



# Happy Medium Magazine

ELECTION  
EDITION

2022 MIDTERMS

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**Election Edition**

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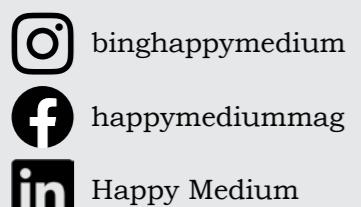
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## Local Elections

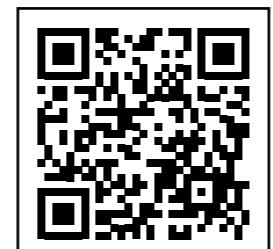
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Want to join our writing team? Scan this QR code to submit an application.



## happy medium — a satisfying compromise; an impossible standard.

Happy Medium's mission is to create a space for all Binghamton University students to respectfully and productively discuss the politics of our nation and world.

Compromise is a requisite of progress. We weigh what we are willing to lose against the potential gain. This process can give us clarity about what is most important to us.

**midterm elections** — In the United States, we hold congressional elections on every even year. This is because members of the House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms, and members of the Senate are elected for six year terms that are staggered such that one-third of Senators are up for reelection every two years. Presidential elections are held every four years, also on even years. Congressional elections that occur half way between presidential elections are called midterm elections. The 2022 midterm election is on Tuesday, November 8. This edition of Happy Medium Magazine is your guide to the upcoming election.

**Dear Reader,**

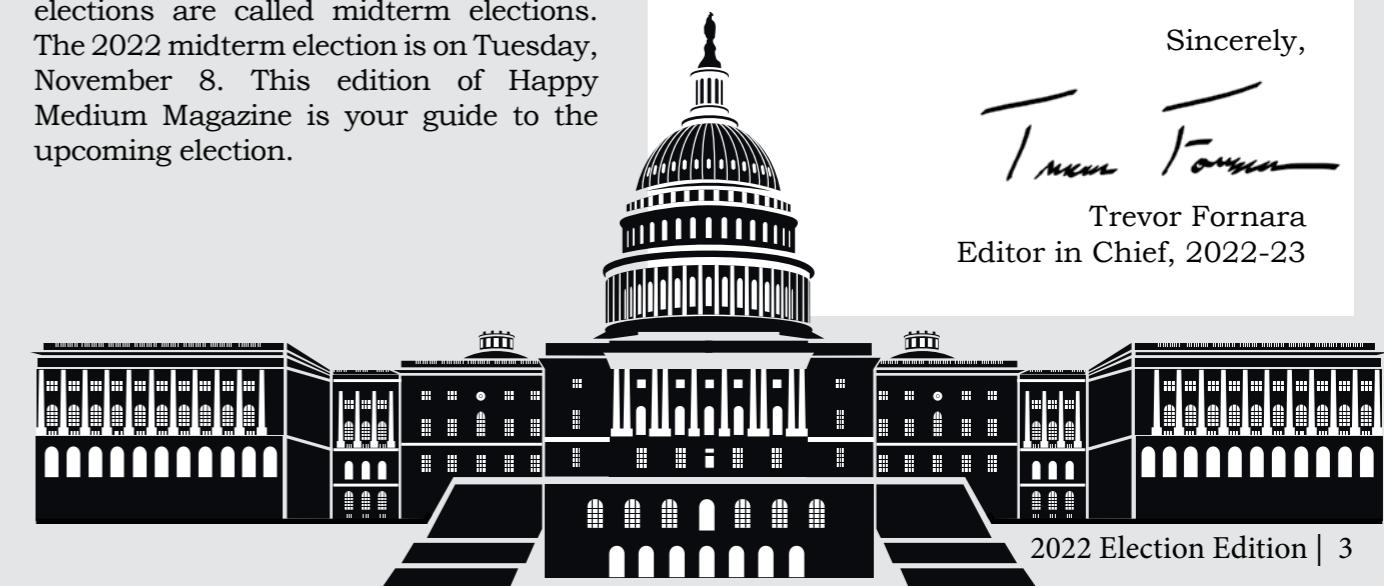
When we first conceptualized creating a print edition of Happy Medium last March, just one month after the launch of our website, we envisioned an annually published compilation of the best articles written by our team. Now, just two months after the release of our first print edition in late August, we're back!

The Happy Medium team worked around the clock reporting on the 2022 midterm election cycle here in Binghamton and nation-wide, resulting in some of the highest-quality content we've produced to date. I'd like to thank everyone who contributed their time and effort to this project for their hardwork and dedication to our mission. Additionally, I'd like to offer a special thanks to Bryan Goodman who chaired our Candidate Interview Committee.

This election edition of Happy Medium Magazine was made possible through a grant from the Harpur Edge Student Success Fund. On behalf of the Happy Medium team, I'd like to thank Harpur Edge and the generous donors who support their office for enabling us to provide valuable information about the upcoming elections to the students, faculty, and staff at Binghamton University.

Sincerely,

Trevor Fornara  
Editor in Chief, 2022-23



## Executive Editing Team



**Trevor Fornara, Editor in Chief**, is a senior from Mystic, Connecticut, majoring in philosophy, politics, and law. Trevor founded Happy Medium in December 2021 and has served as editor in chief since. During his first year at BU, Trevor participated in the Source Project, where he conducted self-led research on the effects of the university on the city's housing market, publishing his report in *Alpenglow: Binghamton University Undergraduate Journal of Research* in October 2022. Last summer, Trevor was a participant in the Summer Scholars and Artists Program, through which he received funding to create the first print edition of Happy Medium Magazine. He now works as the Communications and Outreach Coordinator at the Binghamton University Undergraduate Research Center.



**Briana Lopez-Patino, Managing Editor**, is a senior philosophy major born in Lima, Peru and raised in Rochester, NY. Briana is a founding member of the Happy Medium Executive Editing Team, serving as its first managing editor. She also serves as vice president of the Interdisciplinary Research Club, a Program Assistant for the Emerging Leaders Program, a Research Assistant for the Human Sexualities Lab, a Trainee at the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, and the Co-Chair of Bioethics Education for the National Student Bioethics Association. She plans to earn a PhD in philosophy and aspires to be a professor, bioethicist, and clinical ethics consultant.



**Arwen O'Brien, Marketing Editor**, is a philosophy, politics, and law major. She works for the Student Association at Binghamton and is the Membership Communications Chair for Binghamton's Ski and Snowboard Club. Arwen is a founding member of the Happy Medium Executive Editing Team, serving as its first marketing editor. Arwen grew up in Argentina and England but now lives in Westchester, NY. She is minoring in and is fluent in Spanish.



**Bryan Goodman, Political Director**, is a graduate student from Valhalla, Westchester County, NY. As the publication's first political director, Bryan consults with both writers and the editing team about specific pieces that could potentially be hot-button issues. He attended Westchester Community College for two years before transferring to Binghamton University to complete his undergraduate studies in political science. Bryan is currently enrolled in the 4+1 Master of Public Administration program. Bryan is also passionate about judicial politics and a variety of social/economic issues. His future plans hope to include either law school or a public policy program to further his studies in the field. Bryan hopes to one day be fortunate enough to positively impact as many lives as possible.

# The Midterm Effect: Why The Incumbent President's Party Tends to Struggle

By Arwen O'Brien, Marketing Editor

**E**very two years voters across the country get the opportunity to indicate their approval or disapproval of their current president through the midterm elections. But the inhabitants of the White House won't change, so why should we care?

