



## **Fewer Than 50 State Legislative Districts That Are Essential to Protecting Our Democracy**

*April 2024*

In 2024 our democracy as we know it is on the line. Trump and MAGA Republicans up and down the ballot have outlined clear plans to subvert democracy should they win power in November. This is a battle Democrats, and our country, cannot afford to lose.

Over the past 50 years, Republicans built overwhelming power in state legislatures where voting rights and election administration are decided. And while Democrats have had remarkable gains in recent years, GOP strength continues to threaten American democracy – particularly since this year’s presidential and congressional elections will likely come down to a handful of votes in a sliver of battleground states.

Democratic control of legislative seats, and majorities especially, are the only antidote to Trump and Republicans – who will continue to fuel and innovate ways to undermine free and fair elections through the next decade. In one scenario, if President Biden wins re-election, we should expect Trump to declare himself victor, spread lies, and potentially incite more violence. If Trump wins, we should expect him to empower right-wing extremists in his administration and around the country in state capitals, and an undermining of democracy at an unprecedented level. In either scenario above, chaos will only be tempered through the possession of Democratic power in the states.

### **Don’t Sleep on the Threats to Our Democracy**

Since the January 6 insurrection, conspiracies around election interference and voter fraud have only grown and become a main theme for the 2024 election season. Following the Iowa caucus, where Trump won handedly, [MAGA Republicans spread false claims](#) about election interference in response to Trump losing one county by one vote to former candidate Nikki Haley. In Arizona, a [swarm of Trump supporters recently protested](#) the board of supervisors in Maricopa County, claiming the elected leaders were illegitimate. At the same time, Republicans have brought dozens of [election-related lawsuits](#), claiming unfair and manipulated election processes nationwide.

Democrats must be prepared for this new reality and ready to counter any ongoing attacks against our republic. That starts down ballot, with state legislative leaders who are ready to uphold our democracy and protect our freedoms as Americans. In particular, there are less than 50 districts that are at the heart of this fight and that Democrats must protect – and win – at all costs.

## **The Suburban Roadmap to a 2024 Down-Ballot Victory**

With the Trump realignment we've seen since 2016 and the devastating Dobbs decision on abortion, the battleground to win has narrowed: rather than a few battleground states, voters who live in just a handful of suburban legislative districts will decide control of Congress, the White House, and all the rights that fall to state legislatures – voting rights, reproductive rights, and protecting democracy should Trump and MAGA forces win in November. Voters in these districts reside in the most powerful geography in America, where they will cast decisive votes at every level of the ballot. These state legislative races are indeed the backstop of our democracy.

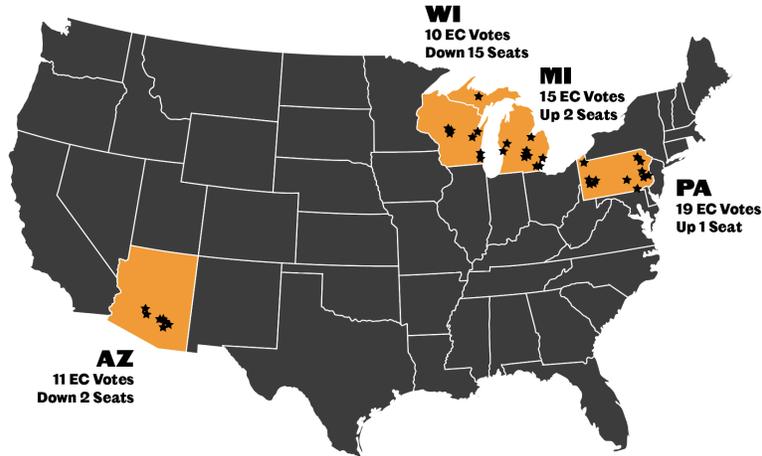
By 2017, suburban voters had had enough of Donald Trump, and the 'Trump Realignment' was apparent in that year's off-cycle elections in Virginia. By 2018, there was a thunderclap across the country. The Dobbs decision from the Supreme Court solidified those suburban gains for Democrats, with repeated and durable wins. Even this year, the [suburban counties where Nikki Haley fought her closest races against Trump](#) provide us with strong evidence that the Trump realignment has continued in the most important suburbs.

