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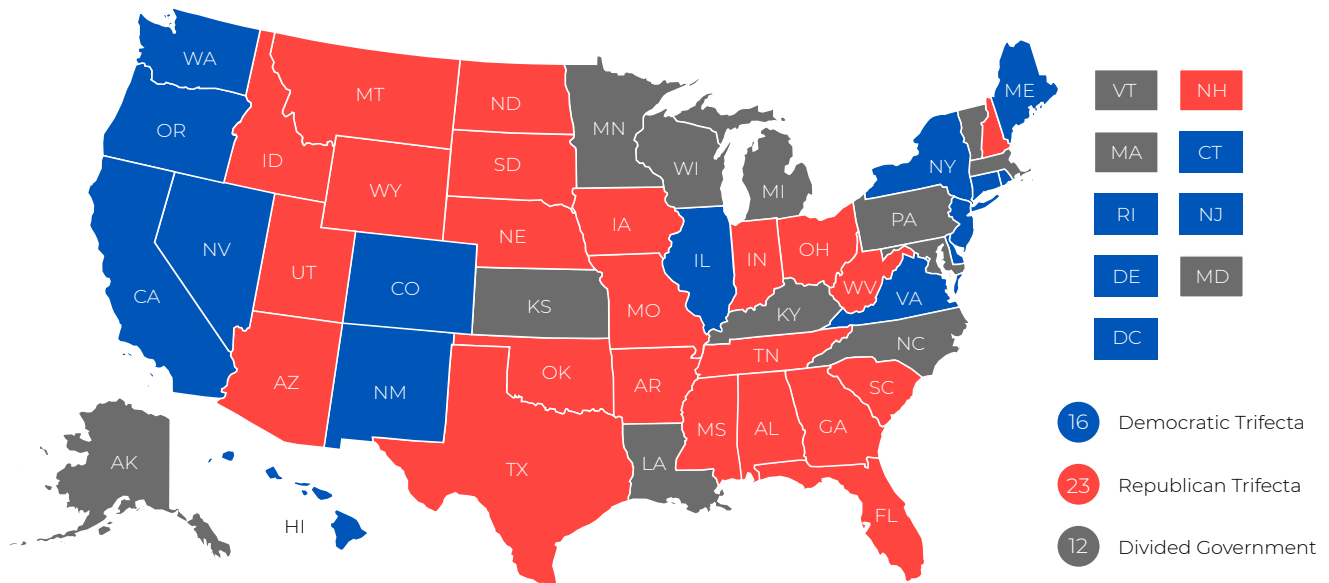
FOCUS

2021 ELECTIONS PREVIEW

Heading into the 2021 elections cycle it is a tale of two states. Few surprises are expected in **New Jersey** where Democrats are expected to easily maintain a trifecta. It's an entirely different story in **Virginia** where both parties have invested heavily in gubernatorial and legislative races with national implications; it is widely regarded as the first true electoral test of Democratic President Joe Biden's agenda and a precursor to Democratic chances nationally in the 2022 midterm elections. The governor's race in particular has attracted a slew of heavyweights from both parties and is proving to be the state's most expensive election on record. In the House, Republicans are hoping to roll back years of Democratic gains and retake control of the chamber that they had previously held for nearly 20 years. As of 2021, Republicans control 61 chambers across the country compared to 31 chambers for Democrats, with the **Alaska** House currently operating under a power sharing arrangement.

Also on the ballot on election day are 15 special elections in eight states out of 64 special elections that have been scheduled across the country this year. Voters will also decide the fate of numerous ballot initiatives ranging from cannabis tax increases to extending legalized sports betting to college sports.

PRE-ELECTION STATE PARTY CONTROL





VIRGINIA ATTORNEY GENERAL RACE

Incumbent Democratic Attorney General Mark Herring is seeking a third term against Republican Delegate Jason Miyares. According to [The Washington Post](#), during a live debate, Miyares contrasted his “tough on crime” stance with Attorney General Herring’s self-proclamation as one of Virginia’s most liberal lawyers. Herring also took some jabs at Miyares for his conservative position on abortion, same sex marriage and confederate statues. Herring is leading in the polls 49 percent to 43 percent with seven percent undecided, according to a Christopher Newport University [poll](#).

GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

NEW JERSEY

Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy is currently up for re-election against Republican nominee Jack Ciattarelli, a former state legislator. With roughly one million more registered democrats in New Jersey, Governor Murphy is projected to win the election. A recent poll by [Stockton University](#) shows he leads by nine points. Like many governors, Murphy’s popularity rose in the early days of the pandemic, cresting at a 71 percent approval rating, but his numbers have dropped to 57 percent in more recent polling, [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reports.

