

## 2018 ELECTION PREVIEW

The battle for control of the Colorado legislature is being waged in four state Senate districts that sprawl across Denver's northern and western suburbs. Two of those seats are currently represented by embattled Republican incumbents; the other two have been held by term-limited Democrats and now are being sought by House Democrats hoping to move to the other chamber. Republicans currently hold only an 18-17 majority in the Senate, so Democrats need to add only one seat to flip those numbers and take control.

Because senators serve staggered four-year terms, there are only 17 of the 35 seats are on the ballot this year. Beyond the four contested seats, Democrats hold five of the remaining districts and Republicans control eight. Based on a review of voter registration numbers, campaign contributions raised through August 1<sup>st</sup>, and whether incumbents are running - it appears the parties will hold the 13 seats they currently control.

Over in the House, Democrats now have a 36-29 control and it appears there's no path to a majority for Republicans. Based on those factors of voter registration, funding, and incumbency - it appears 36 seats are safe for Democrats. And, they might just pick up a couple more.

Democratic legislative candidates so far are raising more money than Republicans - *\$3.5 million to \$1.5 million*. Democrats even are outraising Republicans in some GOP-leaning districts. Voter registration trends are hurting the GOP more than Democrats with unaffiliated voters now at nearly 37% of the Colorado electorate, up nearly three percentage points in the last two years. Democrats have lost one percentage point, while the Republicans have dropped by two.

The fund-raising gap isn't unvarnished good news for Democrats because money raised directly by candidates isn't the only cash spent on legislative races. Four political action committees involved in the legislative races have raised more than \$5.2 million – this includes about \$3 million by the GOP-oriented [Senate Majority Fund](#) and [Values First Colorado](#); and, about \$2 million combined by the Democratic-aligned [Coloradans for Fairness](#) and [Our Colorado Values](#).

And another type of group, independent expenditure committees, can spend money for and distribute campaign materials as long as they don't coordinate with candidate campaigns or explicitly urge a "yes" or "no" vote. Such committees basically don't have to report anything about their operations, and flyers funded by such have appeared in two contested Senate districts, supporting Republican candidates.

With that background in mind, here's a quick look at the four Senate races that will decide control of the legislature in 2019 and 2020.

- **District 16** – Conservative Republican [Tim Neville](#) represents this district, which includes the Jefferson County foothills and Gilpin County. The electorate is 39% unaffiliated, and Democrats and Republicans each have about 29.5% of registered voters. Democratic activist [Tammy Story](#) has raised \$189,857 to Neville's \$138,032. Story has visibility in parts of the district, having run an unsuccessful race for the House in 2016.
- **District 20** – Lying just east of District 16, this district covers a swath of densely populated Jeffco suburbs and has been represented by term-limited Cheri Jahn, a moderate Democrat who styled herself as an independent during last spring's session. Democrat [Jessie Danielson](#), current Speaker Pro Tempore of the House, is seeking to succeed Jahn. Some 39% of voters are unaffiliated, while about 34.5% are Democrats, and Republicans at just above 24%. With \$170,249 raised, Danielson is well ahead of Republican candidate [Christine Jensen](#), a mortgage banker who's been active in Arvada community affairs. She's raised \$79,379.

- **District 22** – This Jeffco district is on the east side of District 20. Democratic [Brittany Pettersen](#) is seeking to follow longtime Democratic member Andy Kerr and faces Republican [Tony Sanchez](#), who’s been active in the Colorado Union of Taxpayers and an anti-Common Core group. Pettersen has a big fundraising lead, \$135,099 to \$73,715. The district’s partisan makeup is similar to other Jeffco districts – 38% unaffiliated, 32% Democratic, and 28% Republican.
- **District 24** – Democrats are heavily targeting this Thornton-based district, now represented by Republican [Beth Martinez Humenik](#). Democratic challenger [Faith Winter](#) is a current House member. She’s raised \$233,365 compared to Martinez Humenik’s \$68,278. This race has potentially interesting dimension given the unaffiliated candidacy of Adam Matkowsky, a Thornton council member who considered a primary run against Winter. He’s raised \$7,993 so far. Unaffiliateds make up 39% of the district, followed by Democrats at 32%, and Republicans at 27%.

Unaffiliated candidate with money could be a factor in another Senate district.

- **District 32** stretches across southeast Denver and has been represented by term-limited Democrat Irene Aguilar. District registration is 45% Democratic, and Democratic candidate [Robert Rodriguez](#) has built up contributions of \$173,620, compared to \$14,765 for Republican [Mark Calonder](#). But unaffiliated hopeful [Peter Smith](#) has \$17,990 in campaign funding.

While Democrats seem to have a lock on their House majority, there are some interesting races among the chamber’s 65 seats. Democrats have a candidate in every district, even safely Republican ones. Republicans aren’t fielding candidates in five reliably Democratic seats.

- **District 17** (Colorado Springs) – Democratic incumbent [Tony Exum](#) faces Republican [Kit Roupe](#), who beat him in 2014 before he beat her in 2016.
- **District 25** (Jeffco foothills) – GOP incumbent Tim Leonard recently withdrew from the race because of personal issues. That leaves Democrat [Lisa Cutter](#) with a head start and a \$51,820 war chest against newly appointed Republican candidate [Steve Szutenback](#).
- **District 27** (central Jeffco) – Incumbent Lang Sias isn’t running because he’s the GOP candidate for Lieutenant Governor. Democrat [Brianna Titone](#) faces appointed Republican candidate [Vicki Pyne](#).
- **District 31** (Adams County) – This seat was held by Democrat Joe Salazar, but he ran unsuccessfully for Attorney General. Democrat [Yadira Caraveo](#) has a \$35,992/\$3,310 fund raising edge over Republican [Enrico Figueroa](#). But unaffiliated candidate [Eric Montoya](#), a Thornton council member, has raised \$26,472.
- **District 33** (Broomfield area) – There’s a lot of money in this race, with incumbent Democrat [Matt Gray](#) raising \$71,075, Republican [Eric Rutherford](#) \$40,858 and another independent, [Jay Geyer](#), generating \$31,902.



More detailed information on all races can be found here: [Senate Candidates](#) and [House Races](#). If you should have any questions, or would like any additional insight, please do not hesitate to reach your Aponte & Busam team member.