported impeachment, while 46 percent opposed it.

But it would have caused Van Drew serious difficulty in a Democratic primary, according to internal polling late last year. More importantly, according to veteran New Jersey political operatives, Van Drew was told he would lose the county line, which gives a candidate preferable ballot position and resources, if he broke with the party on impeachment.

So in mid-December, Van Drew, who had endorsed New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker for president, walked into the Oval Office, sat down next to Trump, and pledged his "undying support" to the leader of the GOP in front of the TV cameras. In the wake of the switch, much of his senior staff resigned.

From the outside, the switch seemed sudden; as late as Thanksgiving Van Drew was assuring voters he would remain a Democrat. But New Jersey insiders tell a slightly different story, that Van Drew had been

the target of a decade-long GOP charm offensive beginning during his time in the state legislature, with figures as senior as Gov. Chris Christie making sure Van Drew always knew he would have a home in the GOP should he ever want to make that move.

2nd District Republican primary candidate David Richter said he would continue to compete in the primary even if it meant running against Van Drew, but following Trump's endorsement of the incumbent, Republicans persuaded Richter to move his bid to the 3rd District, where he is now the GOP nominee.

In January, Trump held a raucous rally in the 2nd District in support of Van Drew, and on July 7 Van Drew steamrolled his only competition in the GOP primary, former Trump administration official/2016 1st District nominee Bob Patterson, winning 82 percent of the vote.

Van Drew reported \$1.2 million in the bank on June 30. He raised and spent \$1.9 million winning the seat in 2018.

Van Drew's campaign team includes Jamestown Associates for media and, until recently, general consultant Bill Stepien, one of the president's top political advisers who just became Trump's campaign manager.

## The Challenger

Amy Savell Kennedy, 41, was born in Atlantic City, where her father was a local politician who served on the Pleasantville and Absecon city councils and as an Atlantic County freeholder. She received a bachelors from Penn State (2001) and later a masters in environmental education from Nova Southeastern University in Broward, Florida.

For a decade after graduation, Kennedy, then married to former Penn State linebacker Mark Petigtout, worked as a history teacher in the Atlantic County public school system.

In 2010, shortly after divorcing Petigtout, she met Rhode Island Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy II, son of the late Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy and nephew of President John F. Kennedy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, at an Atlantic City fundraiser for the developmentally disabled where Rep. Kennedy was the keynote speaker.

The Kennedys married in 2011 (the ceremony was officiated by Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer), and Amy became the education director of The Kennedy Forum, the mental health advocacy group founded by Patrick in 2013. Amy Kennedy also serves on the boards of several other advocacy organizations.

Kennedy announced her candidacy for Congress in January 2020, the second of three major candidates to do so, after Montclair State University Prof. Brigid Callahan Harrison and before 2018 candidate Will Cunningham.

Harrison ran with the backing of Sens. Booker and Menedez, as well as the South Jersey Democratic political machine led by Camden businessman George Norcross, and she secured the county line in five of the district's eight counties.

Kennedy received support from the Atlantic County Democratic Party, as well as national organizations such as End Citizens United, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus PAC and Equality PAC. In the final weeks of the race, she was also endorsed by Gov. Murphy and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland.

Kennedy explicitly ran against the party machine, positioning herself as an outsider — though it's debatable how much of an outsider a Kennedy can be — and the support she garnered from Murphy and New Jersey Working Families Party chair Sue Altman, an enemy of Norcross's, reflected the larger power struggle within the Democratic

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Party in South Jersey.

But what was expected to be a tight race ended up being a blowout that was called shortly after polls closed. Kennedy defeated Harrison 62-23 percent, sweeping all eight counties despite only holding just one party line.

Kennedy reported just \$137,000 in the bank on June 30, but strategists say she should have no trouble raising money for the general election given her connections. She also has ample personal resources, having already contributed \$500,000 to her campaign.



Amy Kennedy

Amy Kennedy for Congress

Her husband was the sole contributor

to a Super PAC that's only expenditure was \$75,000 in ads against Kennedy's primary opponent, though Amy Kennedy later disavowed the PAC's spending. The PAC refunded \$230,000 to Patrick Kennedy on June 26, and reported no money on hand on June 30.

Kennedy's team includes general consultant Dave Hamrick, who will handle media through his firm RSH Campaigns, pollster Molly Murphy of ALG, and direct mail firm Ourso Beychok. Campaign manager Joshua Roesch had previously signed on to manage Van Drew's re-election campaign but left when the congressman became a Republican.

## How It Plays Out

This was not how anyone envisioned the 2020 race for New Jersey's 2nd District would go, said John Froomjian, interim executive director of the Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, "If things had gone along as normal, Van Drew could have been elected for another 20 years, but the Trump impeachment upended anything."