Simply put, the outcome of a single election season can reshape the course of this country's future, including the outcome of the midterm elections. While current president Joe Biden is not on the midterm ballot, voters have the power and opportunity to make major changes to Congress. The election cycle goes as follows for the two chambers of Congress: every seat in the House of Representatives is up for election every two years, while one third of the seats in the Senate are up for grabs, as senators serve six-year terms. In this election season, the Democratic Party is extremely vulnerable to losing control of Congress. Only five seats need to be flipped in the House of Representatives for a Republican majority in the House, and with the Senate, even with the vice president having the tie-breaking vote, they only need to take one Democratic seat.

Historically, the incumbent president's party tends to lose seats in the House of Representatives during the midterms. An analysis done on this trend

showed that "in the 22 midterm elections from 1934 -2018, the President's party has averaged a loss of 28 House seats and four Senate seats" (Woolley 2022). By comparison, in the 2010 midterm elections former President Obama lost 63 seats, while in the 2018 midterm elections former President Trump lost 41 seats. In both cases, control over the House went into the hands of the opposing party (Oliphant and Lange 2022). One key factor in determining how many seats will flip is the popularity of the sitting president—and Biden is not doing well. One poll done by The Washington Post-ABC News found that "53 percent of Americans [are] disapproving of the job he's doing. Additionally, 51 percent of independent voters say they want Republicans in charge of Congress next year to act as a check on Biden" (Phillips 2022). An unpopular president tends to translate into a strong number of seats lost.

Regardless of these figures, the Democratic Party losing control over Congress is not completely guaranteed. There have been instances in the past where presidents have come out of the midterms with their power unscathed, maintaining control of Congress or even expanding their majorities. Jimmy Carter saw some seats go but the Democrats still managed to maintain control of Congress after the

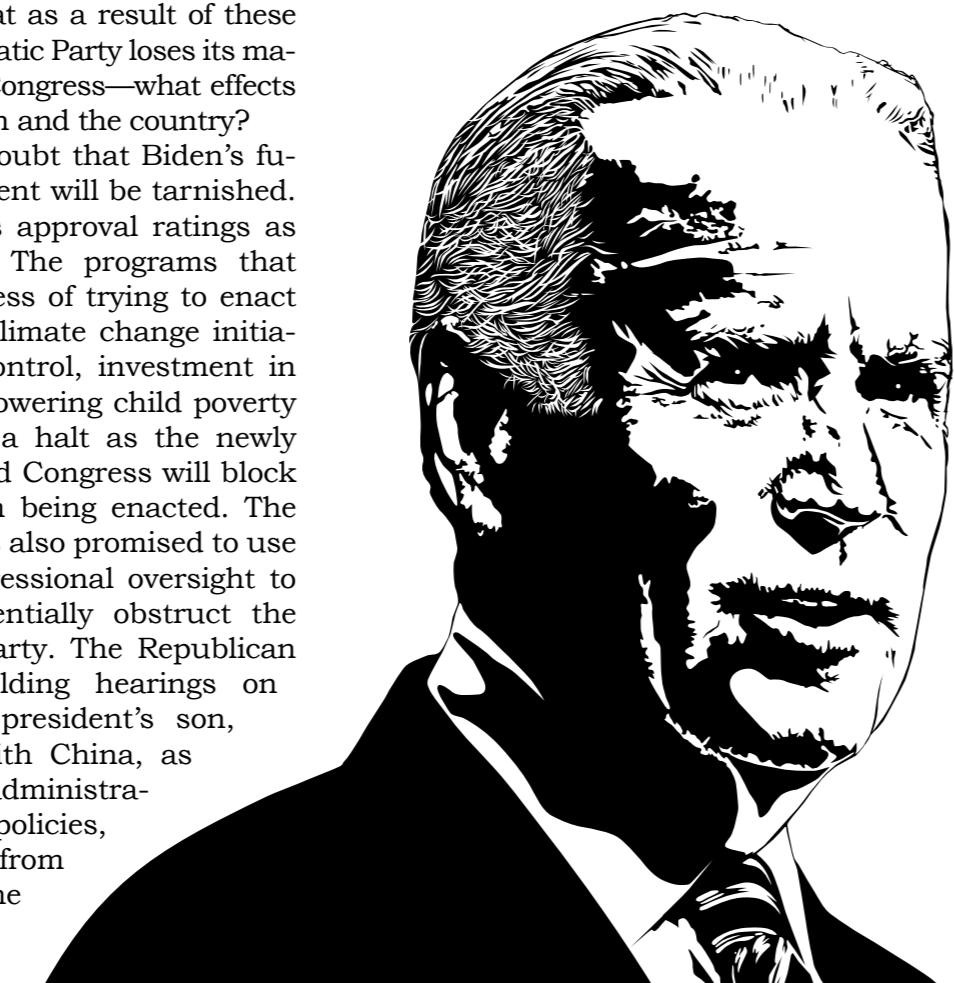
1978 midterms, where they lost 3 seats in the Senate and 11 in the House—but not enough to experience a shift in power (NPR 2009). A special case is the result of the 2002 midterms during George W. Bush's presidency. His Republican party gained in both the Senate and the House, winning two and six seats respectively (NPR 2009). The September 11 attacks were still fresh in people's minds during this midterm election, so voters were motivated to rally behind the president's party. There is a chance that we could see the Democratic Party maintain control of Congress as recent events have helped them gain certain popularity among Americans. Both the end of national abortion protections and the increase of election-denying Republican candidates have given the Democratic Party a boost which could help them protect these crucial seats in the midterms.

Let's suppose that as a result of these midterms the Democratic Party loses its majority and control in Congress—what effects will this have on Biden and the country?

It is without a doubt that Biden's future career as president will be tarnished. As shown above, his approval ratings as president are poor. The programs that Biden is in the process of trying to enact (such as increased climate change initiatives, stricter gun control, investment in infrastructure, and lowering child poverty levels) will come to a halt as the newly Republican-controlled Congress will block these programs from being enacted. The Republican Party has also promised to use their power in congressional oversight to investigate and potentially obstruct the president and his party. The Republican Party plans on holding hearings on Hunter Biden, the president's son, and his relations with China, as well as the "Biden administration's immigration policies, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the origins of the coro-

pandemic" (Zurcher 2022). The Republican Party gaining control of Congress through the midterms will allow for investigation of the current president in political retaliation for the extensive investigations on Trump's role in the January 6 Capitol riot. With no new programs getting passed and Biden's already weak reputation, we may see a new Democratic candidate campaign against Biden in the 2024 presidential elections.

A major change we can expect to see if the Republican party retakes control of Congress is restrictions on abortion rights. After the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* this past June, the Democratic party has promised to "codify into federal law abortion rights that were protected by the Supreme Court's *Roe vs Wade* decision" (Zurcher 2022). The Republican Party



plans to challenge this initiative being made in Congress if they retake the majority. An idea has been proposed for a country-wide and non-negotiable ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Such a national plan would affect Republican and Democrat-run states alike. This ban would have the power to "supersede existing protections in Democratic-run states like California, Illinois and New York" (Zurcher 2022). Changes in abortion protections could also be seen in individual states (e.g Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Michigan) where gubernatorial and legislative races are occurring. The outcome of these elections could alter the legality regarding abortion rights in these states as well.

On top of furthering the limits on national abortion rights, the Republican Party has released their plans of what they will attempt to pass if they win a majority. This includes the desire to "spend more money on border security, repeal new funding for the Internal Revenue Service, and likely expand domestic oil and natural gas drilling" (Phillips 2022). Furthermore, because this is the first federal election since the January 6 Capitol riot, these midterms will be especially interesting. If the Republican Party does successfully retake the majority of Congress, we could assess that such a perilous event against our democratic system does not have a big enough detrimental effect on the very party whose followers were responsible for the event. The Republican Party taking control of Congress after these midterms despite such a powerfully negative event reflecting on their party could be predictive of the fate of American democracy.

