

# Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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## New York 24: Katko Stands Tall Between Democrats and Takeover

By Nathan L. Gonzales



Less than a month into Donald Trump's presidency, Democrats are feeling emboldened. Hundreds of thousands of people marched through the streets of Washington, D.C. and cities across the country to demonstrate their opposition to the new president.

While Democrats were dealt a difficult map in the Senate, party strategists immediately set their sights on nearly two dozen House districts that Hillary Clinton carried in November and are currently represented by a Republican.

But while the race in New York's 24th and other similar districts might look like prime takeover opportunities on paper, there is a considerable hiccup in the Democrats' plans: strong incumbents such as GOP Rep. John Katko.

Democrats targeted Katko last cycle, considering President Barack Obama carried his Upstate New York district with 57 percent in 2012. But the Republican congressman demolished his opponent by 21 points.

Still, Democrats can't walk away from districts such as New York's 24th if they are to have any chance of getting back to the majority. They need to recruit strong challengers here and across the country, and hope the tide turns dramatically against the President and sweeps even strong incumbents out to sea.

### The Lay of the Land

The 24th District is located in north central New York but is closer to Toronto, Canada than New York City. And it's also a place where orange is more associated with Syracuse University than the new Republican president.

The area steeped in symbolism from Cayuga County, home of abolitionist Harriet Tubman and the village of Palmyra, where Joseph Smith had his vision of the angel Moroni and found the golden tablets that led him to form the Mormon Church.

The seat is anchored by Syracuse (population 145,000) in Onondaga County. It reaches north to part of Oswego County and then west to include Cayuga County, and Wayne County, including the easternmost Rochester suburbs.

For 20 years, the region was represented by moderate GOP Rep. Jim Walsh, whose father previously served in Congress and as mayor of Syracuse. But the district became more competitive at the presidential

Continued on page 4

## 2018 Senate Ratings

### Toss-Up

Donnelly (D-Ind.)                      Manchin (D-W.Va.)  
Heitkamp (D-N.D.)                  McCaskill (D-Mo.)

### Tilt Democratic                      Tilt Republican

Baldwin (D-Wis.)  
Nelson (D-Fla.)  
Tester (D-Mont.)

### Lean Democratic                      Lean Republican

Brown (D-Ohio)                      Heller (R-Nev.)  
Casey (D-Pa.)

### Likely Democratic                      Likely Republican

Kaine (D-Va.)                          Flake (R-Ariz.)

### Solid Democratic                      Solid Republican

Cantwell (D-Wash.)                  Barrasso (R-Wyo.)  
Cardin (D-Md.)                          Corker (R-Tenn.)  
Carper (D-Del.)                          Cruz (R-Texas)  
Feinstein (D-Calif.)                      Fischer (R-Neb.)  
Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)                      Hatch (R-Utah)  
Heinrich (D-N.M.)                          Strange (R-Ala.)  
Hirono (D-Hawaii)                          Wicker (R-Miss.)

King (I-Maine)  
Klobuchar (D-Minn.)  
Menendez (D-N.J.)  
Murphy (D-Conn.)  
Sanders (I-Vt.)  
Stabenow (D-Mich.)  
Warren (D-Mass.)  
Whitehouse (D-R.I.)

	GOP	DEM
115th Congress	52	48
Not up this cycle	43	23
Currently Safe	7	15
Competitive	2	10

# Analyzing House Democrats' Initial Target List

By Nathan L. Gonzales

Democrats are still recovering from a severe case of whiplash after losing the White House and making minimal gains in Congress in 2016. But House strategists aren't wasting any time and have already released an ambitious list of 59 takeover targets.



believe Trump's performance set a new standard or was an electoral anomaly.

For example, Trump became the first GOP presidential nominee to lose Orange County, California since 1936 (a result foreshadowed by The Cook Political Report's David Wasserman).

After gaining six seats last year, Democrats still need 24 more to retake the House majority.

History is on Democrats' side, considering the president's party has lost House seats in 18 of the last 20 midterm elections with an average loss of 33 seats in those cycles. But a closer look at the individual districts on the initial target list throws some considerable debris onto the comeback trail.

Subsequently, Democrats have added Southern California Reps. Ed Royce (39th District), Mimi Walters (45th District), and Dana Rohrabacher (48th District) to a target list that already included Darrell Issa (49th District), who won an expensive re-election race in 2016 with just 50.3 percent. But Royce, Walters, and Rohrabacher all won re-election with at least 57 percent and by at least 14 points. Again, that's doesn't mean they can't lose, but it won't be an easy lift.

The immediate focus is often on the 23 Republican Members who now represent congressional districts that Hillary Clinton carried in November. But Clinton cleared 51 percent in just five of the CDs against Donald Trump (so they aren't necessarily deep blue districts) and the 23 so-called Clinton Republicans won re-election in 2016 with an average of 55 percent.