Van Drew's personal brand was already put to the test against the national environment in 2018, as evidenced by his struggles in Cape May County. But his party switch and the resulting national media attention has ratcheted up the pressure tenfold — now Van Drew's personal brand is absolutely integral in holding together enough support to win in what could be an unfavorable national environment for Republicans.

More than most other GOP incumbents, Van Drew has tied himself to the president, and political operatives on both sides of the aisle agree that his fate is likely linked to the president's in this district.

When Van Drew changed parties in December, he thought he had made a "slam dunk" when it came to keeping the seat, said Micah Rasmussen, the director of the Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics at Rider University who managed some of Van Drew's early campaigns in the 1990s. One high-level New Jersey GOP consultant in the state agreed, saying that in December, aligning with Trump was a good bet to win this district.

But since then, the veteran Republican said, it's become much less clear that Van Drew's association with Trump is such an asset, a point echoed by several other observers. As Trump's nationwide numbers against former Vice President Joe Biden have declined, there's little reason to believe the president is as well positioned in the 2nd District as

he was in 2016, and is in danger of losing it outright.

Republicans say Van Drew's overwhelming victory in the GOP primary shows their party is united behind him. And most operatives agree that Van Drew retains a slight edge among more moderate and conservative independents and Democratic-leaningers in the district who have supported him in the past, though they also acknowledge there is now a determined faction of voters who loathe the congressman — Democrats point to the 100 percent increase in primary turnout from 2018 to 2020 as evidence of this enthusiasm.

Van Drew does have policy positions would allow him to create space between himself and the president — offshore drilling (he's against), Obamacare (he's for reform, not repeal), net neutrality (he's for), and a new Voting Rights Act (he supports) — but it's unclear if he will emphasize that distance or minimize it. It may not matter — with polls showing that much of Biden's support comes from voters more enthusiastic about throwing Trump out of office, Van Drew's association with the president could overshadow any specific areas of policy disagreement.

As a relative political newcomer, Kennedy does not have a lengthy voting record or history to be picked apart. But Republicans will make issue of comments Kennedy recently made during an interview when asked what her position was on "defunding the police, reforming or otherwise depowering the police" — her response, that "there's a lot of merit to what we're hearing around the country when we talk about how we should be reallocating funds to make healthy communities" was taken by Republicans to indicate she supports defunding the police.

Republicans will also attempt to tie her to controversial Democratic figures such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York City, though that may prove difficult, as Kennedy has shied away from flagship progressive policies such as the Green New Deal and Medicare for All.

Van Drew will also use South Jersey's ongoing economic struggles, brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, against Kennedy. Republicans in the state have blamed Gov. Murphy for shutting down businesses and wreaking havoc on the tourist-based South Jersey economy, and will seize on Murphy's endorsement of Kennedy to negatively associate Murphy's policies with her.

While some Republicans suggested Kennedy, as a Kennedy, might be vulnerable to attacks as a member of the moneyed elite establishment, other GOP strategists dismissed the notion that her in-laws would provide fodder for the campaign, with several estimating that the association with America's most famous political dynasty was at worst neutral and at best a benefit, if only in fundraising and name recognition. One veteran GOP adviser noted New Jersey's significant Irish population and affinity for both the Kennedys and wealthy Democrats, remarking that Murphy was sworn in on JFK's bible.

Kennedy has also worked to head off those criticisms — some of which were also lobbed unsuccessfully by her primary opponents — by focusing on her four generations of South Jersey roots and her time spent in the district as a public school teacher.

Kennedy is campaigning on a promise to "return a moral compass to Washington," a message echoed by the stylized compass in her logo (which doubles for a nautical theme in this coastal district). She has also made issues of mental health and addiction central to her campaign, drawing on her experience as an educator and activist, and her

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husband's long-documented struggles with substance abuse.

When it comes to Van Drew, Kennedy has argued that his party switch shows he's more interested in his own political success than the wellbeing of his district, using footage of Van Drew's "undying support" press conference in advertising, and she will ask what Van Drew's constituents, rather than Van Drew, got out of the switch. Her campaign will draw on her career as a teacher and community health advocate to create a contrast between her service-oriented approach to politics, and what they say is Van Drew's self-interest.

And national Democrats have made their distaste for Van Drew no secret; the DCCC referred to him in a press release as "turncoat, a con artist, and political opportunist." But it's not clear whether the party switch itself will weigh on voters' minds, or whether they will simply recalibrate based on their opinions of Trump and vote accordingly. Several longtime operatives in the district say that Van Drew has long had a reputation as an opportunist whose moves are calculated for political benefit, and that such a criticism is largely baked into voters' views.

While that may be true, Van Drew is in the big leagues now, and what flew in Trenton may not fly in Washington.

### Presidential Wild Cards

Several Republicans mentioned the possibility that Trump could go out of his way to assist Van Drew in the campaign. The president is known to value loyalty above all else; Van Drew showed the ultimate loyalty to him by abandoning his party, and for it was rewarded with not just an endorsement but a hometown rally.

