



**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FR:** DCCC  
**DT:** July 12, 2016  
**RE:** Pivot into the General Election: The House Democratic Battlefield

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***Breaking News Alert:***

**Five new candidates will join the 2016 Red to Blue Program:** Shelli Yoder (IN-09), Anna Throne-Holst (NY-01), Tom Suozzi (NY-03), Zephyr Teachout (NY-19) and Mike Derrick (NY-21).

**Ten new candidates are being designated Emerging Races, within the Red to Blue Program:** Steve Lindbeck (AK-AL), Matt Heinz (AZ-02), Emilio Huerta (CA-21), Doug Applegate (CA-49), Jay Sidie (KS-03), Paul Clements (MI-06), Suzanna Shkreli (MI-08), Christina Hartman (PA-16), Fran Person (SC-05) and Jane Dittmar (VA-05).

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Filing deadlines have passed and Conventions are fast-approaching, officially marking the pivot into the general election. In an assessment of the House battlefield—including candidate strength, fundraising and the toxic national environment for Republicans—it is clear that the DCCC is extremely well-prepared to take the fight to House Republicans and maximize gains in November.

With general election voters starting to tune in, there are strong Democratic candidates in districts across the country who are ready to talk with voters about the disastrous agenda that Donald Trump—and his House Republican sidekicks—are promoting. Whether they like it or not, House Republicans are party of the Party of Trump and will be defined by him in the eyes of voters.

And the timing couldn't be better. Natural changes in the voting trends and migration patterns of this country are creating opportunities for Democrats all around the country. Democratic-leaning voters, including Millennials and people of color, are becoming a bigger share of the electorate, and migration trends show that marginal Republican districts are becoming more Democratic and competitive over time. Overall, this is a net positive for Democrats in 2016 and beyond.

**Donald Trump's rise as the Republican Presidential nominee has accelerated this demographic shift in the House battlefield, and the DCCC is leaning in.**

As the Washington Post recently [outlined](#), the DCCC believes that *“Trump's rise has, broadly speaking, tilted the House battlefield in [Democrats'] favor by firming up candidates' chances in battleground districts, allowing resources to be focused on more marginal seats. Trump...has accelerated the party's 'demographic pivot' into more affluent, better educated, suburban districts.”*

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## Key Takeaways on the 2016 House Battlefield:

The House battlefield consists of more than 65 competitive races.

There are Democrats on the ballot in nearly 80 Republican-held districts overall.

There are 48 districts in the DCCC's Red to Blue Program.

Republican Recruitment Fails: The NRCC has failed to mount credible challengers in the vast majority of the 11 Frontline districts. The most "competitive" of these districts is ranked Toss-up/Tilt Democrat, with the rest considered Lean and Safe Democratic seats. It's clear that Republicans are the most vulnerable incumbents in the House.

Democrats are in great shape in open seats - always a top target. There are Democratic candidates in all 10 of the top targeted Republican-held open seats. There are also strong Democrats running in all Democratic-held open seats.

House battlefield is shifting in Democrats' favor:

- First, Toss-up or Lean Democratic districts, already considered prime pick-up opportunities, are now leaning in the Democrats' favor. Ex: **TX-23, IL-10, FL-26**
- Second, the competitive battlefield pushes into Toss-up and Lean Republican districts, with strong candidates in place ready to challenge weak incumbents. These races are now undeniably competitive. Ex: **NJ-05, UT-04, CA-25**.
- Third, the shift means Democrats are competing in Lean or Likely Republican districts where we have not mounted credible challenges before. Ex: **FL-07, MN-03, KS-03, NY-22**.

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## Red to Blue – New Additions:

### **Shelli Yoder (IN-09)**

The latest public poll in this open seat race showed Democrat Shelli Yoder tied with her carpet-bagging Republican opponent. Moving into the district from out of state to buy a seat in Congress is not a way to appeal to Hoosiers. Republican Governor Mike Pence has been raked over the coals for his discriminatory laws that have cost Hoosiers jobs, and with whispers of him joining Donald Trump's ticket as VP, any Republican running will be irrevocably tied to Trump's toxic policies. Add to this the fact that popular former Senator Evan Bayh will now be on the Democratic ballot, providing an updraft for Yoder in a district with a high student and suburban vote, and it is clear there has never been a better time for a Hoosier-born Democrat to win in November.

### **Anna Throne-Holst (NY-01)**

Lee Zeldin already faces an uphill battle in his reelection bid in this swing district that voted for President Obama twice. His extreme conservative positions, record of skipping out of work and knack for reckless posturing only make him more vulnerable. Sabato's Crystal Ball rated this race a 'toss-up' because Zeldin "has not tailored his persona and voting record to his perpetually swingy Long Island seat." Cook Political report recently moved this district to 'toss-up' after Zeldin called the President a "racist" on live TV.

Democratic challenger Anna Throne-Holst stands ready to replace Lee Zeldin's party-first agenda with one that will give Long Island families the security and opportunity to succeed.

### **Zephyr Teachout (NY-19)**

Fresh off a debilitating primary that was described as the "nastiest Republican primary of all" among nationwide congressional races, Republican congressional candidate John Faso enters the general election badly bruised and vulnerable. At the same time, Democratic candidate

Zephyr Teachout has built a smart and well-funded campaign with a strong grassroots local backing focused on her career spent reforming government to make sure families have a voice. In a district that President Obama won twice and a political environment ripe for reformers like Teachout, Faso's extreme conservative voting record and career as an Albany insider make this seat a prime pickup for Democrats.