*FiveThirtyEight's* Deluxe model gives Democrats a 55% chance of maintaining control of the Senate and Republicans a 80% chance of winning a majority in the House as of October 23.

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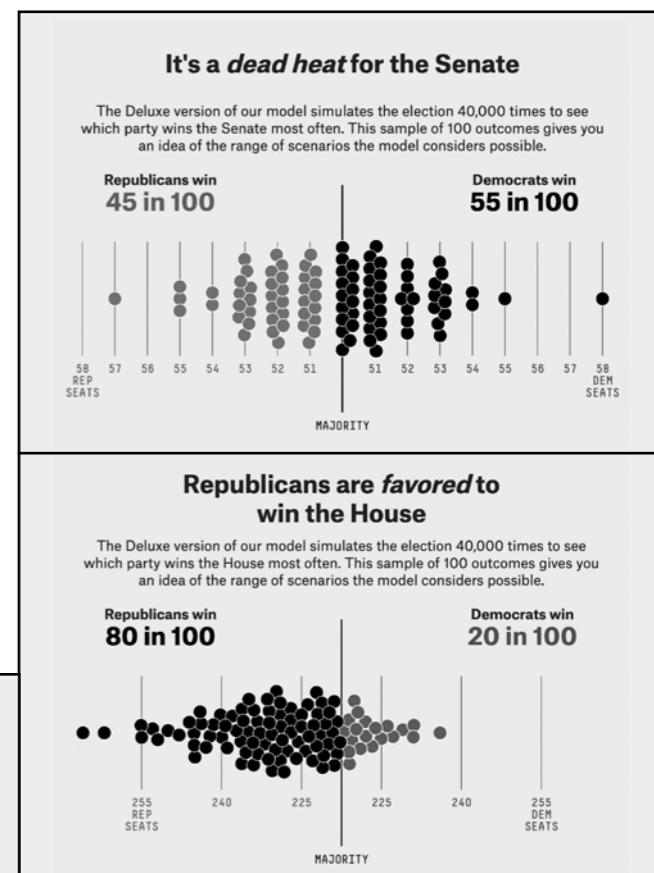
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# What Special Congressional Elections Tell Us About the Midterms

By Bryan Goodman, Political Director

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* will be a driving force for young people and women to vote in the 2022 midterms, which is absolutely critical if the Democrats hope to hold or even expand their majorities in both chambers of Congress. With items such as the Inflation Reduction Act becoming law and partial student debt cancellation, amongst other policy victories for the White House in the month of August, Democrats are becoming hopeful that they can hold both chambers of Congress.

This hope represents their rising popularity among the American electorate. Historically, Democrats have positioned themselves as “not Republicans” rather than developing an identity. But in a twist that took many by surprise, Democrats began to revive what was perceived as hopeless legislation. In a swift change of pace for Senate Democrats, the Inflation Reduction Act passed, providing much needed funding to combat climate change, changes to the tax code to decrease the deficit and increase revenue, and healthcare spending and policy changes including allowing Medicare to negotiate prices for certain drugs. This last piece, Medicare price negotiation, has been a part

of the Democrats’ campaign promises since the mid-2000s, and they just now made true on their word. They also implemented a cap on insulin costs for Medicare recipients at \$35, while an amendment to make this applicable to everyone failed 57-43, with seven Republican senators voting in support of the amendment. This amendment failed because of Senate rules regarding amendments to bills which require a three-fifths majority (60+ votes) to pass.

While legislation and executive action such as the student debt cancellation we saw from the President will likely motivate certain bases of voters to turn out in November, these are still not the greatest influencers of the upcoming election. Immediately following the *Dobbs* decision, many media outlets began reporting that abortion would not be a major issue of the midterm elections. They could not have been more wrong. There are two notable articles in which the writers make clear that *Dobbs*/abortion will not be a major issue of the midterms. They come from Byron York, the Chief Political Correspondent of the *Washington Examiner*, and Rich Lowry, the Editor in Chief of the *National Review*.

It does not have to be November 9 for us



## House of Representatives

to realize the impact that the *Dobbs* decision has had on this midterm cycle so far. We can simply examine various special congressional elections across the country and the Kansas abortion referendum. There were five special Congressional races—elections held to fill a vacancy due to death, retirement, or resignation. FiveThirtyEight has collected data pertaining to these pre and post-*Dobbs* special elections and compiled averages for the margins and the swings for them. Figure 1 is the graphic from the article (Rakich 2022). In a pre-*Dobbs* world, the swing margin in the sample of races was Republican +2, meaning that the Republican Party was outperforming expectations by two percentage points. However, the average partisan lean of this group of races was Democrat +12, yielding a vote margin result of Democrat +10.

Conversely, in the post-*Dobbs* special elections, there was an average partisan lean of Republican +13 and an average vote margin of Republican +2, resulting in an 11 point swing in Democrats’ favor. This swing has turned the tides in the buildup to the November midterms. While FiveThirtyEight still forecasts that the Republicans win control of the House 80 out of 100 times, compared to Democrats’ 20 out of 100

(see page 7), these odds have certainly shifted since before the *Dobbs* decision (“2022 House Forecast”). Since the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, two landmark abortion cases in the U.S. legal world, Democrats’ odds to hold the majority in the House have more than doubled. On June 24, the day the *Dobbs* decision officially released, the odds were 88 out of 100 for Republicans and a mere 12 out of 100 for Democrats (“2022 House Forecast”). There are several key House races that FiveThirtyEight has identified that have a large influence on who controls the House. There are several in California, including the 22nd and 27th districts which are vitally important if Democrats want to maintain their majority.

DATE	SEAT	PARTISAN LEAN	VOTE MARGIN	MARGIN SWING
March 20, 2021	Louisiana 2nd*	D+51	D+66	D+15
March 20, 2021	Louisiana 5th*	R+31	R+45	R+13
May 1, 2021	Texas 6th*	R+11	R+25	R+14
June 1, 2021	New Mexico 1st	D+18	D+25	D+7
Nov. 2, 2021	Ohio 11th	D+57	D+58	EVEN
Nov. 2, 2021	Ohio 15th	R+19	R+17	D+2
Jan. 11, 2022	Florida 20th	D+53	D+60	D+7
June 7, 2022	California 22nd	R+11	R+24	R+14
June 14, 2022	Texas 34th*	D+5	R+5	R+10
Pre- <i>Dobbs</i> average		D+12	D+10	R+2
June 28, 2022	Nebraska 1st	R+17	R+5	D+12
Aug. 9, 2022	Minnesota 1st	R+15	R+4	D+11
Aug. 16, 2022	Alaska at-large†	R+15	D+3	D+18
Aug. 23, 2022	New York 19th	R+4	D+2	D+6
Aug. 23, 2022	New York 23rd	R+15	R+7	D+9
Post- <i>Dobbs</i> average		R+13	R+2	D+11

Figure 1.

# Alaska Special Congressional Election

In what might be the most shocking result of this year's special elections so far, Alaska elected a Democrat to represent them in the House for the first time since Richard Nixon was president in 1973. In this race, Democrat Mary Peltola came out on top in a race between her, Sarah Palin, and Nick Begich. However, thanks to Alaska's ranked-choice voting system and the split of Republican votes between Palin and Begich, Peltola came out victorious. This could be viewed by some as a one-off election due to the disapproval of a candidate such as Palin, but there was a viable second candidate in Begich, who was not able to compete with both of them. Some prominent politicians, such as Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas, believe that ranked-choice voting is "...a scam

to rig elections" (Cotton 2022a) and that "60% of Alaska voters voted for a Republican, but thanks to a convoluted process and ballot exhaustion—which disenfranchises voters—a Democrat 'won'" (Cotton 2022b). Cotton's claim that ranked-choice voting is a scam is a perpetuation of former President Trump's false claims of fraudulent elections. While Cotton pointed out that 60% of Alaskans voted Republican, the two Republican candidates were inevitably going to split the vote. If there were no ranked-choice system in place, the Republicans would still have lost since Peltola won a plurality of the vote after the first round of rankings were tallied ("State of Alaska"). In Alaska, Democrats performed with a swing of +18, turning a typical R+15 district into a D+3 district.