Moreover, one strategist noted that there's "a lot of New Jersey in the White House," between Stepien, the former Van Drew advisor now running the Trump campaign, Kellyanne Conway, a New Jersey native, and potentially even Chris Christie himself, who has re-emerged in recent weeks as a Republican talking head.

On the Democratic side, Biden was once such a presence in New Jersey that he was termed the state's "third senator," and the 2nd District falls squarely in the Philadelphia media market, where the Biden campaign is both headquartered and will be advertising heavily. Furthermore, Jill Biden was born in Atlantic County. Throw in the Kennedy allure (Biden served with Ted Kennedy in the Senate for decades), and there's a non-zero chance this race could see attention from the Biden camp as well.

### The Bottom Line

Van Drew's history in the area, his political savvy, and the underlying demographics of the constituency, give him a slight edge in this race.

But none of that could matter if the bottom falls out for the president, who has been hemorrhaging support not just in the suburbs but also in more rural, blue collar districts like this one.

Van Drew's crossover appeal may be good for a few points of overperformance, but at this point his name is so tightly associated with Trump's that if the president cannot keep roughly even with Biden, Van Drew may be hard-pressed to find the votes he needs. The district has historically been favorable to incumbents — it has sent just three men to Congress since 1975.

But the circumstances of this race — the convergence of Trump, impeachment, the party switch, coronavirus, and the Kennedys — have made what should have been a sleepy affair into a blockbuster competition. Said Froonjian, at the Hughes Institute: "I don't think we've

ever seen anything like this in South Jersey."

Overall, Republicans need to gain 17 seats for a House majority and re-electing Van Drew is essential to that path. But if the congressman loses, it's likely the first sign of evidence in November that Democrats are going to grow their majority. **IE**

## 2020 House Ratings

### Toss-Up (4R, 4D)

GA 7 (Open; Woodall, R)	NY 11 (Rose, D)
IA 3 (Axne, D)	OK 5 (Horn, D)
IL 13 (Davis, R)	SC 1 (Cunningham, D)
NJ 2 (Van Drew, R)#	TX 22 (Open; Olson, R)#

### Tilt Democratic (10D, 1R)

CA 21 (Cox, D)
CA 25 ( <i>Garcia, R</i> )
GA 6 (McBath, D)
IA 1 (Finkenauer, D)
IA 2 (Open; Loeb sack, D)
ME 2 (Golden, D)
MN 7 (Peterson, DFL)
NM 2 (Torres Small, D)
NY 22 (Brindisi, D)
UT 4 (McAdams, D)
VA 7 (Spanberger, D)

### Tilt Republican (4R)

MN 1 (Hagedorn, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
TX 24 (Open; Marchant, R)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	201	233
Currently Solid	174	202
Competitive	27	31
Needed for majority	218	

### Lean Democratic (8D, 1R)

CA 48 (Rouda, D)
IL 14 (Underwood, D)
KS 3 (Davids, D)
NJ 3 (Kim, D)
NJ 7 (Malinowski, D)
TX 7 (Fletcher, D)
TX 23 ( <i>Open; Hurd, R</i> )
TX 32 (Allred, D)
VA 2 (Luria, D)

### Lean Republican (6R, 1L)

MI 3 ( <i>Open; Amash, L</i> )
MO 2 (Wagner, R)
NE 2 (Bacon, R)
NY 2 (Open; King, R)
NY 24 (Katko, R)
OH 1 (Chabot, R)
TX 21 (Roy, R)

### Likely Democratic (9D, 2R)

AZ 1 (O'Halleran, D)
CA 39 (Cisneros, D)
FL 26 (Mucarsel-Powell, D)
NH 1 (Pappas, D)
MI 8 (Slotkin, D)
MI 11 (Stevens, D)
NC 2 ( <i>Open; Holding, R</i> )
NC 6 ( <i>Open; Walker, R</i> )
NV 3 (Lee, D)
PA 8 (Cartwright, D)
PA 17 (Lamb, D)

### Likely Republican (9R)

AZ 6 (Schweikert, R)
FL 15 (Spano, R)
IN 5 (Open; Brooks, R)
MI 6 (Upton, R)
MT AL (Open; Gianforte, R)
NC 8 (Hudson, R)
NY 1 (Zeldin, R)
TX 10 (McCaul, R)
WA 3 (Herrera-Beutler, R)

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

**House Range Projection: Republicans +5 to Democrats +5.  
Republicans need to gain 17 seats for a majority**

# Massachusetts Senate: Bay State Brawl

By Jacob Rubashkin

At the time of Ted Kennedy's death in 2009, Massachusetts had been represented by a Kennedy in the Senate for 54 of the previous 56 years.

Now, the scion of America's most famous family seeks to reclaim the perch from which his forefathers exercised their national influence. There's just one thing standing in the way of Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III and the Senate seat he's been groomed for his entire adult life: the seat's current occupant, Democratic Sen. Ed Markey.