A basic assumption at the beginning of the midterm cycle is that GOP candidates for Congress will suffer on Election Day 2018 as voters hold them accountable for President Trump's performance in office and vote against his party because his name won't be on the ballot. That's reasonable based on historical data, but voters did not automatically hold GOP candidates responsible for Candidate Trump's sins in 2016, as was initially expected. Swing voters were reluctant to punish GOP candidates for Trump then and may not take out their anger on down-ballot Republicans next year.

Overall, the 59 GOP Members on the list won re-election with an average of 56 percent of the vote and by an average margin of 15 points. That includes a combination of legitimate opportunities, such as Texas' 23rd District where Republican Will Hurd was re-elected with 48 percent in a Clinton district, and decidedly longshot races.

In other states, such as New York, Democrats are hoping Republicans underperform Trump. Democrats put six New York incumbents on the list including Lee Zeldin (1st District), Dan Donovan (11th District), John Faso (19th District), Claudia Tenney (22nd District), John Katko (24th District), and Chris Collins (27th District). But Trump won all but Katko's district, and the congressman was still re-elected by 21 points.

For example, Democrats have now set their sights on a trio of Republicans in Illinois: Peter Roskam in the 6th District, Rodney Davis in the 13th District, and Randy Hultgren in the 14th District. All three incumbents won re-election with 59 percent in 2016, even though Clinton carried the 6th (with 50 percent) and Trump narrowly won the 13th (49.7 percent) and 14th (48.7 percent).

The list of 59 Democratic targets includes a variety of opportunities, from Republicans representing Democratic-leaning districts to Republicans in Republican districts that Democrats believe are uniquely vulnerable because of alleged ethical problems, and seats that could come open from Republicans retiring or seeking higher office.

But Roskam and Hultgren also represent districts Democrats drew to elect Republicans. Democrats tried to maximize their gains in Illinois after the 2010 census by drawing a map that endangered a handful of Republicans by packing GOP voters into a few seats, including Roskam's and Hultgren's districts. (On a side note, Democrats don't control two seats—Davis' 13th and Mike Bos's 12th—that Democrats drew to elect Democrats.)

At this stage, the Democrats' initial target list is ambitious and would require plenty of outside help to materialize. But if there is anything that can turn a midterm trickle into a wave, it's an unpopular president. And that's precisely where Trump might be headed. **IE**

A person's view of Democrats' target list is shaded by whether they

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# DCCC Initial 2018 Target List

(Released Jan. 30, 2017)

District	GOP Incumbent	2016 Win %	Margin of Victory	Presidential Winner	District	GOP Incumbent	2016 Win %	Margin of Victory	Presidential Winner
AL-2	Martha Roby	48.8%	8.3%	Trump 64.9%	MN-3	Erik Paulsen	56.7%	13.7%	Clinton 50.8%
AR-2	French Hill	58.3%	21.5%	Trump 52.4%	NC-8	Richard Hudson	58.8%	17.5%	Trump 56.1%
AZ-2	Martha McSally	57%	13.9%	Clinton 49.6%	NC-9	Robert Pittenger	58.2%	16.4%	Trump 54.4%
CA-10	Jeff Denham	51.7%	3.4%	Clinton 48.5%	NC-13	Ted Budd	56.1%	12.2%	Trump 53.4%
CA-21	David Valadao	56.7%	13.4%	Clinton 55.2%	NE-2	Don Bacon	48.9%	1.2%	Trump 48.2%
CA-25	Steve Knight	53.1%	6.2%	Clinton 50.3%	NJ-2	Frank LoBiondo	59.2%	22%	Trump 50.6%
CA-39	Ed Royce	57.2%	14.4%	Clinton 51.5%	NJ-3	Tom MacArthur	59.3%	20.4%	Trump 51.4%
CA-45	Mimi Walters	58.6%	17.2%	Clinton 49.8%	NJ-7	Leonard Lance	54.1%	11%	Clinton 48.6%
CA-48	Dana Rohrabacher	58.3%	16.6%	Clinton 47.9%	NJ-11	Rodney Frelinghuysen	58%	19.1%	Trump 48.8%
CA-49	Darrell Issa	50.3%	0.6%	Clinton 50.7%	NY-1	Lee Zeldin	55.2%	15.6%	Trump 54.5%
CO-3	Scott Tipton	54.6%	14.3%	Trump 52%	NY-11	Dan Donovan	56.8%	22.9%	Trump 53.6%
CO-6	Mike Coffman	50.9%	8.3%	Clinton 50.2%	NY-19	John Faso	50.9%	7.7%	Trump 51%
FL-18	Brian Mast	53.6%	10.5%	Trump 53.3%	NY-22	Claudia Tenney	43.7%	5.1%	Trump 54.8
FL-25	Mario Diaz-Balart	62.4%	24.7%	Trump 49.6%	NY-24	John Katko	58%	20.3%	Clinton 48.9%
FL-26	Carlos Curbelo	53%	11.8%	Clinton 56.7%	NY-27	Chris Collins	62.3%	31.9%	Trump 59.7%
FL-27	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen	54.9%	9.8%	Clinton 58.6%	OH-1	Steve Chabot	59.2%	18.4%	Trump 51.2%
GA-6	Open; Tom Price - Special	61.7%	23.4%	Trump 48.3%	OH-7	Bob Gibbs	64%	35%	Trump 62.5%
IA-1	Rod Blum	53.7%	7.6%	Trump 48.7%	PA-6	Ryan Costello	57.2%	14.4%	Clinton 48.2%
IA-3	David Young	53.4%	13.7%	Trump 48.5%	PA-7	Pat Meehan	59.5%	18.9%	Clinton 49.3%
IL-6	Peter Roskam	59.2%	18.4%	Clinton 50.2%	PA-8	Brian Fitzpatrick	54.4%	8.9%	Trump 48.2%
IL-13	Rodney Davis	59.7%	19.4%	Trump 49.7%	PA-16	Lloyd Smucker	53.8%	10.9%	Trump 51%
IL-14	Randy Hultgren	59.3%	18.6%	Trump 48.7%	TX-7	John Culberson	56.2%	12.3%	Clinton 48.5%
KS-2	Open; Lynn Jenkins	60.9%	28.4%	Trump 55.8%	TX-23	Will Hurd	48.3%	1.3%	Clinton 49.8%
KS-3	Kevin Yoder	51.3%	10.8%	Clinton 47.2%	TX-32	Pete Sessions	71.1%	52.1%	Clinton 48.5%
KY-6	Andy Barr	61.1%	22.2%	Trump 54.7%	VA-2	Scott Taylor	61.3%	22.9%	Trump 48.8%
ME-2	Bruce Poliquin	52.9%	9.3%	Trump 51.4%	VA-10	Barbara Comstock	52.7%	5.8%	Clinton 52.2%
MI-7	Tim Walberg	55.1%	15%	Trump 55.7%	WA-3	Jaime Herrea Beutler	61.8%	23.6%	Trump 49.9%
MI-8	Mike Bishop	56%	16.9%	Trump 50.6%	WA-8	Dave Reichert	60.2%	20.4%	Clinton 47.7%
MI-11	Dave Trott	52.9%	12.8%	Trump 49.7%	WV-2	Alex Mooney	58.2%	16.4%	Trump 65.8%
MN-2	Jason Lewis	47%	1.8%	Trump 46.5%					