## United States Senate

On the day that the *Dobbs* decision was released, Republicans held a slight edge over Democrats with a 53% chance to win a majority, according to data from FiveThirtyEight. Since then, Democrats have improved their odds, with a 55% chance of maintaining control of the chamber as of October 23 (see page 7) ("2022 Senate Forecast"). The growing understanding that Democrats will hold or expand their majority in the Senate is due in part to the nature of the Senate map this cycle favoring Democrats, along with low-quality candidates running on the Republican ticket, according to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R) (Kapur

and Thorpe 2022). The Democrats have a favorable map this cycle as compared to what they will face in 2024, so it is critical for them to build the foundations of a future majority now and look to further expand on it in 2024. However, unfortunately for Democrats, there are many seats in swing states and generally Republican-favored states that will be up for re-election during the presidential election year including Montana, Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maine.

Let's focus on the 2022 Senate elections. This cycle, Democrats have to defend seats in Nevada, Arizona, New Hampshire,

and Georgia, while looking for pickups in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, with even the possibility of flipping seats in Ohio, North Carolina and Florida if everything goes perfectly for them. Democrats' best bets are in both Pennsylvania and Wisconsin with two current Lieutenant Governors running for the Senate seats as Democrats. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania and Mandela Barnes of Wisconsin are both hoping to yet again win a state-wide election that would propel them to the United States Senate with the hopes of overtaking Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema as the 49th and 50th votes that are needed for a majority in the chamber. Both Fetterman and Barnes have previously been elected Lieutenant Governor of their respective states. Fetterman has been performing incredibly well according to all polling data so far, and Barnes is beginning to pick up steam in his race against two-term incumbent Ron Johnson.

It is important to take a realistic approach to the polling we have seen so far. Historically, polling has proven to under-represent Republican support; however, in recent months, it has been doing this for Democrats. Figure 1 further supports this claim and has proven that despite large partisan leanings, Democrats have been able to overcome such roadblocks to either run competitive elections or outright win them. It will be an extremely difficult task for Democrats if they want to maintain their majorities in both chambers of Congress. While history says it is extremely unlikely, it is not impossible for them. These indications from the special congressional elections and the Kansas referendum vote on abortion have shown us that there are countless single-issue voters throughout the country that have the potential to turn the tides of the "red wave" that was predicted to happen in the 2022 midterms. Only time will tell, but as the elections grow closer, the gap for the Democratic Party is shrinking and bringing both the Senate and

even the House of Representatives within striking distance of retention.

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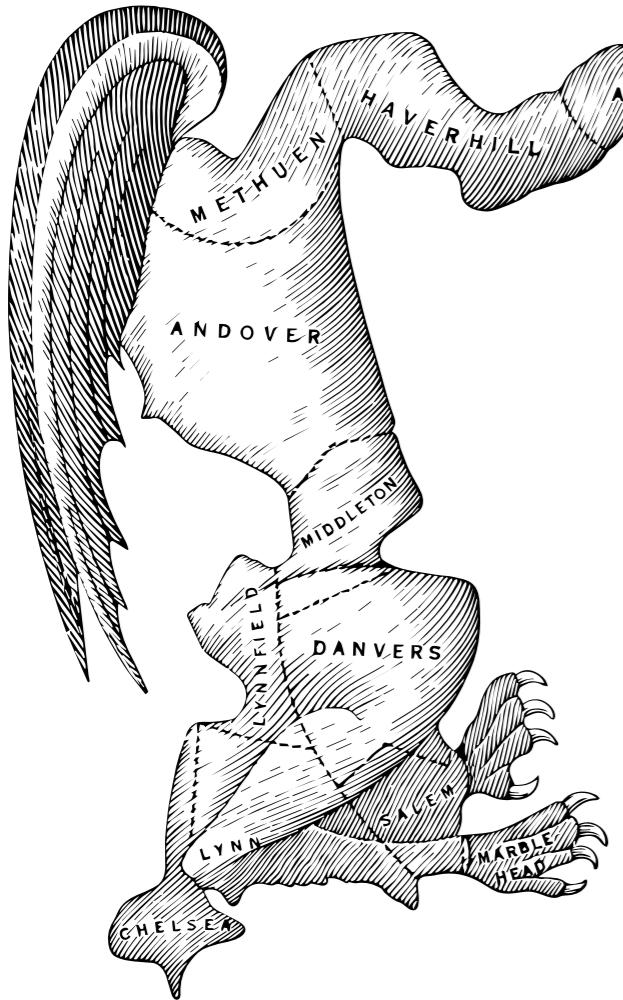
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# Let's Talk About Gerrymandering

By Emma Breuer

“Courts ought not to enter this political thicket.”

— Justice Felix Frankfurter  
*Colegrove v. Green* (1946)

**Partisan gerrymandering** is concerned with the redrawing of district lines in order to either split or consolidate voters in favor of whichever party holds the majority in state legislatures. “The actual process of political gerrymandering is done by placing voters in districts based on their political registration, voting history, turnout rates, and various other demographic factors that indicate how they might vote” (“Basics”).

## Who Draws the Lines?

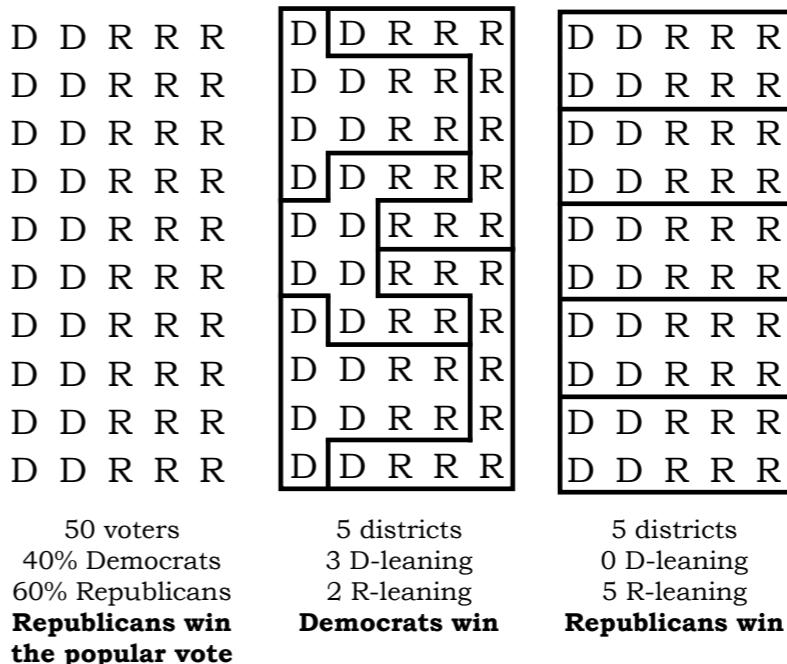
The redrawing of state legislative and congressional districts is reserved for the respective state legislatures and happens once every decade following the constitutionally mandated Census. In most states, redistricting legislation is passed similarly to other legislation and must be approved by a majority vote from each legislative chamber:

the lower state house and upper state house (Levitt 2020). Some states task their respective redistricting commissions with drawing the new lines. Each state varies in deadlines for redistricting plans, commissions, political involvement, and office holding, just to name a few.