And Markey, at a spry 74 years of age, has no intention of going into early retirement.

The result is a brawl in the Bay State Democratic primary that is both the culmination of decades of Massachusetts political machinations, and has become a symbolic tussle over the future of the party and its priorities nationwide.

Whoever wins the primary will be a senator next year, considering the political climate and local Democratic trend. And on most issues that might come before the US Senate in the next Congress, it is difficult to distinguish the two candidates to any significant degree.

But the result of this primary could be an indicator of which direction the party is heading in as it looks to future generations of leadership.

## The Lay of the Land

When then-Boston City Councilwoman Ayanna Pressley successfully challenged longtime Rep. Michael Capuano in the 2018 Democratic primary in Massachusetts' 7th District, she put the rest of the state's congressional delegation on notice: incumbency did not guarantee them safety, and the next generation of up-and-coming Massachusetts Democrats were not going to "wait their turn."

The eyes of political observers soon turned to Rep. Kennedy, the son of former Massachusetts Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II and the grandson of New York Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy's decision in the summer of 2019 to enter the 2020 Senate race put him on a collision course against Markey in the September 2020 primary.

Massachusetts has, with one glaring exception, been a consistent Democratic vote on the federal level. It has voted for every Democratic presidential nominee since 1988, most recently voting for Hillary Clinton 60-32 percent against Donald Trump. The last time the state sent less than 60 percent of its votes to a Democrat was 1992, when Bill Clinton won 48 percent to President George H.W. Bush's 29 percent and Ross Perot's 23 percent.

The state stuck by Michael Dukakis' side as he lost to Bush in 1988, just one of 10 states to vote for the Massachusetts governor. And even in the Ronald Reagan landslides of 1984 and 1980, the state just narrowly backed the Gipper by 3 points in 1984 and by less than two-tenths of 1 percent in 1980. In 1972, the state was the lone supporter (along with Washington, DC) of George McGovern's candidacy.

In the Senate, the state has voted for Democrats every election since 1980, with the exception of Scott Brown's upset victory in the 2010 special election to replace the deceased Kennedy; Brown won that race by 4 points over state Attorney General Martha Coakley, but lost two years later to Elizabeth Warren by 8 points.

At the gubernatorial level, Republicans have had more success. Moderate incumbent Charlie Baker first won election in 2014 over

Coakley 48-47 percent, and then cruised to re-election in 2018 as one of the most popular governors in the country, defeating Democrat Jay Gonzalez by 33 points. He did so while Warren was also cruising to a second term, defeating Republican Jeff Diehl by 24 points.

## The Incumbent

Markey, the dean of the Massachusetts delegation, has been in Congress since he was 29 years old. In many ways, his political career is a direct rebuke to the mystique of the Kennedys. The son of a Malden, Mass. milkman, Markey drove an ice cream truck to pay tuition at Boston College, where he received both his undergraduate (1968) and law (1972) degrees. While in college, he enlisted in the US Army Reserve, where he served in the same unit as future House Speaker Tip O'Neill, also of Massachusetts.

The man Markey succeeded in Congress, Torbert MacDonald, had two degrees from Harvard, where he was the captain of the football team and roommates with John F. Kennedy, Rep. Kennedy's great uncle.

Running in the crowded, 12-man special election called after



Caroline Brehman/CQ Roll Call

Ed Markey

MacDonald's death in 1976, Markey represented a clear break from his predecessor; he was considered to be one of the most liberal candidates, and the most insurgent as well. The then-state senator had a reputation for

pugnacity, and had never stepped foot in Washington before he was sent to Congress.

Markey won that special primary election for the 7th District (North Boston suburbs), with 22 percent of the vote, and went on to win the general with 85 percent. Between 1976 and 2012 he won every general election with at least 62 percent of the vote. He faced just one serious primary challenge, in 1984, against state Sen. Samuel Rotondi. Markey won 54-40 percent.

In 2013, when Sen. John Kerry resigned to become US Secretary of State, Markey ran in the special election to succeed him. In the primary he defeated neighboring Rep. Stephen Lynch 57-42 percent and went on to defeat Republican Gabriel Gomez 55-45 percent.

A year later, Markey coasted to victory over Hopkinton Selectman Brian Herr, 62-38 percent.

While in the House, Markey maintained his reputation of liberal brashness, and took up the cause of climate change; he was the driving force behind the creation of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, serving as its chairman from 2007 until it was abolished by the new Republican majority in 2011. A longtime chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Markey also touts his role in the passage of the

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landmark 1996 Telecommunications Act.

And in the Senate, he became a darling of progressives nationwide when he co-authored the Green New Deal proposal with New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Markey's campaign team includes Jef Pollock of Global Strategy Group for polling. Markey's campaign manager, John Walsh, is the former chairman of the Massachusetts Democratic Party.