Sources: Daily Kos Elections, Inside Elections, Secretaries of State websites

# New York 24: Democrats Searching for Katko Challenger

Continued from page 1  
and congressional levels.

Barack Obama carried the district in 2008 (57-43 percent) and 2012 (57-41 percent), but the House seat has a recent history of flipping between the two parties. Katko is the first Member to win re-election in a decade.

Walsh was nearly defeated for re-election, 51-49 percent, in 2006 in what was then the 25th District. The congressman barely defeated Democratic Hill staffer Dan Maffei in the anti-President George W. Bush wave. When Walsh didn't seek re-election two years later, Maffei won the open seat, 55-42 percent.

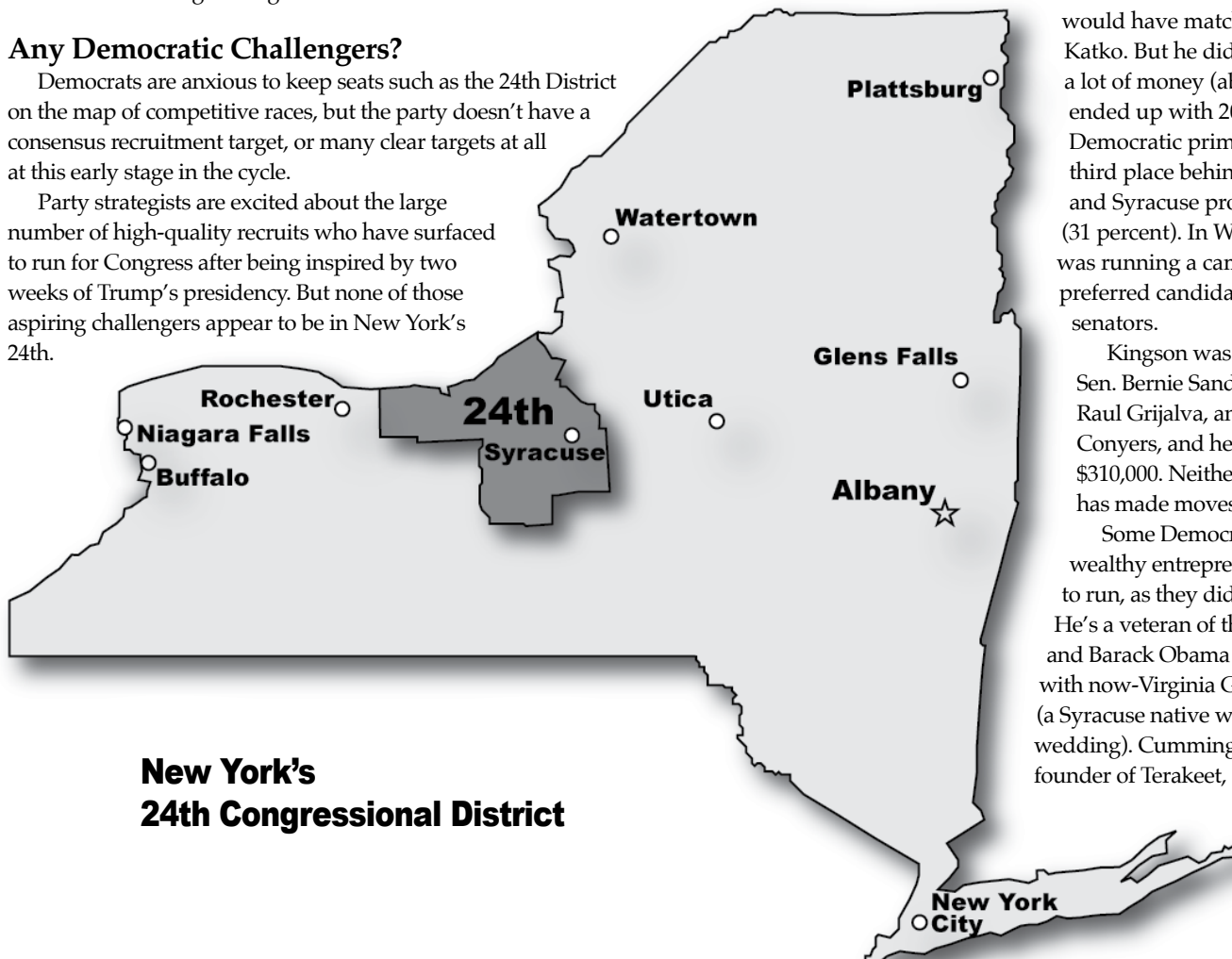
In 2010, when the tide turned against President Obama and his party, Maffei lost re-election to Republican Ann Marie Buerkle in an upset. But Maffei returned two years later to reclaim his seat with a 47-42 percent victory over Buerkle (when it was redrawn and renumbered to the 24th District).

Maffei's second stint didn't last any longer as he lost re-election to Katko, 58-40 percent, in 2014 in a race marked by its margin more than its outcome. Katko widened his support to a 61-39 percent victory in 2016 over Democratic congressional staffer Colleen Deacon, but Clinton's narrow victory over Trump in the seat is keeping hopes alive, even if there isn't a challenger in sight.

## Any Democratic Challengers?

Democrats are anxious to keep seats such as the 24th District on the map of competitive races, but the party doesn't have a consensus recruitment target, or many clear targets at all at this early stage in the cycle.

Party strategists are excited about the large number of high-quality recruits who have surfaced to run for Congress after being inspired by two weeks of Trump's presidency. But none of those aspiring challengers appear to be in New York's 24th.



There isn't really an appetite for Deacon to run again, and there is no indication she wants a rematch. And now that the 2016 race is over, there is some revisionist history on the strength of her candidacy. Democrats are split between her being an underwhelming candidate and someone who ran into the Katko buzzsaw.