According to [NJ Spotlight News](#), his platform rests heavily on his plan to codify a women’s right to choose into state law. Other concentrated issues include affordable housing, clean energy and criminal justice reform. Jack Ciattarelli was a member of the state General Assembly from 2011 to 2018. In 2017, he ran for governor but lost in the primary election. If elected, he plans to focus on lowering taxes. New Jersey currently has the highest property tax in the country, so this is a pressing issue for many residents. According to [The Washington Post](#), Murphy has repeatedly tried to link Ciattarelli with former Republican President Donald Trump, a charge that Ciattarelli has labeled a distraction.

VIRGINIA

Former Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe is seeking re-election against Republican businessman Glenn Youngkin. According to [CNN](#), Youngkin is a Richmond native who made his fortune as the co-chief executive of the private equity firm Carlyle Group. Youngkin’s priorities include cutting taxes, prioritizing small businesses and economic growth following COVID-19. Education has also emerged as a key theme for Youngkin who seized on debate comments by McAuliffe who stated, “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach.” Youngkin has specifically attacked McAuliffe over his 2017 veto of the so-called “Beloved” bill, which would have allowed parents to prevent their children from reading sexually explicit material, and has vowed to “ban critical race theory on day one,” [NBC News](#) reports.



McAuliffe has been making vaccine mandates for certain workers his top campaign issue with [Politico](#) reporting that in mid-September 60 percent of his ads were on pandemic policy.

The [Richmond Times Dispatch](#) reports that McAuliffe has been taking support from Democratic heavyweights former President Barack Obama, Vice President Kamala Harris, Stacy Abrams and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden. Youngkin, however, has been hesitant to accept help from former Republican President Donald Trump, though that has not stopped Trump from campaigning for him along with Steve Bannon, according to [The Hill](#). McAuliffe leads Youngkin by three percent and the race is neck and neck with voters siding with McAuliffe on vaccine issues, while Youngkin is seen as a stronger candidate in terms of job creation, according to a [CBS News](#) poll.

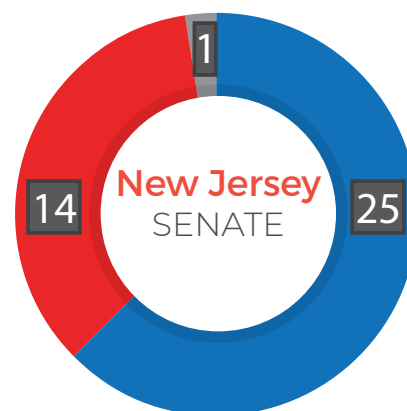
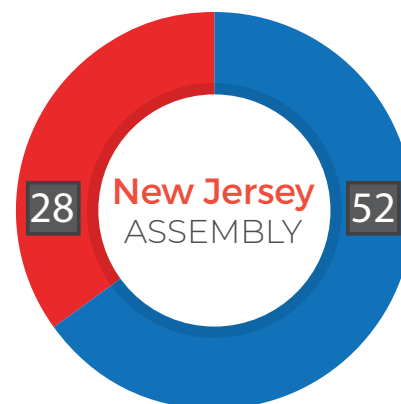
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE

All 80 seats in the **New Jersey** Assembly are up for re-election this year with Democrats currently holding a 52-28 majority in the chamber. Democrats also enjoy a 25-14 majority in the Senate, where all 40 seats are up for re-election, with one seat currently vacant. Given Democrats large majority in both chambers and the lack of competitive races, neither chamber is up for grabs, [Insider NJ](#) reports.

Among the handful of competitive races in the Senate, is the District 2 contest where Asm. Vince Mazzeo, D-Northfield, is seeking promotion to the Senate and faces former Asm. Vince Polistina, R-Egg Harbor Township. The seat was vacated by former Sen. Chris Brown, R-Atlantic City, who resigned to take a job in the administration of Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy, [NJ Spotlight News](#) reports. Arguably the most competitive Senate race is the District 8 contest where Sen. Dawn Addiego, D-Evesham, who had made headlines for leaving the Republican party in 2019, is facing off against Asm. Jean Stanfield, R-Westhampton. According to the [New Jersey Globe](#), Republicans have targeted the seat since Senator Addiego switched parties and it represents one of their best chances to pick up a seat this cycle.