## The Democratic Challenger

Joseph P. Kennedy III, 39, has served as representative from Massachusetts' 4th District (Western Boston suburbs and Bristol County) since 2013, when he succeeded the retiring Barney Frank. Prior to that, he had worked as an assistant district attorney from 2009 to 2011, first in the Cape and Islands office and then in Middlesex. The son of Joseph P. Kennedy II, who represented the 8th District from 1987 to 1999, "JKIII," as he is known in the press, graduated from Stanford in 2003, did a stint in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, and then went to Harvard Law School, from which he graduated in 2009.



Joseph Kennedy

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

In the 2012 election to succeed Frank, Kennedy cleared the Democratic field easily and won 90 percent of the vote against two unknown candidates. He went on to defeat GOP nominee/2010 4th District nominee Sean Bielat 61-36 percent in the general election. Bielat tried, unsuccessfully, to argue that Kennedy was trying to coast on his fame, telling *Slate*, "This guy brings a name, and some money. If you ask most people around here what they know about Joe Kennedy, they can't tell you a damn thing."

Two years later, Kennedy ran unopposed in the primary and general elections. In 2016, he defeated Republican David DeRosa 70-30 percent, and was unopposed again in 2018.

In Congress, Kennedy sits on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and is the vice chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. Long pegged as a rising star in the party, Kennedy delivered the Democratic response to Trump's 2018 State of the Union address.

Kennedy's campaign team includes former Bernie Sanders chief strategist Tad Devine of Devine Mulvey Longabaugh for media, Jim Gerstein of GBAO for polling, Paul Ambrosino of Ambrosino, Muir, Hansen & Crouse for direct mail, Marne Pike at Veracity for digital, and campaign manager Nick Clemons, who served as Kennedy's first manager in 2012 and as his district director since.

Kennedy had been working with 4CM+M for media, but recently replaced them with Devine, just a month before the primary.

## How It Plays Out

Kennedy is largely believed to have begun the primary with an advantage because of his name recognition and enduring affection — no Kennedy has ever lost a race in the state.

Early on, Kennedy was able to seize a financial edge, out-raising

Markey by \$1 million in both the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first three months of 2020. But between a midsummer Kennedy spending spree and Markey's campaign finally waking up, the two candidates drew even by the end of June, when both campaigns reported raising \$1.8 million, and identical cash reserves of \$4.8 million.

Markey is running an unabashedly progressive campaign, trumpeting support from AOC and Elizabeth Warren, and organizations including the Sierra Club, NARAL, Indivisible, and the Sunrise Movement, a youth-led climate change advocacy group that has been on the forefront of the issue over the past three years. Markey is also endorsed by establishment figures such as Sen. Chuck Schumer and the DSCC, and five of Massachusetts' nine members of Congress (sitting out the race are Reps. Pressley, Seth Moulton, and Markey's successor Katherine Clarke). Markey has been endorsed by his 2013 primary election opponent, Rep. Lynch, while Kennedy has been endorsed by Markey's 2013 general election opponent, Gomez.

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## Candidate Conversation



Sri Preston Kulkarni for Congress

### Sri Preston Kulkarni (D)

Texas' 22nd District —  
Rating: Toss-Up

**Interview Date:** June 24, 2020  
(via Google Meet)

**Date of Birth:** October 6, 1978;  
Ruston, La.

**Education:** Univ. of Texas,  
Austin (2002); Harvard (MPA,  
2017)

**Elected Office:** None; 2018 Democratic nominee for the 22nd District

**Current Outlook:** Kulkarni came up 5 points shy of retiring GOP Rep. Pete Olson in 2018, and now he'll get a shot at the open seat in this Houston-area district, the fastest-growing in the nation. Kulkarni is significantly outpacing his 2018 fundraising — by March 31 of this year he'd already matched his total for the 2018 cycle — and he admitted his campaign is leagues more organized than last time. He also has a slew of major Democratic endorsements and avoided a runoff in his primary. It took a runoff to settle the GOP race, but now the stage is set for Kulkarni to face Ft. Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls (who reported just \$29,000 in the bank on June 30, compared to Kulkarni's \$1.2 million) in the general election.

**Evaluation:** Kulkarni was engaging, energetic, and quick with a dad joke. A 14-year veteran of the US Foreign Service who resigned in protest in 2017, he speaks at least a half-dozen languages, many of which he uses on the campaign trail in this diverse district. He's confident in his messaging and in the leftward movement of this district. Kulkarni is diplomatic about where he stands in the Democratic Party — he stayed out of the presidential primary despite having worked for one of the candidates, New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and he's been endorsed by the Blue Dog PAC, as well as more liberal groups such as End Citizens United and J Street. As President Donald Trump continues to struggle in the suburbs, Kulkarni and candidates like him will be in a strong position to increase the Democratic majority even further.

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Markey has made climate change and his relationship with youth activists central to his campaign, adopting Warren’s tactic from her presidential campaign of recording video of his surprise phone calls with his young supporters.