Deacon entered the race last cycle with high expectations. She was Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's regional director and secured endorsements from EMILY's List, New York Sen. Chuck Schumer and, of course, her boss. Deacon's profile as a single, working mom was supposed to be Katko's kryptonite.

But multiple Democratic sources now say that Deacon didn't meet expectations, they wished Gillibrand had been more involved, and even admit that Deacon suffered from a stature gap with the congressman, who stressed his law-and-order credentials.

Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner declined to run in 2016, but Democrats will probably take a fresh run at her this cycle, particularly since she is term-limited from her current job and will be out of office later this year. Miner would help Democrats draw attention to the race because of her profile, but she is unlikely to run against Katko.

Steven Williams ran last cycle, and some Democrats now believe the retired U.S. Navy JAG Corps officer would have matched up better against Katko. But he didn't raise and spend a lot of money (about \$330,000) and ended up with 20 percent in the Democratic primary - enough for third place behind Deacon (50 percent) and Syracuse professor Eric Kingson (31 percent). In Williams' defense, he was running a campaign against the preferred candidate of both New York senators.

Kingson was endorsed by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, Arizona Rep. Raul Grijalva, and Michigan Rep. John Conyers, and he raised and spent about \$310,000. Neither Kingson nor Williams has made moves toward another run.

Some Democrats would love for wealthy entrepreneur Mac Cummings to run, as they did a couple of years ago. He's a veteran of the 2008 Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama campaigns and is close with now-Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (a Syracuse native who performed his wedding). Cummings is CEO & co-founder of Terakeet, a tech company which

continues to create jobs in Syracuse. But he also has a young family and doesn't appear

Continued on page 5

# New York 24: Democrats Need Midterm Wave to Develop

*Continued from page 4*

interested in challenging the well-liked congressman.

The silver lining to the lack of candidates for Democrats is that they may not have to worry about a primary.