On the Assembly side, the Republican State Leadership Committee (RSLC) has targeted the Assembly seats in District 2, where one incumbent, Asm. Vince Mazzeo, D-Northfield,

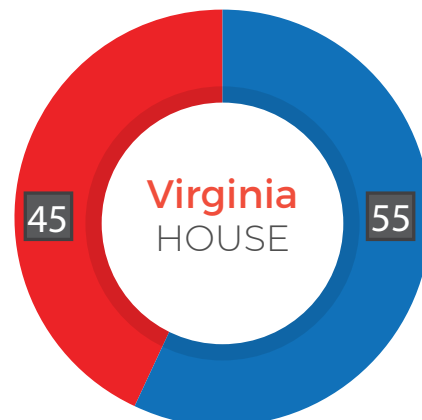




is now running for the Senate. Incumbent Asm. John Armato, D-Northfield, and Atlantic County Commissioner Caren Fitzpatrick, D-Northfield, are facing off against former Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian, R-Atlantic City, and attorney Claire Swift, R-Margate, [NJ Spotlight News](#) reports. The RLSC is also targeting the Assembly seats in District 11. Regardless of the outcome, Republicans are expected to have a new minority leader as the [New Jersey Globe](#) reports that Asm. Nancy Muñoz, R-Summit, has the votes to become the next minority leader, succeeding Asm. Jon Bramnick, R-Westfield, who is seeking election to the Senate.

VIRGINIA HOUSE

All 100 seats in the **Virginia** House are on the ballot this year with Democrats currently enjoying a 55-45 majority. Democrats have enjoyed success in the last two elections, erasing a large GOP majority in 2017 and finally taking control of the chamber in 2019. According to the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), Republicans are hopeful that Democratic President Joe Biden's growing unpopularity will put them back in control of the chamber but with Democrats holding a 10 seat advantage that could prove to be a difficult task. Key contests this cycle include the District 27 contest between incumbent Del. Roxann Robinson, R-Chesterfield, and Democrat Debra Gardner, a public sector leader from Chesterfield. Robinson won her last election by less than a percentage point, [WTVR](#) reports. In District 66, former House Speaker Kirk Cox, R-Colonial Heights, is not seeking re-election for the first time in over 30 years. Running to succeed Delegate Cox is Republican Colonial Heights City Councilman Mike Cherry who is facing Democrat Katie Sponsler, an Air Force veteran and park ranger also from Colonial Heights. According to the [Virginia Mercury](#), Democrats are also hoping to pick up seats in District 84 and 100.



Republicans meanwhile are targeting a number of seats in the hopes of picking up the six seats needed to take control of the chamber. Republicans are eyeing the District 12 seat currently occupied by Del. Chris Hurst, D-Blacksburg, who is running against Republican Jason Ballard who serves on the Pearisburg town council. According to the [Associated Press](#), Republicans are also targeting another rural seat held by House Education Committee Chair Roslyn Tyler, D-Emporia, who faces a rematch against Republican Otto Waschmann, a pharmacist from Stony Creek. Delegate Tyler won the first contest by a mere 506 votes. The GOP is also eyeing a pair of Virginia Beach districts, including the District 83 seat held by Del. Nancy Guy, D-Virginia Beach, who faces Republican lawyer Tim Anderson, as well as the District 85 seat held by Del. Alex Askew, D-Virginia Beach, the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#) reports.



SPECIAL ELECTIONS

GEORGIA

Georgia House District 165 became vacant after Rep. Mickey Stephens, D-Savannah, passed away following an extended illness. According to the [Savannah Morning News](#), five candidates have qualified in the nonpartisan special election. Four candidates identify as Democrats, including former Savannah Mayor Edna Jackson and former Chatham County elections board member Antwan Lang. Other candidates include Army veteran and businessman Clinton Young, payroll specialist Sabrina Green-Kent and libertarian candidate Clinton Cowart. Key issues in the race include ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19 and voting rights.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky is holding three special elections to fill two vacancies in the House and one in the Senate, [Kentucky Today](#) reports. Both chambers of the legislature are firmly in Republican hands, so the special elections are unlikely to change any dynamics on the ground. Candidates for House District 51, which was vacated upon the death of Rep. John Carney, R-Campbellsville, include Republican Michael Pollock, an insurance risk advisor, who faces former Taylor County Judge Executive and Democrat Eddie Rogers, both of Campbellsville. In House District 89 Republican Timmy Truett, an elementary school principal from McKee, faces Democrat Mae Suramek, a business owner from Berea, for the seat vacated by the resignation of Rep. Robert Goforth, R-East Bernstadt. In the Senate, Dr. Donald Douglas, R-Nicholasville, is facing off against attorney Helen Bukulmez, D-Paint Lick, for the District 22 seat vacated by the passing of Sen. Tom Buford, R-Nicholasville.

MAINE

Maine is holding a special election to fill the House District 86 seat vacated by the resignation of former Rep. Justin Fecteau, R-Augusta. The contest pits Augusta Democratic city councilor Raegan LaRoche against Republican James Orr, an Army veteran from Augusta. According to [Spectrum News](#), both candidates are focused on pocketbook issues with Orr wanting to lower taxes and Roche concerned with housing and jobs. Orr also opposes the state's vaccine mandate for healthcare workers.

