

ARIZONA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Overview:

Arizona's House of Representatives (HoR) is divided into 30 districts, each of which have two representatives, for a total of 60 seats. Each representative represents an average of 106,534 constituents. All 60 seats are up for re-election in 2018. Currently, Republicans hold 35 seats in the HoR, while Democrats hold 25 (one seat is vacant, but will be filled by a Democrat). Term limits are in place (maximum of four terms), which make five Republican and three Democratic incumbents ineligible for re-election. While exact information is hard to find, Republicans have controlled the HoR since before 1992. As only six potential pick-up districts have been identified, shifting control in 2018 is unlikely. However, the retirement of two vulnerable Republicans, plus close races elsewhere, make it possible to achieve near-balance in the HoR in 2018.

Approach to Assessing Districts:

The 2016 Presidential election, at a glance, correlates very well with the House of Representatives elections of 2016. Democratic strength is mainly in the rural northeast of the state (Coconino, Navajo, and Apache counties; HoR District 7), and the south of the state including Tucson and the surrounding area (Pima and Santa Cruz counties; HoR Districts 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10). By contrast, Republicans were mainly successful in western and southeastern Arizona. The Phoenix area is complex, with the central part of the city mainly Democratic (including parts of Glendale, and Tempe), and the northwest and eastern areas mainly Republican (including Scottsdale, Chandler, Mesa, Surprise, and the rest of Maricopa and Pinal counties). Results for the Congressional map and the 2016 McCain vs Kirkpatrick Senate race show similar trends. In summary, Arizona state races correlate quite well with national races, suggesting that as Trump's approval falls, openings for Democratic candidates could emerge.

In Phoenix, the story is familiar: Democrats have been very successful in the city itself, but have struggled in the suburbs and rural parts of Maricopa County. However, with three candidates from near Phoenix (Districts 8 - Pinal County - 17, and 20) considered vulnerable (they only beat their closest Democratic competitor by five points or less), there is a chance to make breakthroughs into previously Republican areas. Further, Representative J.D. Mesnard in District 17 is term-limited, opening up a major opportunity for a seat pick-up. Through choosing strong candidates and getting out the word about major issues in suburban and exurban areas (education, jobs, and infrastructure come to mind), Democratic candidates may be able to make inroads into these growing areas, which will be key to flipping the HoR.

Unlike many other states, Democrats have had some recent success in rural Arizona. Attempts to analyze the districts demographically run into problems. The Democrats currently hold seats in northern Arizona, including Coconino, Navajo, and Apache Counties. All three counties are heavily Native American. However, they aren't necessarily Democratic safe zones; Navajo County actually voted for Trump in 2016, and has consistently voted Republican in recent elections. It serves as a reminder that local candidates who know the area are more important

than partisan divisions. 2018 presents an opportunity slightly to the south, in District 6. Representative Barb Barton, who narrowly won re-election in 2016, is ineligible due to term limits. A candidate who can connect with rural and native American voters in this district could have a chance.