## The Incumbent

Katko, was born in Camillus (Onondaga County), graduated from Niagara University in 1984, and Syracuse University law school in 1988. He worked for a law firm in Washington, D.C. before becoming a trial attorney at the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission until 1995.

For the next 20 years, Katko worked for the Justice Department, including time as special assistant U.S. attorney in Virginia's Eastern District and a prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office for New York's Northern District. He left his position in order to run for Congress.

In 2014, Katko won a late-breaking race against Democratic Rep. Maffei. Katko stormed onto the scene with his law-and-order credentials, including U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder giving him an award for prosecuting gangs in Syracuse two months before the election. The Republican raised and spent about a million dollars and defeated the incumbent by nearly 20 points.

Democrats were unimpressed with Katko's early fundraising during his first term (he had \$475,000 in the bank on June 30, 2015) and intrigued by Obama's 57 percent total in the 2012 election and initially excited about their eventual nominee, yet Katko won by over 20 points once again.

The Katko campaign team includes general consultant Bob Honold, who also produces the television ads, and pollster Patrick Lanne of Public Opinion Strategies.

## How It Plays Out

After a bruising 2014 race against a Democratic incumbent, Katko's team knew it had some work to do to repair the new congressman's image in the face of a tough fight for a second term.

Republicans spent most of their time and money attacking Maffei in the initial race, so Team Katko decided to go on television early in the 2016 race (early July specifically) with positive ads focusing on his independence, law-and-order background as a prosecutor, and moderation. The relatively inexpensive Syracuse and Rochester media markets allowed the campaign to dual-track (air two ads at one time) for much of the sprint to the general election.

Katko spent \$1.2 million on 11 television ads over the last four months of the race. In comparison, his former GOP colleague Bob Dold of Illinois might spend that much money on one ad for one week in the Chicago market.

By the time Democrats hit the airwaves in New York, Katko allies believed they had laid a solid foundation for a profile independent from Trump. Multiple Democrats admitted that the strategy was effective and wished their side would have gone on television earlier.

Deacon's under-funded campaign relied on hybrid ads with the DCCC, which meant the committee helped carry the burden of the cost while together they received the lower candidate rate.

Democrats tried to penetrate Katko's moderate image by painting him as being against abortion rights and in favor of defunding Planned



Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

**John Katko**

Parenthood. While it didn't work in 2016, some strategists believe the issue could become more salient if congressional Republicans actually defund Planned Parenthood, repeal the Affordable Care Act, and/or the Supreme Court makes a decision that changes women's access to abortion. That would take a theoretical threat and turn it into reality.

Democrats also tried to connect Katko to Trump, including use of an out-of-context quote about "absolutely" supporting Trump, when he said that about supporting the GOP nominee early in the primary. While Katko (who supported Ohio Gov. John Kasich in the primary and wrote in South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley in the general election) successfully navigated the attack, it could be more difficult two years from now.

Katko took an initial vote against the majority of his party early this year when it tried to lay the groundwork for ACA repeal through a budget maneuver. But it may not matter all that much in two years when he has a voting record of support with President Trump.

Even if Katko only votes with Trump 80 percent of the time (which would be low for a Member of the same party), it could be enough to put a dent in the congressman's image, particularly if the President becomes more toxic. Any percentage will be enough to fill Democratic attack ads.

But one of the key unknowns of the midterm election cycle is whether voters will hold GOP congressional candidates responsible for President Trump's first two years office. Decades of history says they will, but 2016 demonstrated that moderate voters made a distinction between some GOP candidates and Candidate Trump.

Of course, Democrats need a candidate to deliver attacks or at least be available as an alternative for voters seeking change. But the quality of the challenger necessary to win is relative to the political environment. If Trump starts hemorrhaging support, less-than-perfect candidates could suffice.

Midterm electorates tend to be older and whiter and often favor GOP candidates accordingly. Specifically in the 24th, GOP strategists estimate about 70,000 fewer voters compared to presidential years, including

*Continued on page 6*

# New York 24: Cheap Media Markets Impact Interest

Continued from page 5

fewer black and young voters in Syracuse.

Democrats have to wrestle with the recent presidential results, which show an opportunity, and a longer trend of a region slipping away as manufacturing jobs leave the area. Republicans have to realize that while Trump's populist message resonated in pockets of Upstate New York, there is a possibility of a backlash if the economy doesn't improve or there is a feeling of unfulfilled promises.

## The Bigger Picture

Democrats are bit closer to the House majority after a six-seat gain in 2016. But they still need to gain 24 seats to get over the top. That's going to be difficult to do without winning a large number of the 23 districts Clinton carried in the last presidential race that are represented by Republicans and some of the other 36 districts on Democrats' initial target list.

While Katko looks strong, some of his GOP colleagues may be even further out of reach for Democrats.