Markey also emphasizes his working class Malden roots in an implicit contrast to Kennedy, and approaches the race not as an incumbent senator with party backing (which he is) but as an underdog in a race against 70 years of pure Massachusetts political power (which he also is).

Strategists on both sides point to an interesting resulting dynamic in the race. Despite — or because of — his hardscrapple roots and alignment with AOC, Warren and others, Markey draws his support

largely from more highly educated voters, affluent voters, party activists and the political establishment, evidenced by endorsements from 110 of the 162 Democratic Massachusetts state legislators (Kennedy has just five). Kennedy, while political royalty, draws his support from blue collar voters, voters without bachelors or advanced degrees, and lower information and lower-propensity voters, particularly working class constituencies in the Boston area for whom the Kennedy name is still golden.

Markey has made an issue of Kennedy’s time working for Republican Michael O’Keefe, the DA for the Cape and Islands, who was known for his hardline views on criminal justice and vehement opposition to marijuana decriminalization. Kennedy did not support a 2016 referendum to decriminalize marijuana in the state but has since reversed his opinion (Markey, it should be said, has also reversed on a key issue for Democrats over the course of his career, having first won office in 1976 as a pro-life candidate, and Kennedy allies often note Markey’s vote for the 1994 Crime Bill).

But the broad contours of this race are not necessarily ideological. Kennedy, whose policy positions mirror Markey’s on most every big ticket item, from the Green New Deal to Medicare for All, from studying reparations for slavery to overturning *Citizen’s United*, has largely drawn on broad themes of generational change. He talks far more about “the old system” and “the status quo” than he does Markey, who does not appear in name or image in any of the five TV ads Kennedy has spent \$2.5 million to air since May.

He has tried create some separation with Markey on campaign finance, pressuring him to disavow any Super PAC involvement in the race — the only active Super PAC in the race is spending \$500,000 to support Markey and is organized by the Sunrise Movement — but Markey has refused, saying that the young progressives running the organization deserve to be heard.

Kennedy has also gone after Markey for not being a presence in the community, arguing that the senator spends too much time in Chevy Chase, Md. and not enough time in communities around Massachusetts.

Markey bristles at the suggestion. The senator recently launched a website featuring an interactive map of the state — when the user selects any town in Massachusetts, they are presented with a list of all of Markey’s appearances in the town, endorsements from local officials, and an exact dollar amount of how much federal funding Markey has brought to that town while in Congress.

At times, Kennedy has struggled to articulate why he is running at this moment, and why Markey should be booted from office. In a 2017 interview with WBUR when he was asked about the possibility of running for Senate and responded that “timing is everything. And ... opportunities don’t come up that often.”

With Pressley bursting onto the scene in 2018, fellow Rep. Seth Moulton raising his national profile with a presidential run in 2020, and popular Attorney General Maura Healey lurking in the wings, the Massachusetts political stage is getting crowded, and running in 2020, risky as it is, might just represent the best chance Kennedy has to make the jump. But the congressman’s allies maintain that his decision to run was solely about his belief that Markey was not doing as good a job as he could be.

Without significant ideological disagreement, Kennedy has focused on highlighting the generational gap between the two — 37 years of difference — and has tried to argue that as “Sen. Kennedy” he would

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## 2020 Senate Ratings

### Toss-Up

Collins (R-Maine)

Emst (R-Iowa)

Daines (R-Mont.)

Tillis (R-N.C.)

### Tilt Democratic

### Tilt Republican

*Gardner (R-Colo.)*

Perdue (R-Ga.)

*McSally (R-Ariz.)*

### Lean Democratic

### Lean Republican

Peters (D-Mich.)

Cornyn (R-Texas)

Loeffler (R-Ga.)

*Jones (D-Ala.)*

### Likely Democratic

### Likely Republican

Graham (R-S.C.)

Sullivan (R-Alaska)

### Solid Democratic

### Solid Republican

NM Open (Udall, D)

TN Open (Alexander, R)

Booker (D-N.J.)

WY Open (Enzi, R)

Coons (D-Del.)

Cassidy (R-La.)

Durbin (D-Ill.)

Capito (R-W.Va.)

Markey (D-Mass.)

Cotton (R-Ark.)

Merkley (D-Ore.)

Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)

Reed (D-R.I.)

Inhofe (R-Okla.)

Shaheen (D-N.H.)

McConnell (R-Ky.)

Smith (D-Minn.)

Risch (R-Idaho)

Warner (D-Va.)

Rounds (R-S.D.)

Sasse (R-Neb.)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	53	47
Not up this cycle	30	35
Currently Solid	11	10
Competitive	12	2

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

**Senate Projection: Democratic net gain +3-5 seats. Democrats need +4 for a majority. Can control Senate with +3 and a White House victory.**

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have a louder megaphone to promote and fight for the policies he and Markey agree on. Kennedy holds himself out as someone who can elevate and do more with the position of senator, affecting change not just by legislating from within Congress, which he acknowledges Markey is adept at, but outside the Capitol building as well.