## Gerrymandering and the Supreme Court

Partisan gerrymandering has a long history and has been a heated subject of deliberation in both local courts and the Supreme Court. “In previous decades, it has invalidated redistricting maps and established rules to protect the voting rights of voters in general (in its equal population cases), certain ethnic and racial minorities (to enforce the Voting Rights Act and other provisions), and to protect voters from racially segregated districts (unconstitutional racial gerrymandering under the 14th Amendment)” (“Basics”).

## How gerrymandering can alter the outcome of an election:



Understanding the history and precedent set by the Supreme Court will help to gain a comprehensive understanding of the legality of partisan gerrymandering.

In *Gaffney v. Cummings* (1973) the district court rejected Connecticut’s apportionment plan because of its unconstitutional partisan structuring resulting in extreme population variance in congressional redistricting. The final decision of the Supreme Court held that “Minor deviations from mathematical equality among state legislative districts do not make out a *prima facie* case of invidious discrimination under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment...A ‘political fairness principle’ that achieves a rough approximation of the statewide political strength of the two major parties does not violate the Equal Protection Clause” (“Gaffney v. Cummings”).

In *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), the Supreme Court determined that North Carolina’s reapportionment scheme, in which they aimed to create one very concentrated, small

black-majority voting district, was unconstitutional. The Attorney General rejected the first reapportionment plan that packed minority residents into one district. North Carolina is covered by VRA (Voting Rights Act) preclearance, meaning that its state jurisdiction is barred from revising voting practices without approval from the Attorney General, which it promptly violated as it attempted to use the map. The new map that was drawn up created two majority-minority districts with one being especially gerrymandered. The 5 state residents that questioned the constitutionality of the plan alleged that the goal of drawing that district was to ensure more black representatives from North Carolina.

The final decision concluded that while the reapportionment plan appeared superficially racially impartial, the districts drawn were covertly racially segregated, violating the 15th Amendment. *Shaw v. Reno* (1993) set a precedent for the unconstitutionality of racial gerrymandering.

In *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2003) the Supreme Court echoed a similar decision to that of *Shaw v. Reno* (1993)—the Supreme Court did not reserve the rights or powers to rule on the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering. Unique to this case, however, were the Democratic voters who attempted to sue in federal court based on the notion that the Republican-majority state legislature in Pennsylvania “...had violated the one-person, one-vote principle of Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution...” (Scalia 2003). The reapportionment plan clearly advantaged Republican representatives in Pennsylvania and created an unequal division of votes per district which deemed such a plan unconstitutional. A more pressing conclusion

that came from this case, though, was the decision by Justice Scalia that the question of whether or not partisan gerrymandering was up to the discretion of state or federal courts had been answered. Such decisions lay solely in the hands of state legislatures.

In 2019, the *Rucho v. Common Cause* case reinforced an important precedent for partisan gerrymandering's place in courts. Head of the North Carolina Senate Redistricting Committee, Robert Rucho (R), appealed to the Supreme Court regarding the district court's rejection of North Carolina's 2016 congressional map based on the map's clear partisan gerrymandering. The opinion of the Court held that "partisan gerrymandering claims are not justiciable because they present a political question beyond the reach of the federal courts" ("Rucho v. Common Cause"). This decision lends itself to understanding how partisan gerrymandering plays a role in modern United States politics and government. By deciding that the constitutionality of partisan-based gerrymandering is not a matter that can be decided by federal courts, as this would impede state governments' rights, the Supreme Court asserts that decisions thereof were up to the state legislatures, thus removing any sort of check on the legislatures power by the judicial branch.

### **Partisan Gerrymandering in the Upcoming Elections**

On November 8, 2022, the United States midterm elections will be held based on district lines drawn following the 2020 Census. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are both registered Democrats. Democrats currently hold the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Vice President Harris, in her capacity as President of the Senate, has the power to vote in any instance when breaking a tie is necessary, which gives the Democrats the upper hand in legislation that cannot be filibustered. If able to

successfully redraw district lines in their favor, especially considering how small the House majority is, Democrats may be able to secure the House majority. Insofar as the upcoming elections are concerned, partisan gerrymandering could very well prove to be a serious barrier between Republicans and Democrats gaining the majority.

In late summer 2022, Democrats seemed optimistic about the upcoming election. However, such optimism has dwindled as recently as October 18, 2022, when President Biden's approval rating sat at 40% (Lange 2022). Of the total 435 House districts, 220 of them are leaning towards Republican representation—giving Republicans a narrow advantage.

When considering how partisan gerrymandering might affect the upcoming elections, looking at voter behavior in the median district illuminates some promise for Democrats to maintain the House majority. Of the 435 congressional districts, 215 of them lean towards Democrats, meanwhile 220 districts lean towards Republicans, meaning that Democrats will need to secure votes in an additional three districts if they hope to maintain the House (Cohn 2022). Insofar as the Senate is concerned, it is unlikely that Democrats will observe a win in both the House and the Senate, as gerrymandering has an ineffective impact in the Senate; however, it is not impossible in the House.

In a simulation done by FiveThirtyEight, ten congressional districts were decided to be the most likely to determine which party controls the House. The results show that nine out of the ten districts show Republican-tilting, despite Republicans' average predicted success rate in these districts only being 60/100. These findings further portend that "The 2021-22 congressional redistricting process preserved a largely Republican-leaning status quo," which does not appear to be too promising of a Democrat lead (Rakich 2022). Considering the propagation

of Republican-leaning status quo in district line redrawing, a Democratic edge in this upcoming election does not seem likely. In fact, even less promising are the right leaning results of the 10 "tipping-point districts," of which 7 are predicted to vote Republican.

### **A Final Note**

All things considered, which party will maintain the majority in the House seems to be up in the air, although the Republicans look likely to swing the majority. Despite post-2020 congressional redistricting being in favor of Republicans and a declining approval rating of President Biden, a direct assertion of who will carry this midterm election seems to rest closer to election day. The influence and power of partisan gerrymandering in elections is palpable in our current political climate as well as historically; but what is most important to keep in mind when considering how redistricting affects elections is population density and other redistricting metrics employed to generate the most promising outcome for each respective party. Partisan gerrymandering has proven capable of giving certain parties a leg-up in Congress, but perhaps in light of this election, Americans may witness a shocking turn of events at the polls this year. The political agendas of Democrats and Republicans, increased voter consciousness, and the recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* may allow for an unpredictable voter turnout. Failed attempts by the Democrats following the 2020 Census to successfully gerrymander the state of New York seem to imply that they might have to get creative this upcoming election and explore strategies outside of partisan gerrymandering.

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# Gen Z Candidates for Congress are Proving that Grassroots Organizing Works

— but not without the help of some powerful allies.

By Martin Dolan



**T**hat young people consist of an important, even election-deciding voting block is not a new concept by any means, but after the incredibly competitive and polarizing elections of 2018 and 2020, anticipating the voting patterns Generation Z is proving to be an essential part of 2022 as well—on both sides of the ballot.

The teenagers and twenty-somethings that collectively make up the somewhat-vague categorization of “Gen Z”—between roughly 18 and 25 years old, more diverse and politically-minded than those of older generations—were raised side by side with internet technology, not quite remembering the early-Obama years of economic recession but coming of age in the post-Trump culture war. It’s largely understood that Gen Z, as young people historically have, lean disproportionately left in their voting habits, and whether or not Democrats can win key 2022 midterm seats will end up being a function of, among other factors, how well they’re able to mobilize young people.