For example, Rep. Tom MacArthur represents New Jersey's 3rd District, which is partially covered by the expensive Philadelphia media market. So Democratic candidates, the party, and outside groups have to think twice about investing the money necessary to win, particularly considering the congressman is personally wealthy and can probably match anything thrown at him. And New Jersey's 3rd is just one of four targeted House seats in the Philadelphia media market, along with Pennsylvania's 6th, 7th, and 8th districts.

If Katko survives, that would force Democrats to win at least two or three other seats in New York to win the majority. Freshman Reps. John Faso (19th District) and Claudia Tenney (22nd District) are likely targets but represent districts Trump carried. Faso struggled for much of last year until Trump surged at the end and helped push him across the finish line.

## The Bottom Line

Katko looks well-positioned for re-election, and he still would even if Democrats had a candidate. But there is the possibility that President Trump becomes so unpopular that it won't take a top-tier challenger to defeat a strong incumbent like Katko. Democrats can't bank on that happening, particularly after a 2016 cycle when voters were reluctant to blame GOP candidates for Trump's sins.

Katko certainly can't and won't take his re-election for granted. But his strong effort in 2016 probably discouraged or at least gave some candidate pause in challenging him next year. But Democrats need to convince a credible contender to run in case a wave develops.

Cheap media markets are a blessing and a curse for the congressman. He could go up with television ads early to solidify his position, but it could also attract attack ads from Democratic outside groups. Democrats are also looking to capitalize on the enthusiasm from the marches and translate them into tangible campaign support.

We're still probably six months to a year before starting to understand the magnitude of the midterm elections. But we know winning back the House majority is difficult without winning seats in Upstate New York.

## 2016 Split-Ticket House Districts

	CD	Incumbent	2016 Win %	Presidential Winner	
				2016	2012
REPUBLICANS	AZ-2	McSally	57%	Clinton 49.6%	Romney 49.9%
	CA-10	Denham	51.7%	Clinton 48.5%	Obama 50.6%
	CA-21	Valadao	56.7%	Clinton 55.2%	Obama 54.6%
	CA-25	Knight	53.1%	Clinton 50.3%	Romney 49.7%
	CA-39	Royce	57.2%	Clinton 51.5%	Romney 50.8%
	CA-45	Walters	58.6%	Clinton 49.8%	Romney 54.8%
	CA-48	Rohrabacher	58.3%	Clinton 47.9%	Romney 54.7%
	CA-49	Issa	50.3%	Clinton 50.7%	Romney 52.4%
	CO-6	Coffman	50.9%	Clinton 50.2%	Obama 51.6%
	FL-26	Curbelo	53%	Clinton 56.7%	Obama 55.4%
	FL-27	Ros-Lehtinen	54.9%	Clinton 58.6%	Obama 53%
	IL-6	Roskam	59.2%	Clinton 50.2%	Romney 53.3%
	KS-3	Yoder	51.3%	Clinton 47.2%	Romney 53.8%
	MN-3	Paulsen	56.7%	Clinton 50.8%	Obama 49.6%
	NJ-7	Lance	54.1%	Clinton 48.6%	Romney 52.5%
	NY-24	Katko	58%	Clinton 48.9%	Obama 57%
	PA-6	Costello	57.2%	Clinton 48.2%	Romney 50.6%
	PA-7	Meehan	59.5%	Clinton 49.3%	Romney 50.4%
	TX-7	Culberson	56.2%	Clinton 48.5%	Romney 59.9%
	TX-23	Hurd	48.3%	Clinton 49.8%	Romney 50.7%
TX-32	Sessions	71.1%	Clinton 48.5%	Romney 57%	
VA-10	Comstock	52.7%	Clinton 52.2%	Romney 50.8%	
WA-8	Reichert	60.2%	Clinton 47.7%	Obama 49.7%	
DEMOCRATS	AZ-1	O'Halleran	50.7%	Trump 47.7%	Romney 50.4%
	IL-17	Bustos	60.3%	Trump 47.4%	Obama 57.6%
	IA-2	Loebsack	53.7%	Trump 49.1%	Obama 55.8%
	NH-1	Shea-Porter	44.3%	Trump 48.2%	Obama 50.2%
	NY-18	Maloney	50.8%	Trump 49%	Obama 51.4%
	NJ-5	Gottheimer	51.1%	Trump 48.8%	Romey 51%
	PA-17	Cartwright	53.8%	Trump 53.4%	Obama 55.4%
	MN-1	Walz	50.3%	Trump 53.3%	Obama 49.6%
	MN-7	Peterson	52.5%	Trump 61.8%	Romney 53.9%
	MN-8	Nolan	50.2%	Trump 54.2%	Obama 51.7%
NV-3	Rosen	47.2%	Trump 47.5%	Obama 49.5%	
WI-3	Kind	Unopposed	Trump 49.3%	Obama 54.8%	

Sources: Daily Kos Elections, Inside Elections, Secretaries of State websites

# Analyzing House Republicans' Initial Target List

By Nathan L. Gonzales

Not to be outdone, the National Republican Congressional Committee released its initial list of House takeover targets a little more than a week after the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee revealed its list.