At the heart of this turf lies the legislative battleground, suburban rings around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, Detroit, and Milwaukee. These are the swing precincts that will likely determine control of Congress, the White House, and the most important legislative races to protect democracy – truly the most important votes in America.

### **41 Districts That Need to Be A 2024 Priority for Democrats**

Across the country, the battleground to protect democracy lies in fewer than 50 state legislative races that will be the backstop to democracy. In 2022, Democrats won many of these, taking Democratic majorities in the Michigan and Minnesota legislatures and the Pennsylvania House. In 2024, Democrats will need to defend wins in key battleground districts and work to gain legislative power in Arizona and Wisconsin.

Our suburban battleground overlaps with what will be critical for Democrats in the path to holding the White House and winning back the US House. These super voters are the most important voters in the country – who will be voting in the most competitive and critical races up and down the ballot. In 2020, Biden won these states by razor thin margins (his electoral victory was clinched by just ~45,000 votes in 3 states). These tiny margins are even more extreme down-ballot: in 2022, the US House flipped by just ~6,000 votes in 5 races; this same year, the Pennsylvania State House flipped by just 63 votes in one race, and the Michigan State Senate came down to ~300 votes.



**Arizona**

The two best state legislative offensive opportunities for Democrats are the State House and State Senate. Democrats are down only two seats in each chamber, one seat to a tie. In Arizona, the districts precisely overlap, providing a high degree of efficiency in both chambers. Voters in these districts will vote for decisive races for State House, State Senate, Congress, US Senate, and President. The battleground is almost entirely concentrated between the Phoenix and Tucson suburbs. In a 30 seat Senate chamber, Democrats have 15 seats in districts where Biden received at least 50% of the vote. Democrats lost the State Senate by ~6,000 votes across the chamber in 2022.

**AZ Top Districts for 2024**

Chamber	District	Incumbent	Suburban?	Count(ies)	Region	Competitive CD Overlap	2024 Haley <sup>1</sup>	2022 State Leg Dem 2-Way	22 Gov Dem 2-Way	2022 US Senate Dem 2-Way	2020 Biden Performance
House	2	Judy Schwiebert (D) Justin Wilmeth (R)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	1, 8	20%	48.2%	50.0%	52.0%	48.9%
House	4	Matt Gress (R) Laura Terech (D)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	1	20%	50.5%	49.7%	51.7%	50.4%

<sup>1</sup> "Arizona Republican Primary Election Results." *The New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2024, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/03/19/us/elections/results-arizona-republican-presidential-primary.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/03/19/us/elections/results-arizona-republican-presidential-primary.html).

House	13	Jennifer Pawlik (D) Julie Willoughby (R)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	N/A	20%	48.3%	50.5%	52.5%	51.5%
House	16	Teresa Martinez (R) Keith Seaman (D)	Partial	Pima, Pinal	Phoenix - Tucson	6	21% / 14%	44.3%	48.2%	50.6%	48.0%
House	17	Rachel Jones (R) Cory McGarr (R)	Partial	Pima, Pinal	Tucson	6	21% / 14%	48.8%	48.7%	51.4%	47.8%
House	23	Mariana Sandoval (D) Michele Pena (R)	No	Yuma, Pima, Maricopa	Yuma - Phoenix - Tucson	N/A	11% / 21% / 20%	53.7%	56.6%	59.3%	56.7%
Senate	2	Steve Kaiser (R)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	1, 8	20%	48.2%	50.0%	52.0%	48.9%
Senate	4	Christine Marsh (D)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	1	20%	50.5%	49.7%	51.7%	50.4%
Senate	13	JD Mesnard (R)	Yes	Maricopa	Phoenix	N/A	20%	48.3%	50.5%	52.5%	51.5%
Senate	17	Justine Wadsack (R)	Partial	Pima, Pinal	Tucson	6	21% / 14%	48.8%	48.7%	51.4%	47.8%

