

HOUSE OVERVIEW | By David Wasserman, July 7, 2017

House: Rating Changes Favor Democrats in 10 Districts



This is a tricky point in the election cycle to begin making predictions. On one hand, the danger signs are everywhere for the GOP: President Trump's approval is mired in the **high 30s**, and support for the AHCA's legislation is stuck in the **high teens**, and Democrats have been significantly **over-performing**—despite falling short—in a broad array of special elections. They also lead most national **generic ballot** tests by high single digits.

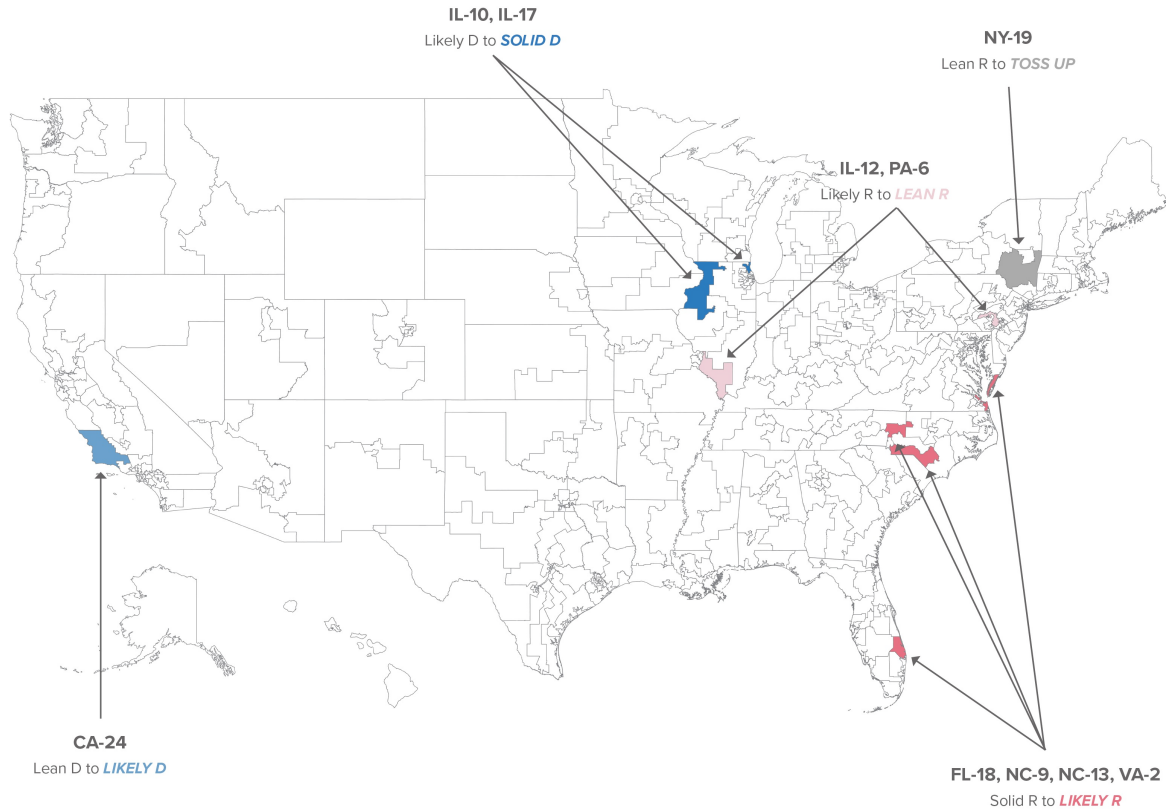
Race by race, the data isn't much better for Republicans. Multiple public and private polls now show House Republican incumbents who won by wide margins last fall tied with or trailing real and hypothetical opponents. For example, GOP Rep. Martha McSally (AZ-02) cruised by 14 points last fall. After voting for the AHCA, she's running even in two surveys against former Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, whose impending bid is the worst-kept secret in Tucson.

Taken as a whole, the evidence would seem to point to a wave election that would justify moving a slew of races into the Toss Up column and threaten GOP control of the House.

Except, the election isn't this November; it's still 16 months away. The fact these warning lights are flashing now means Republicans won't be caught off guard like many incumbents were in 2006 and 2010—they will have time to raise millions, conduct opposition research and define their opponents early. And Democrats aren't rushing to topple Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who has proven an effective foil for GOP House candidates.

This is the odd place we find ourselves when it comes to our race ratings: we know that if this environment persists, dozens of races in Lean and Likely Republican will eventually make their way into the Toss Up column. But we don't yet know which. Even after today's changes, Democrats would only net three seats if the 10 Toss Ups were to be split down the middle. But that understates the degree of danger Republicans face.