Final Legislative Districts - Approved 1/17/12

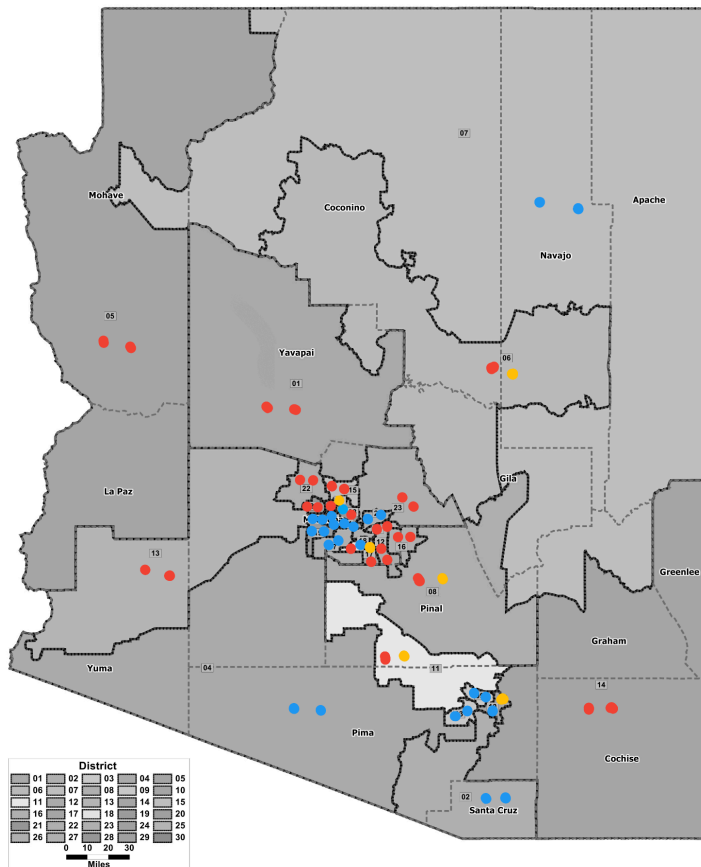


Fig. 1. Map showing the partisan composition of the Arizona HoR. Each district has two representatives. Red dots show Republican representatives, blue dots show Democratic representatives, and orange dots represent Republicans who were within 5% of the nearest Democratic candidate in 2016.

Similarly, Democrats have had success in southern Arizona, in Santa Cruz and Pima Counties (Districts 2 and 4). Both counties are heavily Hispanic. However, in Cochise County in the southeastern corner of the state (District 14), Democrats have had little success at any level, despite similar demographics. While perhaps overly simplistic, it should be noted that the Democratic representatives from Districts 2 and 4 are all Hispanic Americans, while no candidate from District 14 in the last three elections has been a Hispanic American. Finding a candidate with ties to the local Hispanic community could be an inroad here. Finally, western Arizona is largely white and rural, and has presented similar struggles for the Democrats as similar counties nationwide. Continued outreach to these districts, including running well-funded candidates in every election, is necessary to change the long-term outlook here.

Prospects for 2018:

The Democratic Party is tantalizingly close to finally achieving a majority in the HoR, but the specific district races make it clear that taking the HoR in 2018 is unlikely. Democrats need to flip six Republican seats to achieve a majority, and six close races have been identified. If all goes perfectly, a majority is certainly possible. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, it will be necessary to make further inroads into suburban Phoenix and more of rural Arizona. (After all, there's no sense taking the HoR for two years and then just losing it again). The 2018 map offers great opportunities to do just that.

For urban and suburban races, there are opportunities to:

- Consolidate our stronghold in Tucson (District 10 - a very unpredictable and swingy district).
- Make inroads into areas surrounding Phoenix (Districts 8 and 11 - Pinal County; District 17 - Gilbert, Chandler; District 20 - Glendale).
- Build on our successes in Northern Arizona (District 6 - includes city of Flagstaff).

Two other factors are at play here. One is term-limited incumbents. As mentioned before, the Republican incumbents in Districts 6 and 17 are term-limited, which combined with close races in 2016 makes these districts attractive as possible pick-ups. While three Democratic reps are term-limited, their districts are all likely safe.

The other factor at play is Arizona's quirky multi-member district system. Each party may run up to two candidates per district, and the top two vote-getters will win, regardless of party. Needless to say, this makes strategy for running candidates considerably different. In some areas, it is wiser to run only one candidate, as two Democrats will split each other's votes and reduce the chances of winning even one seat. This strategy is already employed by both parties, but should absolutely be used in highly Republican districts where we hope to break through.

Potential Pick-ups in 2018:

- District 6 - Term-limited incumbent. Will need someone to appeal to rural and Native American voters.
- District 8 - Pinal County, next to Phoenix. Possibly some degree of resentment towards growing Phoenix here? Candidate will have to know area well - historically Republican seats.
- District 10 - Swingy seat in Tucson.
- District 11 - Pinal County, next to Phoenix.
- District 17 - Gilbert and Chandler - part of Phoenix Metroplex. Fast-growing, wealthy areas (though growth has slowed recently). Term-limited incumbent.
- District 20 - Glendale - another part of Phoenix Metroplex. Not quite as wealthy or fast-growing as District 17.

Hall of Shame: Fortunately, this is a short Hall of Shame, as the Democrats only failed to field a candidate in one race in 2016 - District 12. Yay! While they could have run two candidates in

each district, I do not advise this as in some areas the vote splitting could cost us a seat. Just need to make sure there's a Democrat running in all 30 districts next year!