### **Mike Derrick (NY-21)**

After one year in office, Elise Stefanik has already established a reputation for saying one thing in the district and falling in line with the House Republican agenda in Washington. Stefanik's Washington-focused record will be a difficult one to defend in this district that President Obama won district twice – earning more than 53% of the vote in 2012. That is a stark contrast with Bronze Star Medal Recipient Colonel Mike Derrick (ret.), who spent his entire career keeping Americans safe and putting his country first and is now is ready to do the same for the North Country.

## **Emerging Race New Additions:**

### **Steve Lindbeck (AK-AL)**

After Rep. Don Young pulled just 51% against an unknown and underfunded candidate in 2014, polls show him mired in scandal and more unpopular than ever. Steve Lindbeck is running a strong campaign and posting unprecedented fundraising numbers, including raising more money in his first fundraising quarter than Rep. Young's three previous opponents raised all cycle. Democrats had record presidential caucus turnout in 2016 and Democratic registration numbers have increased 9.3% this year – compared to just 2.5% for Republicans. As Donald Trump continues to turn off voters of all stripes, including Alaska's 32 percent minority population, Lindbeck is well-positioned to oust Rep. Don Young.

### **Matt Heinz (AZ-02)**

Dr. Matt Heinz has proven that he has what it takes to make the race in Arizona's 2<sup>nd</sup> District very competitive. In 2014, McSally won by a mere 161 votes, making it the closest race in the country despite a very favorable environment for Republicans. AZ-02 is 56.7% suburban and Hispanics represent 19.9% of the voting age population – both clear indicators that the demographics of this district provide increasingly friendly ground for Democrats with Trump at the top of the ticket.

### **Emilio Huerta (CA-21)**

California's 21<sup>st</sup> Congressional District's population is over 66 percent Latino, a considerable factor in a normal presidential year and a potentially defining factor in the face of Donald Trump's racist 2016 campaign. With Trump's expected disastrous effects down-ballot and a 17-point Democratic registration advantage, Central Valley native and civil rights attorney Emilio Huerta is well-positioned to win this district in November.

### **Doug Applegate (CA-49)**

California's 49<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is a prime example of where Donald Trump's candidacy could be the breaking point for what was previously thought to be safe Republican districts. The district, which President Obama carried in 2008, is wealthy, suburban, well-educated, has a 15 percent Latino voting age population. After a weak primary showing by Rep. Darrell Issa, the DCCC released a general election [poll](#) showing Democrat Marine Colonel Doug Applegate tied with the 15-year high-profile incumbent. Notably, it also showed Clinton leading Trump, who was viewed unfavorably by 60% of likely voters, a fact that will not help Issa—a national surrogate for Trump—drive turnout in November.

### **Jay Sidie (KS-03)**

Kansas 3<sup>rd</sup> district, a largely suburban and well-educated district, is proving to be a prime pickup opportunity for Democrats in 2016. A DCCC-conducted poll in March showed that an unnamed Democrat is virtually tied with Republican Kevin Yoder, 39% to 38%. This tight margin is fueled

largely by an 18-point advantage for Democrats among registered Independents. Yoder's personal profile is mixed, especially with Independents. Republicans desperately rushed to release a poll of their own – the only problem for them is that it showed Yoder [below 50%](#). A DCCC released poll showed Clinton with a 7-point lead over Trump in June. Making matters worse for Yoder, Sam Brownback is the [least popular governor in the nation](#) with a 26% approval rating.

### **Paul Clements (MI-06)**

This suburban, young, and independent-minded district is exactly the type of place where Donald Trump performs terribly, and given that Governor Rick Snyder is more unpopular than ever, Democrats have never had a better chance to wrest the seat away from climate-change denier Fred Upton.

### **Suzanna Shkreli (MI-08)**

With Governor Rick Snyder named the third-most unpopular governor in the nation following the water crisis in Flint, and with the toxic Donald Trump at the top of the ticket, the Republican brand in Michigan has never been weaker. And in this highly educated and suburban district that voted for Obama twice, Suzanna Shkreli's impressive career as a successful prosecutor putting away child abusers and advocating for working families will resonate with independent voters in November.

### **Christina Hartman (PA-16)**

With the retirement of the Republican incumbent Joe Pitts, voters in PA-16 will have fresh opportunity to determine the direction of this district. While Christina Hartman is a dynamic candidate who values align with the suburban voters of the district, her opponent Lloyd Smucker has fully embraced Donald Trump's divisive campaign.

President Obama won this district in 2008, and since then the district has become increasingly diverse. Seventeen percent of the population is non-white. Ten percent of the voters are of Hispanic descent and that number is growing larger every year. As Smucker was spending \$275k of his own money to make it out of a brutal primary, Hartman has continued to raise money and garner the support of Democratic leaders, unions, and other groups.

### **Fran Person (SC-05)**

A former aide to Vice President Joe Biden, Fran Person has proven he is one of the few Democrats who can raise the necessary funds to make South Carolina's 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District more competitive. Person raised over \$175,000 within one month of launching his campaign, substantially more than any non-incumbent Democrat running in SC-05 in more than 30 years. Person achieved this feat in just 32 days, nearly besting the incumbent Republican Mick Mulvaney's quarterly total. Mulvaney's reports show 70 percent of his funds coming from PACs and special interest groups. South Carolina's 5th is a diverse district with 27.4% African American voting age population, who will turn out in higher numbers in a presidential year.

### **Jane Dittmar (VA-05)**

Jane Dittmar – a former elected official from the district - continues to garner the support of Democratic leaders in the region and has proven capable of running a strong campaign. Robert Hurt's retirement makes this an open seat, providing an opportunity for Democrats to make headway in a district that President Obama narrowly lost in 2008 and 2012. In a presidential year, African Americans -- who make up 20.7 percent of the voting age population in the redrawn VA-05 -- will likely turn out in large numbers against Donald Trump.

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