### Michigan

Democrats hold a two-seat majority in the House and the Senate is not up for election this year. The Michigan battleground is spread around the state, but there is a large concentration in the Detroit suburbs. In a 110 seat House chamber, Democrats have 54 seats where Biden won more than 50% of the vote in 2020. There are still 11 Republican held seats won by Whitmer in 2022 giving Democrats further opportunity to grow the majority. Democrats only won the House chamber in 2022 by a mere 1,425 votes.

### MI Top Districts 2024

Chamber	District	Incumbent	Suburban?	Count(ies)	Region	Competitive CD Overlap	2024 Haley <sup>2</sup>	2022 State	22 Gov Dem	2022 US Senate	2020 Biden Performance
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								Leg Dem 2-Way	2-Way	Dem 2-Way	
House	27	Jaime Churches (D)	Yes	Wayne	Detroit	N/A	26%	50.8%	52.9%	N/A	47.9%
House	28	Jamie Thompson (R)	Yes	Monroe, Wayne	Detroit	N/A	20% / 26%	49.0%	53.2%	N/A	47.3%
House	38	Joey Andrews (D)	No	Allegan, Van Buren, Berrien	Benton Harbor	4	27% / 27% / 26%	50.5%	55.1%	N/A	54.7%
House	46	Kathy Schmaltz (R)	Partial	Jackson, Washtena w	Ann Arbor	N/A	23% / 44%	45.6%	55.0%	N/A	49.9%
House	54	Donnie Steele (R)	Yes	Oakland	Detroit	N/A	34%	48.8%	53.9%	N/A	51.0%
House	55	Mark Tisdell (R)	Yes	Oakland	Detroit	10	34%	48.2%	54.4%	N/A	51.3%
House	58	Nate Shannon (D)	Yes	Macomb	Detroit	1, 9	20%	51.3%	53.9%	N/A	47.2%
House	61	Denise Mentzer (D)	Yes	Macomb	Detroit	10	20%	52.0%	56.2%	N/A	49.7%
House	103	Betsy Coffia (D)	Partial	Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie	Travers e City	N/A	31% / 34% / 27%	50.7%	56.2%	N/A	52.4%

## Pennsylvania

Democrats have a one-seat majority in the House, and Republicans hold a four-seat majority in the Senate. Democrats only won control of the PA House by 63 votes in one district in 2022. There were several other close races showing the need for incumbent protection efforts. Many of the competitive seats are in the Philadelphia or Pittsburgh suburbs, but there are also opportunities in Scranton, Lehigh Valley and Erie. Out of the 203 seats, Governor Shapiro won 125 seats, giving Democrats a clear path for further growth in the chamber. Democrats also have a path toward winning a trifecta in Pennsylvania over the coming years. If Democrats can win a couple of State Senate seats in 2024, Democrats will be set up to take a majority in 2026 when the other half of the chamber is up for election.

<sup>2</sup> "Michigan Democratic Primary Election Results." *The New York Times*, 28 Feb. 2024, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/02/27/us/elections/results-michigan-democratic-presidential-primary.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/02/27/us/elections/results-michigan-democratic-presidential-primary.html).