It's not always a comfortable argument, for the congressman or for others in the Democratic Party, many of whom have chafed at Kennedy's brazenness in challenging a senator in good standing.

But uncomfortable does not equal ineffective. It is undeniable that Kennedys are afforded a level of prominence and attention that rivals any other political player, and as a leader he was compelling enough to persuade nearly two dozen of his colleagues in the House to endorse his bid against an incumbent, including the towering conscience of Congress, the late Rep. John Lewis of Georgia.

### Poll Position

Because this seat is not part of the battle for Senate control, it has attracted less attention from public pollsters. Just five surveys of the race have been released publicly this year, and they generally point to a close race in which Kennedy has an edge.

A Feb. 12-19 poll from UMass Lowell and conducted online by YouGov showed Kennedy ahead by one point, 35-34 percent, and a Feb. 18-24 poll from UMass Amherst/WCVB and conducted online by YouGov found Markey ahead 3 points, 43-40 percent, the only poll showing a Markey lead. A third February poll, from Suffolk University/*Boston Globe*/WBZ, taken Feb. 26-28 and done by live caller interview, found Kennedy ahead 42-36 percent.

A follow-up survey by UMass Lowell/YouGov taken April 27-May 1 showed a similarly tight race, with Kennedy leading by 2 points, 44-42 percent.

An Emerson College poll taken May 5-6 using IVR and MTurk methods showed Kennedy with a much wider 58-42 point lead. But there's reason to be circumspect about that result, which did not include any undecided voters — highly improbable at that stage of the campaign — and indicated that 60 percent of respondents thought they might change their minds.

But recent *Boston Herald* reporting indicated that Markey may be lagging more than previously thought; according to the *Herald*, Kennedy has a double-digit polling lead not just in his own district (to be expected) but also in Rep. Richie Neal's Western Massachusetts district. With Kennedy expected to run strong in the Boston area, Markey will have to compensate with voters from elsewhere in the state, from districts including Neal's.

### Republicans?

There are two candidates running for the Republican nomination.

Shivya Ayyaduri, a scientist with four MIT degrees who was once well-known for incorrectly claiming to have invented email as a high-schooler, and has become popular in conspiracy theorist circles for spreading misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic, is running and has loaned his campaign \$1 million. Ayyaduri ran as an independent in the 2018 election against Warren and Diehl and received 3 percent of the vote.

Also running is Dover-area lawyer Kevin O'Connor, who had just \$75,000 in the bank on June 30.

Neither will win the general election.

### The Bottom Line

Whichever candidate emerges from the Democratic primary will be the heavy favorite for election, and it is difficult to see how their votes on the major issues of the day would differ.

A Markey win would signal that the progressive wing of the Democratic Party has enough firepower to defeat a Kennedy in Massachusetts, and more broadly that the younger, activist wing of the party has the range to play in Senate races, where they have previously been restricted to the House.

A Kennedy win would indicate that, despite the party's turn toward a more progressive populism that eschews dynastic politics, memories of past greatness still have pull. It could also launch the congressman, who was already the subject of some speculation about a 2020 presidential run, into the already-brewing conversation about the next generation of Democratic leadership in 2024 and beyond.



### Candidate Conversation



Brynne Kennedy for Congress

#### Brynne Kennedy (D)

California's 4th District —  
Rating: Solid Republican

**Interview Date:** June 23, 2020  
(via Google Meet)

**Date of Birth:** February 29,  
1984; Pittsfield, Mass.

**Education:** Yale (2006); London  
School of Economics (MBA,  
2012)

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

**Current Outlook:** Kennedy is attempting to unseat one of California's few remaining Republican representatives, Tom McClintock. This expansive district stretches from the northern Sacramento suburbs south to include the Sierra Nevada mountains and foothills and is one of the reddest in the state, having voted for Donald Trump by 15 points in 2016 and GOP gubernatorial nominee John Cox by 19 points in 2018, but McClintock defeated Democrat Jessica Morse by just 8 points last cycle. Kennedy is already outpacing Morse's fundraising, and won't have the embarrassing legal setbacks Morse's campaign suffered. Still, winning those last few points is a heavy lift for any Democrat.

**Evaluation:** Kennedy, who once was a competitive gymnast with Olympic aspirations, is running as a business-friendly, conservative Democrat. The founder of a successful HR technology company, Kennedy has lived around the world and done stints in the finance industry as well, and she says that her private sector experience gives her crossover appeal to Trump voters in the district — even going as far as to compare herself favorably with Trump's outsider status. Her plan appears to be to largely ignore Trump and focus on McClintock, a good strategy in a district that will likely vote for the president again. But Kennedy's finance background will also provide fodder for her opponents, particularly her time at Lehman Brothers in the mid 2000s. She might also have to defend herself from accusations of carpet-bagging; she moved to the district from San Francisco just a little over a year ago, and filed for office within months of arriving (McClintock, it should be said, lives outside the district). Kennedy is the type of credible candidate Democrats need to take advantage of an opportunity in a wave election, and that's what we might be seeing with Trump's struggles at the top of the ballot.