Ratings Changes



District	Ratings Change
CA-24 Carbajal	Lean D to Likely D
FL-18 Mast	Solid R to Likely R
IL-10 Schneider	Likely D to Solid D
IL-12 Bost	Likely R to Lean R
IL-17 Bustos	Likely D to Solid D
NY-19 Faso	Lean R to Toss Up
NC-09 Pittenger	Solid R to Likely R
NC-13 Budd	Solid R to Likely R
PA-06 Costello	Likely R to Lean R
VA-02 Taylor	Solid R to Likely R

Updated Bottom Lines

CA-24: Rep. Salud Carbajal (D) - Central coast: Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo

Likely Democratic. Carbajal was his own worst enemy for a portion of the 2016 campaign, when he won this as an open seat by just seven points. But GOP nominee Justin Fareed hasn't made any moves towards a comeback, and as long as President Trump's approval rating is below 40 nationally, Republicans won't be expending much effort in a district he lost by 20 points.

FL-18: Rep. Brian Mast (R) - Treasure Coast: Port St. Lucie, Jupiter

Likely Republican. In 2016, Mast benefited from his personal story as a disabled veteran, Democrat Randy Perkins's disorganized campaign and Donald Trump's success in Mar-a-Lago's backyard. But this district also reelected a Democrat in 2014, and it's susceptible to a wave. Attorney and former Senate candidate Pam Keith is running, but prosecutor and former state Sen. Dave Aronberg is considering and would be formidable.

IL-10: Rep. Brad Schneider (D) - Chicago north suburbs: Lake Shore

Solid Democratic. For years, this wealthy district hosted some of the most competitive races in the country. But after Donald Trump lost it by 29 points and dragged down Republican Bob Dold with him, it may be off the map for good. With Dold unlikely to embark on a comeback, Republicans may be consolidating behind former AIPAC staffer Jeremy Wynes. But in this political environment, Schneider looks safe.

IL-12: Rep. Mike Bost (R) - Southwest border: East St. Louis, Carbondale

Lean Republican. For years, Democrats have desperately tried to recruit Navy veteran and St. Clair County State's Attorney Brendan Kelly to run for Congress. This week, he announced he is running. He'll need every bit of this district's Democratic roots to unseat Bost, considering Trump carried the district 54 percent to 40 percent. But it's clear Bost is in for a much more competitive race than he had last fall.

IL-17: Rep. Cheri Bustos (D) - West: Rock Island, parts of Peoria and Rockford

Solid Democratic. Bustos stood out in 2016 as the only Democrat to hit 60 percent of the vote in a contested race in a district carried by President Trump. Now, she's leading the party's efforts at "Heartland Engagement." Republicans seem content to give her a pass this cycle and wait for 2020, when Bustos could vacate this seat to seek a promotion if her political mentor, Sen. Dick Durbin, retires.

NY-19: Rep. John Faso (R) - Northern Hudson Valley: Kingston, the Catskills

Toss Up. Despite his long tenure in Upstate politics, Faso was one of just 15 Republicans to win by single digits in 2016 - and he did so against a very liberal, carpetbagging Democrat. Now he's facing a deluge of opponents. Democrats are perhaps most high on West Point graduate and Iraq veteran Pat Ryan, but the dynamic could change if 2016 nominee Zephyr Teachout or Ulster County Executive Mike Hein get in.

NC-09: Rep. Robert Pittenger (R) - South: Charlotte suburbs, parts of Fayetteville

Likely Republican. In 2016, Pittenger faced an FBI inquiry and a vastly redrawn district, and only survived his primary by 134 votes against First Baptist Church of Charlotte Rev. Mark Harris. This week, Harris announced he is running again. Democrats are excited about Iraq veteran and solar energy businessman Dan McCready, but given that this is a 54 percent Trump seat, he'll probably need both a bruising GOP primary and a big wave.

NC-13: Rep. Ted Budd (R) - West central: High Point, Statesville, Greensboro

Likely Republican. Budd effectively captured this newly drawn seat last year by winning 20 percent of the vote in a snap primary with backing from the Club for Growth, and still hasn't been seriously tested. On paper, this is the most competitive district in North Carolina. Democrats' dream candidate might be Cal Cunningham, who was awarded the Bronze Star in Iraq and once represented heavily GOP areas of NC-13 in the state senate.

PA-06: Rep. Ryan Costello (R) - Southeast: parts of Chester and Berks counties

Lean Republican. A prototypical northeastern GOP moderate, Costello has served assiduously in the House, breaking from his party on the AHCA. But while Hillary Clinton carried his district, he also had the good fortune of running against a Democrat allergic to fundraising. That won't be the case with Democrat Chrissy Houlahan, a former Air Force captain and And1 Basketball executive who has already raised \$450,000. Republicans concede this is now a real race.

VA-02: Rep. Scott Taylor (R) - Southeast: Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Eastern Shore

Likely Republican. Taylor, a former Navy SEAL, proved his political mettle by unseating GOP Rep. Randy Forbes in last year's primary, but he didn't have a credible Democratic opponent when President Trump carried this seat by just three points. Now, Democratic state Sen. Lynwood Lewis, an attorney who hails from the rural Eastern Shore and doesn't have to give up his seat to run, appears close to jumping in.