The GOP list of 36 districts currently held by Democrats is smaller than Democrats' 59, but Republicans have the luxury of being in the majority and not needing to expand the playing field, or even gain seats at all.

Some of the targeted races are obvious. Democrats Jacky Rosen (Nevada's 3rd), Carol Shea-Porter (New Hampshire's 1st), Josh Gottheimer (New Jersey's 5th), Stephanie Murphy (Florida's 7th), Ami Bera (California's 7th), and Tom O'Halleran (Arizona's 1st District) all defeated damaged GOP incumbents or candidates.



Thomas McKinness/CQ Roll Call

Stephanie Murphy

But the NRCC list also stretches into territory that Republicans haven't bothered competing for in a few cycles, including Colorado's 7th (represented by Democrat Ed Perlmutter), Connecticut's 2nd (Joe Courtney), Michigan's 5th and 9th (Dan Kildee and Sander Levin), and Wisconsin's 3rd (Ron Kind).

Donald Trump carried Kind's district with 49 percent in November, yet the congressman didn't face major party opposition. The other Democrats ran well ahead of their GOP opponents, but Hillary Clinton won the districts with less than 52 percent, which is a commonality among other targeted races on the list.

The NRCC list also includes eight targeted districts on the West Coast, where Republicans haven't picked up a House seat in at least a decade.

Overall, the Democrats on the list just won their elections with an average of nearly 55 percent and an average margin of victory of 12.8 percent. That's remarkably similar to the 59 GOP Members on Democrats' initial target list who won re-election with an average of 56 percent of the vote and by an average margin of 15 points. The higher vote totals by targeted Republicans is a result of Democrats needing to expand the map of competitive races into less friendly territory.

Republicans have a number of targets that look good on paper, but face long historical odds. Being in the majority often carries significant responsibility and risk in a midterm election cycle. If voters are dissatisfied with the current President, there is no other electoral recourse than to vote against candidates and incumbents from his party.

Republicans best-case scenario is to hope there isn't a backlash against GOP incumbents in the suburbs and that Trump continues to inspire voters in more rural areas to vote for Republicans when he's not on the ballot. It's a long shot.



## NRCC Initial 2018 Target List

(released Feb. 8, 2017)

District	Democratic Incumbent	2016 Win %	Margin of Victory	Presidential Winner
AZ-1	Tom O'Halleran	50.7%	7.3%	Trump 47.7%
AZ-9	Kyrsten Sinema	60.9%	21.8%	Clinton 54.7%
CA-7	Ami Bera	51.2%	2.4%	Clinton 52.3%
CA-24	Salud Carbajal	53.4%	6.8%	Clinton 56.7%
CA-36	Raul Ruiz	62.1%	24.2%	Clinton 52.2%
CA-52	Scott Peters	56.5%	13%	Clinton 58.1%
CO-7	Ed Perlmutter	55.2%	15.4%	Clinton 51.4%
CT-2	Joe Courtney	56.4%	22.7%	Clinton 48.7%
CT-5	Elizabeth Esty	52.9%	12.5%	Clinton 49.9%
FL-7	Stephanie Murphy	51.5%	3%	Clinton 51.4%
FL-13	Charlie Crist	51.9%	3.8%	Clinton 49.6%
IA-2	Dave Loebsack	53.7%	7.5%	Trump 49.1%
IL-17	Cheri Bustos	60.3%	20.6%	Trump 47.4%
MA-9	Bill Keating	55.7%	22.1%	Clinton 52.5%
MD-6	John Delaney	56%	15.9%	Clinton 55.8%
MI-5	Dan Kildee	61.2%	26.1%	Clinton 49.7%
MI-9	Sander Levin	57.9%	20.5%	Clinton 51.5%
MN-1	Tim Walz	50.3%	0.8%	Trump 53.3%
MN-7	Collin Peterson	52.5%	5%	Trump 61.8%
MN-8	Rick Nolan	50.2%	0.6%	Trump 54.2%
NH-1	Carol Shea-Porter	44.3%	1.3%	Trump 48.2%
NH-2	Ann McLane Kuster	49.7%	4.4%	Clinton 48.6%
NJ-5	Josh Gottheimer	51.1%	4.4%	Trump 48.8%
NM-1	Open; Michelle Lujan Grisham	65.2%	30.3%	Clinton 51.6%
NM-3	Ben Ray Lujan	62.4%	24.8%	Clinton 51.8%
NV-3	Jacky Rosen	47.2%	1.3%	Trump 47.5%
NV-4	Ruben Kihuen	48.52%	4%	Clinton 49.5%
NY-3	Tom Suozzi	48.9%	5.5%	Clinton 51.6%
NY-18	Sean Patrick Maloney	50.8%	9.9%	Trump 49%
OH-13	Tim Ryan	67.7%	35.5	Clinton 51.1%
OR-4	Peter DeFazio	55%	16%	Clinton 46.1%
OR-5	Kurt Schrader	53%	10%	Clinton 48.3%
PA-17	Matt Cartwright	53.8%	7.6%	Trump 53.4%
WA-6	Derek Kilmer	61.5%	23%	Clinton 51.8%
WA-10	Denny Heck	58.7%	17.4%	Clinton 51.3%
WI-3	Ron Kind	Unopposed	Unopposed	Trump 49.3%

Source: Daily Kos Elections, Inside Elections, Roll Call, Secretaries of State websites

# Special Election Update: Watch Georgia's 6th District

By Nathan L. Gonzales

As the Senate confirms President Donald Trump's cabinet members, the special elections to replace some of them are starting to take shape.