While many characteristics of Gen Z’s demographics—they’re generally more racially diverse, higher educated, and less religious—seem to align more with the values of solidly blue, urban states, it’s going to be in Southern swing districts throughout Georgia, Texas, and Arizona that their presence will have the power to make the most tangible differences. Demographer William Frey has written extensively about a disconnect between the “brown and the grey” in these districts, where younger, diverse voters seem to be politically at odds with the older, conservative whites

**Maxwell Frost**



**Karoline Leavitt**

(Brownstein 2022). Younger voters have been particularly mobilized by the growing issues of access to abortion and restrictive voting policies, which have sprung up throughout red states in the south and midwest over the past election cycle.

So, while Gen Z has its share of issues with current policies on both the left and right (a September NPR poll found that only 37 percent of Millennials and Gen Z believe Biden has improved the economy), they’ve



proven themselves to be a powerful group that has only been partially tapped into by establishment politicians (Montanaro 2022). On the other side of the ballot box, though, a small but loud wave of young House candidates have stepped up to try and cater to this increasingly-slippery voter demographic.

Maxwell Frost is a twenty-five-year-old musician from South Florida who, despite his youth, is being pointed at by many leading Democrats as the man who will likely be the first Gen Z congressman. Running in Florida’s 10th district, which consists of Orange County and the western half of Orlando, Frost came from a background of activism and organization before eventually winning the contentious Democratic primary in the reliably blue district. Frost had no

real political experience and didn't finish his college degree, yet due to his grassroots mobilization of voters and personal story that connected to voters, he was able to come away from the primary in August 2022 with an unlikely win (Sotomayor 2022). Frost identifies as a strong, young liberal—his campaign webpage focuses on issues like access to healthcare, ending gun violence, and an attention to environmental causes—but he also wants to keep everything he does in the context of helping the working-class, which he came from and still feels an obligation towards, in a system that is increasingly stacked against them (Frost).

In a September profile with the Washington Post, Frost opened up about the feelings of excitement but also of unbelonging that comes with being a young member of Congress. He reflected, somewhat jadedly, on a phone call with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi after his primary win, yet was promoted by established left-wing figures of the party like Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders as a candidate who had the ambition, story, and grassroots supporters to make a splash at a young age. After the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut, Frost became involved in activist movements fighting against gun violence throughout Florida and the US, lasting all the way to the March for Our Lives protests after another shooting in Parkland, Florida. It was his work on these campaigns that put him on the map of party figures on both sides of the aisle; Frost credits this organic platform to his success more than any presence on TikTok or the internet, which he leaves for his team to handle. And when opponents on the right criticized Frost as being too extreme—a socialist, an insult slung at many a young, progressive candidate—he waved them aside as not caring enough to know his story. He comes from a line of Cuban immigrants and refugees—working class people who resettled in Florida to escape the authoritarian policies of their home country (Sotomayor 2022).

So while technology and social media have certainly helped Frost in his ten-year journey from local activist to likely Congressman, it's not fair to write him off as merely a product of Twitter or TikTok. Rather, like many in Gen Z, Frost has been able to use social media as just another outreach tool in his already strong repertoire of grassroots organization and campaigning, gaining support from voters young and old alike.

That's not to say the GOP hasn't been effective in mobilizing its own generation of young Republicans—quite the opposite. Karoline Leavitt, a twenty-five-year-old from Rockingham County, New Hampshire, has been growing a following among Republican voters in much the same way that Frost did in Florida. With experience working as both a staff member in the Trump White House and as a Director of Communications under New York Congressmember Elise Stefanik, Leavitt has built a reputation as a leader of a growing number of young Republicans rallying against the party "establishment." Leavitt's first political race, the primary earlier this year against Matt Nowers—himself only thirty-three and with a resume that includes working under Trump—found her winning with a slight 35 percent plurality, thanks in part to endorsements from a series of MAGA-aligned GOP figureheads like Stefanik and Ted Cruz (Sexton 2022). Leavitt's whole platform aligns with the politics of those politicians as well, running a provocative campaign that called for, among other things, a re-evaluation of the integrity of elections following what she views as Donald Trump wrongly losing the 2020 presidential election (Leavitt). The theme of being against an establishment—the media, the Democratic Party, or the Republicans in power who didn't do anything to stop Biden's election—runs throughout the rhetoric of Leavitt's campaign, with the implication that in her youth is a promise to be above the "politicking" of Washington's corruption.

While Leavitt's politics may be the opposite of Frost's, her campaign has suffered many of the same criticisms, often based around her youth and perceived inexperience. An article from Washington Post reporter Amy Yang investigated some of these attacks on Leavitt's campaign—ones that focused more on her platform than her politics. "She's just a woke Gen Z-er," says one attack ad, "[who] wants to bring her generation's new vision to Congress. You know, mooching off her parents, running up huge credit card debt. Woke, immature and irresponsible" (Wang 2022). Leavitt, to her credit, has turned the negative press against her—harnessing these sorts of attacks from both the left and right and writing both off as attacks from the "establishment" she has been continuously campaigning against. And like Frost, while Leavitt's social media platform has been both a benefit and harmful for her career (videos have surfaced on Twitter of her making crass jokes), the fact is that her campaign has relied on the internet more as a tool for spreading her message than a gimmick. Endorsements from older, more experienced GOP figures, as well as her own lengthy work experience, have benefitted Leavitt more than any TikTok video ever has.

When critics of young politicians on both the left and right try to write off younger candidates gaining momentum as gimmicks, that their progress has only come because of viral moments and the novelty of youth, it's clear that there's a large disconnect between the establishment and the young populations which are increasing in size in our country. And while young people on both sides of the aisle have used tools like social media to spread their grassroots activism and policy advocacy, dismissing their work as merely because of the internet is oversimplifying the way that political parties are beginning to tap into the cultural moment that is Gen Z. The internet helps—as it has helped campaigns for the past twenty-odd years, including Obama, Trump, and Biden—but

in the current polarized political state of the country, it is even more clear than ever that success in politics requires friends in high places. Whether its Frost with Warren and Sanders or Leavitt with Stefanik and Cruz, getting elected in a House race is always a question of being connected to the right people, even when said campaigns are running on a platform of anti-establishment rhetoric that criticizes that sort of system in the first place. So in the future of elections, when Gen Z and subsequent generations undoubtedly become more and more of a force, it's important to look towards young people for the future of leadership, but at the same time, to keep an eye on the older politicians who will be, in a way, choosing them.