MICHIGAN

Michigan is holding two special elections to fill vacant Senate seats in districts 8 and 28. In District 8, Rep. Douglas Wozniak, R-Shelby Township, is seeking promotion to the Senate where he will face Democrat Martin Robert Genter of Harrison Township. According to [Mlive](#), the district leans Republican and was previously held by former Sen. Peter Lucido, R-Shelby, who is now the Macomb County prosecutor. In District 28, Rep. Mark Huizenga, R-Walker, won a three-way primary against Rep. Tommy Brann, R-Wyoming, and former Rep. Kevin Green, R-Algoma Township. Representative Huizenga will face Kent County Commissioner Keith Courtade, D-Alpine Township, in the Republican leaning district. The



seat was previously held by Republican Sen. Peter Macgregor, who left to become Kent County Treasurer.

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi will hold two special elections to fill vacancies in Senate districts 32 and 38 and a third special election in House District 29 is being disputed in the Mississippi Supreme Court.

House District 29 became vacant after the resignation of former Rep. Abe Marshall Hudson, Jr., D-Bolivar, on August 30. Republican Gov. Tate Reeves issued an order declaring that Democrat Robert Sanders automatically won the election, being the only candidate to be approved for the ballot, and the race was cancelled. Keveon Taylor, a law student at the University of Mississippi, also filed to run in the race but was denied by the Mississippi Board of Election Commissioners over a residency requirement, reports the [Jackson Free Press](#). Taylor successfully filed a court challenge with the Hinds County Circuit Judge, who ruled in his favor. The state's attorney general's office appealed the decision to the state Supreme Court who immediately put the circuit court order on hold while the election dispute remains on appeal.

Two democratic senators stepped down on June 30, the last day of the budget year, reports the [Clarion Ledger](#). Candidates in Mississippi special elections run without party labels and neither election will threaten the Republican majority in the Senate. Senate District 32 became vacant after the resignation of former Sen. Sampson Jackson, D-Preston. Nine candidates have filed to run in the race: W.J. Coleman, Stan Copeland, James Creer, Justin Curtis Creer, Minh Duong, Rod Hickman, Kim Houston, Keith Jackson and Bradley Joseph Sudduth. Senate District 38 became vacant after former Sen. Tammy Witherspoon, D-McComb, was elected as mayor of Magnolia. Gary Brumfield and Kelvin Butler will be on the ballot to replace her. If no candidate in either election receives a majority of the vote a runoff will take place on November 23.

NEW YORK

New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul issued a [proclamation](#) in September declaring two special elections in Assembly District 86 and Senate District 30. Assembly District 86 became vacant on September 10 after the resignation of Asm. Victor Pichardo, D-Bronx. Democrat Yudelka Tapia is running unopposed in the special election and will be his replacement.

Senate District 30 became vacant on September 9 after Sen. Brian Benjamin, D-Harlem, was [appointed](#) as lieutenant governor by Governor Hochul. The Manhattan Democratic Party nominee Cordell Cleare, D-Harlem, is favored to win against Republican Oz Sultan and Shana Harmongoff of the "Hope 4NY" party. Cleare, who is the former chief of staff of former Councilmember Bill Perkins, D-Harlem, was endorsed by Lt. Gov. Brian Benjamin on October 14, reports the [New York Daily News](#), who beat Sultan by about 86 percentage points in 2020. Democrats are expected to keep their supermajority in the Senate.



PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania will hold two special elections for vacant House seats. House District 113 became vacant after former Rep. Martin Flynn, D-Scranton, won a state Senate seat for District 22 in May, reports [The Citizens' Voice](#). Democrat Thom Welby, Flynn's former chief of staff, Republican Dominick Manetti and Libertarian Bonnie Flaherty will face off for the seat. House District 164 became vacant after former Rep. Margo Davidson, D-Delaware, resigned on June 23. Davidson was charged with stealing taxpayers dollars through fraudulent reimbursement claims on June 22, reports the [Delaware Valley Journal](#). Democrat Gina Curry, Republican Brian Sharif Taylor and Libertarian Aniket Josan will vie for the seat. Republicans are expected to keep their majority in the House.

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Senate District 3 became vacant after the resignation of former Sen. Gayle Goldin, D-Providence, on August 17 after she accepted a position as senior adviser in the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, [WPRI](#) reports. Former Providence city councilman Sam Zurier, D-Providence, won the democratic primary in October and will face Republican Alex Cannon, who was the only Republican to run for the seat. Zurier is heavily favored to win as Senate District 3 is 63 percent Democrat, 32 percent unaffiliated and five percent Republican, as reported by [The Boston Globe](#).