Late Thursday night, Republicans in Kansas' 4th District selected state Treasurer Ron Estes as the GOP nominee to replace Mike Pompeo, who was confirmed as Trump's CIA director. Democrats select their nominee on Feb. 11, but Estes is the prohibitive favorite in the April 11 special election.

Estes, who is regarded as more of an establishment candidate, defeated former Trump campaign adviser Alan Cobb and former Rep. Todd Tiahr in a race that was decided by 126 local committeemen and women, according to state law. In Congress, Estes is likely to be a mainstream conservative who is unlikely to join the conservative House Freedom Caucus.

The United States Senate confirmed one of their own, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, to become President Trump's attorney general on Wednesday.

The hearings were contentious and the vote fell along partisan lines, but Trump finally got to reward the first major congressional endorsement he received in the presidential primary. Republicans delayed Sessions' confirmation vote because they needed his vote as a senator to make sure Betsy DeVos was confirmed as Secretary of Education. And it still took Vice President Mike Pence to break that tie.

On Thursday morning, GOP Gov. Robert Bentley appointed Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange to replace Sessions in the Senate.

That move wasn't without controversy considering Luther has been investigating Bentley for alleged misuse of state resources surrounding an extramarital affair by the governor.

Strange will serve at least through 2018, when a special

election will take place with the regularly-scheduled midterm elections for the final two years of Sessions' term. Strange had previously said he would run next year even if he was not appointed.

A primary could still develop next year considering some aspiring politicians have been waiting 20 years for the seat to come open, but the seat is not at risk of a Democratic takeover. Still, Sessions' movement technically adds another seat for Republicans to defend next year, bringing their total to nine. Democrats are defending 25 seats.

Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke is still waiting to be confirmed as secretary of the Interior, but Democratic Sen. Jon Tester told Montana Public Radio that the vote could come next week.

Once Zinke is confirmed and resigns, Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will set a special election to be held within 100 days. Both parties will hold nomination meetings before that election to select nominees instead of traditional primaries.

According to the Great Falls Tribune, the field of interested Republicans includes real estate investor Drew Turiano, former state

Sen. Ken Miller, Missoula contractor Dwayne Rehbein, state Sen. Ed Buttrey of Great Falls, former gubernatorial candidate and high-tech



Ron Estes

entrepreneur Greg Gianforte and Rep. Carl Glimm.

Gianforte is regarded as a top-tier contender. If elected, he would join Maryland Democrat Anthony Brown, Kentucky Republican James Comer, New York Republican

Tom Suozzi, and New York Democrat John Faso who all lost races for governor and were just elected to Congress.

State Rep. Amanda Curtis and entertainer Rob Quist, the founding member of the Mission Mountain Wood Band and former Gov. Brian Schweitzer's choice, are considered the leading Democratic contenders. But either of them will start the as an underdog in a race that hasn't captured the attention of national Democrats. Probably because Trump just won Montana by 20 points.

The special election to watch for a sign of future GOP problems is Georgia's 6th District. Republican Rep. Tom Price was confirmed as Health & Human Services Secretary in the middle of the night on Friday morning.

The DCCC was criticized after the 2016 election for failing to target more races, so it will be hard for the committee to completely walk away from a seat Trump carried with just 48 percent. And it looks like Democrats have a credible contender: former Hill staffer / small businessman Jon Ossoff.

Ossoff already raised more than \$500,000 for the race. But his connection to Democratic Reps. Hank Johnson (his former boss) and John Lewis may put him to the left of the district.

There will likely be a crowded GOP field including former Secretary of State Karen Handel. But Ossoff could make the runoff if Republicans divide up a plurality of the vote and Ossoff consolidates Democrats. Then national Democratic strategists seem likely to spend at least some money in order to see if they can move numbers. **IE**



Luther Strange

## CALENDAR 2017

<b>Feb. 12-15</b>	Pitchers & Catchers Report
<b>April 2</b>	Baseball Opening Day
<b>April 4</b>	California's 24th Special Primary Election
<b>April 11</b>	Kansas' 4th Special General Election
<b>June 6</b>	California's 24th Special General Election
<b>June 6</b>	New Jersey Gubernatorial Primary Elections
<b>June 13</b>	Virginia Gubernatorial Primary Elections
<b>Nov. 7</b>	Virginia, New Jersey Gubernatorial Elections