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# JOSH RILEY



## CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT #19

By Tim Martinson

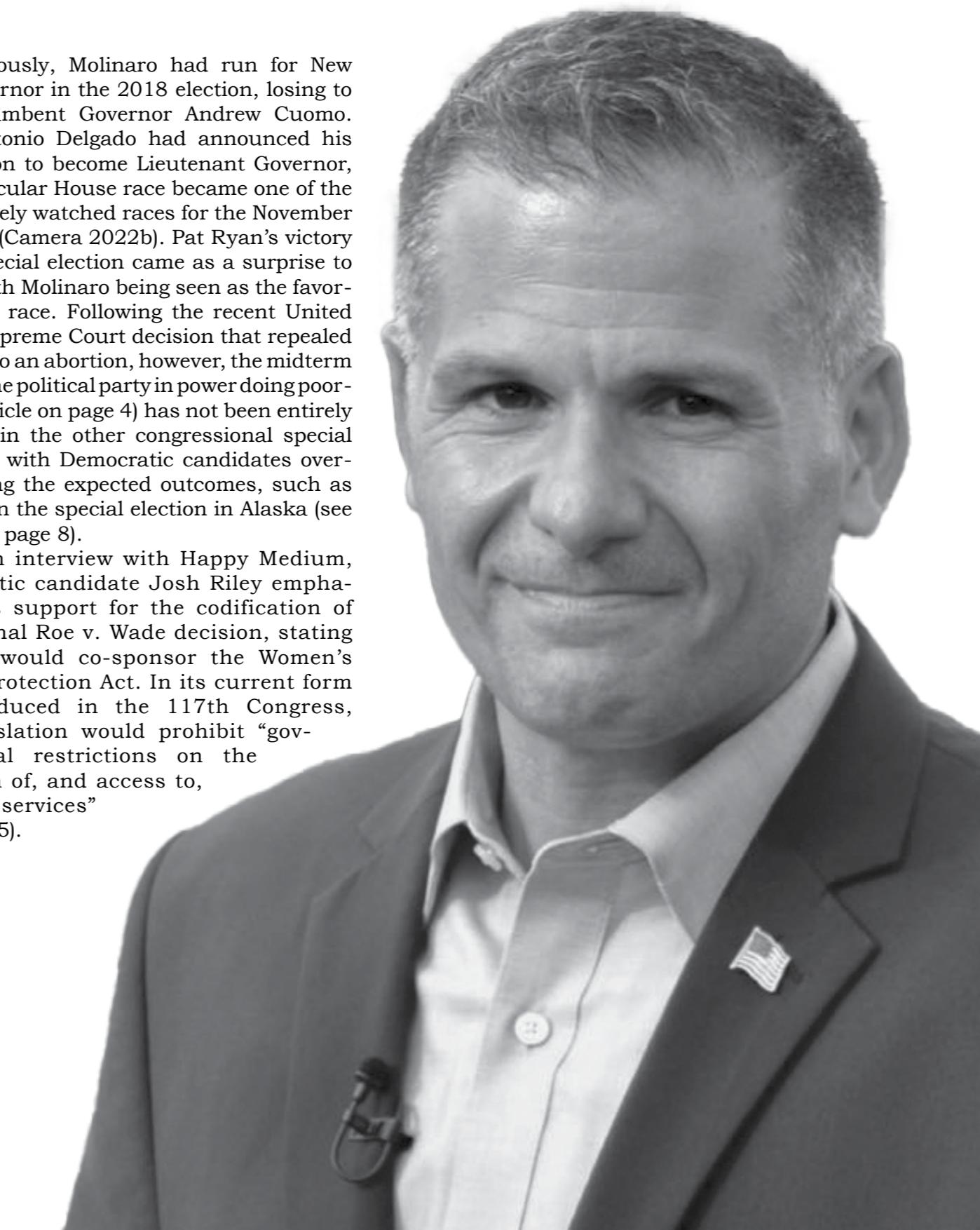
**W**ith the upcoming elections in November for many political offices, it would help to know more about the various candidates in the races that Binghamton University students can vote for locally. For the federal elections to the U.S. House of Representatives, the newly drawn district maps place Binghamton University and the surrounding areas into the 19th congressional district of New York ("Elected Officials" 2022). The main candidates for this congressional race in November will be Republican Marc Molinaro, current Dutchess County executive, and Democrat Josh Riley, an attorney and a former congressional staffer. Molinaro previously ran in a special election for the 19th district on August 23, 2022 under the old district maps, which was caused by the incumbent Congressman Antonio Delgado (D) resigning to become Lieutenant Governor of New York. He narrowly lost with 48.8% of the vote to the Democratic candidate Pat Ryan, who received 51.1% of the vote (de Paredes 2022).

Instead of running for the new version of the 19th district in the general election like Molinaro, Ryan is running in the 18th district. As a result, the new 19th district has no incumbent congressman running for re-election (Camera 2022a).

Previously, Molinaro had run for New York governor in the 2018 election, losing to then-incumbent Governor Andrew Cuomo. Once Antonio Delgado had announced his resignation to become Lieutenant Governor, this particular House race became one of the more closely watched races for the November elections (Camera 2022b). Pat Ryan's victory in the special election came as a surprise to many, with Molinaro being seen as the favorite in the race. Following the recent United States Supreme Court decision that repealed the right to an abortion, however, the midterm trend of the political party in power doing poorly (see article on page 4) has not been entirely the case in the other congressional special elections, with Democratic candidates overperforming the expected outcomes, such as winning in the special election in Alaska (see article on page 8).

In an interview with Happy Medium, Democratic candidate Josh Riley emphasized his support for the codification of the original Roe v. Wade decision, stating that he would co-sponsor the Women's Health Protection Act. In its current form as introduced in the 117th Congress, this legislation would prohibit "governmental restrictions on the provision of, and access to, abortion services" (H.R. 3755).

# MARC MOLINARO



Riley also highlighted his support for campaign finance reform, reiterating his refusal to accept money from corporate political action committees, or PACs. He also stated his support for a constitutional amendment to overturn the 2010 Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. FEC*, which overruled earlier decisions that had allowed “prohibitions on independent expenditures by corporations” and bans on corporations “making electioneering communications” (“*Citizens United*”).

Riley stated that the biggest challenge facing the new 19th congressional district of New York is that “for a generation, this region has been overlooked and left behind by our politics and our economy.” When asked about how he would address the issue of inflation, Riley gave a twofold answer. In the long term, he would like to see manufacturing jobs returned to the United States and upstate New York, in particular emphasizing the manufacturing of semiconductors and electronics. Riley denounced rising costs as a consequence of policies from “professional politicians and the special interests” to ship manufacturing jobs overseas. He also cited a new lithium battery project coming out of Binghamton University; the “New Energy New York Project” was awarded over \$63 million in a grant from the federal government, which “aims to turn the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions into the nation’s premier hub for lithium battery research, manufacturing and workforce development” (Potter 2022). In the short term, however, Riley gave his support for tax cuts for the middle class and allowing Medicare to cover hearing, dental, and vision for the elderly.

The campaign for the Republican candidate, Marc Molinaro, did not respond when reached out to for an interview, so the following information on his platform comes directly from his campaign website. On the topic of inflation, Molinaro’s policy platform indicates his support for “indexing the portions of the federal individual tax code not currently

adjusted for inflation” and “working outside the tax code to increase the supply of critical goods... to reduce costs” (“*Reducing Inflation*” 2022). His platform also describes plans to lower property taxes, such as “limiting the ability of States to shift Medicaid expenses to local property taxpayers” and “restoring the full SALT deduction” (“*Reducing Inflation*” 2022). Additional plans include creating a commission to provide recommendations for a balanced budget in 10 years, “simplifying the tax code,” and “empowering those with low income” (“*Reducing Inflation*” 2022). Other key issues listed on Molinaro’s campaign website include addressing the opioid epidemic, mental health crises, and the energy crisis, as well as supporting U.S.-Israel relations, resources for veterans, services for seniors, and investment in and adoption of “cryptocurrency and the digital asset space” (“*Marc’s Vision*” 2022).

Absent on Molinaro’s campaign website is the issue of abortion and reproductive health. However, according to WSKG, at a town hall in Endicott, Molinaro opposed most abortions after about seventeen weeks, stating that he does not want “government in the specific decision-making that women will have to make... But I also want to be respectful of the fact, at some point there ought to be some limitation, except in the case of life of the mother, rape and incest” (Golden 2022). Additionally, according to a PIX11 article, Molinaro has stated that he opposes a national abortion ban. The article describes that Molinaro “says he supports a woman’s right to chose [sic] with ‘thoughtful limitations’ on late term abortions” (Rosoff 2022).

Molinaro’s campaign website also describes the “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative, launched in 2015, “which seeks to change the way individuals, businesses, organizations, and communities relate to our neighbors of all abilities,” particularly those with “intellectual, physical and developmental disabilities” (“*Encouraging America*” 2022).

Molinaro’s plan includes “funding for Crisis Intervention Training and Mental Health First Aid,” greater enforcement of laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act for those with special needs, and creating a “federal onboarding platform” for greater accessibility to federal programs (“*Encouraging America*” 2022).