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private, national and state-level polling, we're changing our presidential rating in 17 states- all in favor of Biden. With those changes, Biden leads Trump in our Electoral College projection 319 to 187, when 270 is needed to win. There are some key states, such as North Carolina, where Trump doesn't appear to be hemorrhaging voters at the same rate, but there just isn't significant evidence that there is a single state getting better for Trump right now.

Biden's total includes winning all the states Hillary Clinton carried in 2016, along with Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Florida, Wisconsin, and Nebraska's 2nd District — all of which Trump carried four years ago. Georgia, North Carolina, and Maine's 2nd District make up the Toss-up category. Iowa, Ohio, and Texas join the Tilt Republican category, while Alaska and Montana are now rated Lean Republican. The Likely Republican category is evidence of the expanding softness in Trump's support and now includes Kansas, Missouri, South Carolina and Utah. There could be more candidates for this category, but there just isn't a lot of data in most of the other states assumed to be going Republican.

Critics will claim that *Inside Elections* has counted Trump out and that we've declared the president can't win. That is not true. Just like the race wasn't over when neither candidate was projected to win more than 270 votes, the race isn't over when current projections put Biden over 270. But the fear of projecting the race incorrectly shouldn't cause us to ignore the preponderance of data which show a Biden win is more likely than a Trump win at this stage of the race.

Ah, but what if the data are wrong? The question about "Shy Trump" voters comes up almost as often as the president tweets. Qualitatively, it seems like the president has emboldened his supporters, and people who might have been sheepish about vocalizing their support for Trump four years ago are now happy with what he's done in office and unafraid to tell the world. Quantitatively, multiple GOP pollsters admit that those voters could still exist, but make up potentially 1 to 3 percent of the electorate and would have to manifest themselves in just the right states to matter.

On a broader level, to dismiss the current presidential data would be to assume that virtually all pollsters (partisan and nonpartisan) are independently making the same methodological mistake in the same direction. That's possible, but not likely. Up to this point, private GOP polling doesn't paint the picture of a fundamentally different race, just closer margins in some areas.

Rather than argue about the current state of play, Republicans will argue about the future. They believe the economy (and the public's confidence in the president on the economy) will supersede other issues, Trump's law and order approach will assure skittish independent voters, and that Biden will make a fatal mental mistake that will discredit him as a credible alternative for voters looking for a change.

Not only is there considerable doubt the economy will be able to recover enough by the fall for that dynamic to benefit Trump, positive



Joe Biden

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

coronavirus cases continue to climb higher around the country, threatening whatever plans for re-opening are in the works and even causing governors to send their states back into various degrees of lockdown.

And the president has shown an inability to focus on the economy, the one area where voters still may view him as more capable than Biden. He keeps coming back to cultural issues, such as statues, Confederate battle flags, even canned beans, and settling scores with his critics. Voters just don't trust him (compared to Biden) to handle some of the biggest issues facing the country right now including coronavirus and race relations. More than anything, it appears the president has lost the benefit of the doubt with a majority of voters, and that is difficult to recover.

Republicans and political observers will also bring up time as the wild card. "Four months is an eternity," is the common refrain. But it's not clear Trump and the Republicans have enough time to significantly recover. Just like the president's decline has been steady, his recovery would likely take time in the other direction. With the polarized state of the electorate, it's very unclear what single news event would cause Trump's standing to improve dramatically, considering 50 percent of registered voters said there was "no chance at all" they might support the president, according to the latest *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll.



President Donald Trump

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

And Trump doesn't have until Nov. 3 to recover. Four years ago, approximately 40 percent of voters cast their ballots before Election Day.

That percentage is likely to grow significantly with increased access to mail-in balloting in response to the coronavirus, and some voters will start receiving their ballots as early as September, as explained by Grace Panetta of *Business Insider*.

If the data does change dramatically between now and November, then we'll adjust our ratings and analysis accordingly. These are projections rooted in data, not predictions of the future.

The biggest mistake of 2016 was not underestimating Trump's support but a failure of imagination. Too many people couldn't comprehend how he could win. Four years later, too many people can't comprehend how he could lose and underestimate how far he could possibly fall.

IE

## CALENDAR

<b>Sept. 29</b>	First Presidential Debate (Indiana)
<b>Oct. 7</b>	Lone Vice Presidential Debate (Utah)
<b>Oct 15</b>	Second Presidential Debate (Florida)
<b>Oct. 22</b>	Third Presidential Debate (Tennessee)
<b>Nov. 3</b>	Election Day
<b>Jan. 5</b>	Georgia Senate Runoffs (if necessary)