PA Top Districts 2024											
Chamber	District	Incumbent	Suburban?	Count(ies)	Region	Competitive CD Overlap	2024 Haley	2022 State Leg Dem 2-Way	22 Gov Dem 2-Way	2022 US Senate Dem 2-Way	2020 Biden Performance
House	13	John Lawrence (R)	Yes	Chester	Philadelphia	N/A	N/A	40.6%	56.0%	51.0%	48.8%
House	18	K.C. Tomlinson (R)	Yes	Bucks	Philadelphia	1	N/A	47.7%	63.4%	57.2%	52.6%
House	88	Sheryl Delozier (R)	Yes	Cumberland	Harrisburg	10	N/A	45.3%	57.2%	50.4%	49.1%
House	118	James Haddock (D)	No	Lackawanna, Luzerne	Scranton	8	N/A	52.3%	57.7%	52.8%	48.5%
House	137	Joe Emrick (R)	Partial	Northampton	LeHigh Valley	7	N/A	48.8%	55.8%	51.6%	50.3%
House	142	Joseph Hogan (R)	Yes	Bucks	Philadelphia	1	N/A	49.9%	60.2%	53.9%	51.0%
House	144	Brian Munroe (D)	Yes	Bucks	Philadelphia	12, 31	N/A	50.8%	59.4%	53.0%	51.7%
House	160	Craig Williams (R)	Yes	Delaware, Chester	Philadelphia	N/A	N/A	47.6%	57.5%	52.4%	53.4%
Senate	37	Devlin Robinson (R)	Yes	Allegheny	Pittsburgh	N/A	N/A	N/A	57.9%	51.9%	49.3%
Senate	49	Daniel Laughlin (R)	No	Erie	Erie	N/A	N/A	N/A	61.5%	55.4%	51.2%

### Wisconsin

After progressives took control of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, they invalidated the Republican gerrymander, giving the state new, fairer maps for the Assembly and State Senate. Among the 99 seat Assembly, Governor Evers won 53 districts which gives Democrats a clear path toward the majority. In the 33 seat State Senate, Evers won 18 seats which gives Democrats a narrow majority of districts. With only half the senate up in 2024, there is recognition that this will be a play for the majority in 2026. The new maps present opportunities in many corners of the state. While there are a handful of competitive races in Madison and Milwaukee suburbs, there is also competitive turf in Green Bay, Eau Claire, La Crosse and other smaller cities.

## WI Top Districts 2024

Chamber	District	Incumbent	Suburban?	Count(ies)	Region	Competitive CD Overlap	2024 Haley <sup>3</sup>	2022 State Leg Dem 2-Way	22 Gov Dem 2-Way	2022 US Senate Dem 2-Way	2020 Biden Performance
House	21	TBD	Partial	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	N/A	17%	N/A	55.0%	53.0%	52.0%
House	26	TBD	Partial	Sheboygan	Milwaukee	N/A	13%	N/A	53.0%	51.0%	52.0%
House	30	TBD	No	St. Croix, Pierce	Northwest	N/A	12%	N/A	50.0%	48.0%	49.0%
House	53	TBD	Partial	Winnebago	Green Bay	N/A	14%	N/A	54.0%	52.0%	52.0%
House	61	TBD	Yes	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	N/A	17%	N/A	53.0%	50.0%	51.0%
House	85	TBD	No	Marathon	North Central	N/A	10%	N/A	51.0%	48.0%	50.0%
House	88	TBD	Partial	Brown	Green Bay	N/A	12%	N/A	52.0%	49.0%	50.0%
House	89	TBD	Partial	Brown	Green Bay	N/A	12%	N/A	53.0%	50.0%	50.0%
House	94	TBD	Partial	La Crosse, Trempealeau	Eau Claire-La Crosse	N/A	17% / 11%	N/A	52.0%	49.0%	50.0%
Senate	8	TBD	Yes	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	N/A	17%	N/A	53.0%	51.0%	52.0%
Senate	14	TBD	Yes	Dane	Madison	N/A	24%	N/A	51.0%	49.0%	50.0%
Senate	30	TBD	Partial	Brown	Green Bay	N/A	12%	N/A	54.0%	51.0%	52.0%

Forward Majority invested \$35M in the state legislative battleground in 2022, and plans to be at that level of investment in persuasion, mobilization and registration programs in 2024.

<sup>3</sup> "Wisconsin Republican Primary Election Results." *The New York Times*, 2 Apr. 2024, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/04/02/us/elections/results-wisconsin-republican-presidential-primary.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/04/02/us/elections/results-wisconsin-republican-presidential-primary.html).