If the results for the special election in August are any indication, the election for the 19th congressional district will end up being a very close one. This race between Josh Riley and Marc Molinaro is one such example of how Binghamton University students will have the opportunity to have their voices heard in the state legislature and Congress this November.

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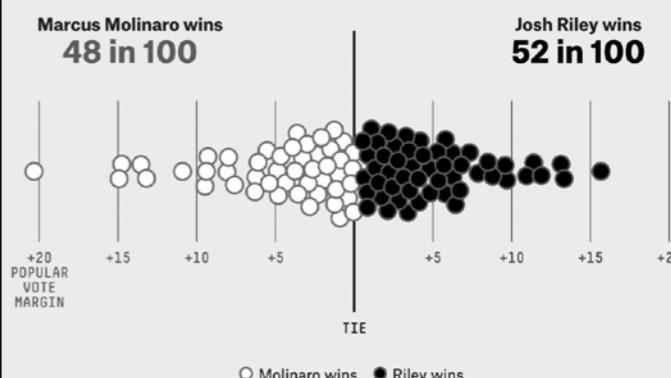
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## It's a dead heat in New York's 19th District

The Deluxe version of our model simulates the election 40,000 times to see who wins most often. This sample of 100 outcomes gives you an idea of the range of scenarios the model considers possible.



FiveThirtyEight’s Deluxe model gives Democrat Josh Riley a 52% chance of winning the congressional election as of October 23.



# State Senate District #52

## Lea Webb vs. Rich David

By Bryan Goodman, Political Director

**E**x-Binghamton Mayor Rich David and eight-year City Councilwoman Lea Webb are the two main party nominees for the New York State Senate's 52nd district this November. Webb (D) and David (R) are both vying for a seat in New York State's upper legislative chamber. The vacancy for this seat was created by the decision of incumbent Senator Fred Akshar's (R) decision to run for Broome County Sheriff rather than seek re-election to the State Senate. I sat down with Webb for a virtual interview on October 12 to talk about all things public service and policy. Happy Medium reached out to the Rich David campaign twice via email and did not hear back, so all information about David's policy positions have been acquired through local media articles and directly from the candidate's social media platforms and campaign website.

Webb is a Binghamton native, raised by union-member parents, and an alum of Binghamton University's neuroscience program. Webb's community organizing originated around issue-based and electoral campaigns after graduating from college. Webb first ran for Binghamton City Council

against the council president at the age of 26. She described her first bid for city council as a "very grassroots campaign" which saw a well above-average voter turnout in her district. With her victory, Webb became not only the youngest person ever elected to the Binghamton City Council, but also the first African-American elected to the council. Webb went on to serve on the council for eight years and now works at Binghamton University as an educator in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion division.

Webb prides herself on her values—looking out for the community, understanding and questioning why things happen the way they do, and largely attributes these values to her parents and her upbringing. "Seeing and experiencing first-hand what happens when communities are rendered voiceless or not paid attention to, that sense of justice is something that...really cultivated it." "Public service isn't just a profession, it's something that I'm personally committed to."

Webb called the issue of food insecurity "pervasive" not just locally but nationally, and has learned that policy directly impacts food insecurity. She went on to discuss the



## City of Binghamton Political Powerhouses Clash in State Senate Bid

messaging around food deserts and how many people working in the advocacy area of food justice now refer to this issue as "food apartheid." This framing takes away the implicit understanding that food deserts are natural occurrences, when in reality they are the direct result of policy choices. She then linked this concept to the lack of access to affordable housing, transportation, business, and poor health outcomes, showing how all of these different socioeconomic determinants compound each other to make matters worse for individuals and families. She explained how walking even one mile in the City of Binghamton to buy groceries is extremely difficult and can be a deterrent to buying healthier food options due to the lack of adequate transportation to and from these resources. Taking an approach to revitalize blighted spaces and adjusting zoning laws, regulations to develop greenspaces, community gardens, and urban farms, are some of the steps in a comprehensive approach to address this issue, according to Webb.

When it comes to addressing predatory landlords who buy up properties and let them deteriorate, the city council passed a

vacant property registration law to instill a system of more accountability for landlords sitting on vacant properties. As a smaller city, Binghamton is restricted when it comes to enforcing these policies and rooting out the cause of issues. Specifically, the level at which fines can be set by the city for these types of violations is severely limited. Webb emphasized the importance of comprehensive plans that understand community-specific issues. If the state government loosens some restrictions on enforcement mechanisms, it would allow for the city to take on absent landlords and actually enforce their vacant property registration law.

Reproductive healthcare access has been put under threat at the state level following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. With the possibility of a nationwide abortion ban if Republicans take back control of the federal government, I asked Webb how New York State can still provide protections to individuals seeking specific reproductive healthcare. Webb emphasized her support for an amendment to the New York State Constitution that would enshrine the right to

# “Public service isn’t just a profession, it’s something that I’m personally committed to.”

– Lea Webb (D), State Senate Candidate

access to proper reproductive healthcare. Webb says that having these protections in the State Constitution would insulate them from political uncertainty and the back and forth typical with such political disputes.

“Expanding resources for education on sexual health, making sure we are a sanctuary state and that people are getting access to the medicines that they need... are a few things. Even with the Constitutional amendment, people still have to a.) Know what’s happening; and b.) Vote for it.” Lea Web (D)

Webb suggests that simply enshrining this right will not be enough. If the amendment is approved, subsequent legislation will be necessary to act as the enforcement mechanism behind protecting such a right. Webb highlights on her campaign website that the lack of access to care discriminately affects people of color, immigrants, those in rural areas, and low income individuals. Ensuring the funding and protection of access for individuals, while also protecting healthcare providers, is critical to establishing New York as a sanctuary state in this context.

**NOTE:** A constitutional amendment in the state of New York has to face final approval from the voters through a referendum where a simple majority of voters is necessary to approve the amendment.

When asked what her first priority would be upon election to the state Senate, Webb stated that moving to pass the aforementioned Equality Amendment is at the top of the list.

Resources surrounding affordable housing were also mentioned alongside the Climate Protection Act from 2019 and resources from the Inflation Reduction Act to lower energy costs.

While Happy Medium did not hear from Rich David’s campaign, the Republican candidate in this election, his campaign website and Facebook page were used to gather information about his platform. Rich David is the former Mayor of the City of Binghamton. David is not a native resident of Binghamton, although he moved to the area more than two decades ago (“About”). He first served as deputy mayor for the city. When the administration he worked for was term limited, he transitioned to a role at SUNY Broome Community College. David once again re-immersed himself in city politics when he ran for mayor in 2013. He was successfully elected in 2013 and reelected in 2017. David could not run for reelection in 2021 due to a two-term limit for Binghamton mayors, making way for then-Deputy Mayor Jared Kraham to succeed him.

David is proud of lowering taxes during his tenure as mayor, along with providing expanded funding for the city’s police department. In 2015, David pushed the city council to allocate \$100,000 to purchase body-worn cameras for all officers in the department (Lorsch 2015). Along with this funding provided to officers, an additional \$20,000 would be allocated to providing officers with updated demographic tracking software, making collection of data pertaining to stops easier to organize and analyze (Lorsch 2015).

His campaign website also emphasizes the David administration’s fight against blight and vacant properties in the city. During his time as mayor, David “demolished more than 100 blighted properties...” (“Rich’s proven track record” 2022).

Several of David’s ads vow a fight against inflation, gas prices, and increased grocery

costs. David has been centralizing his campaign about the global price increases that have occurred due to the supply chain crisis, energy crisis due to the war in Eastern Europe, and many other factors that a New York state senator cannot unilaterally fix themselves. David’s campaign messaging has been similar to Republican campaigns across the country: focusing on reducing inflation, lowering gas prices, and keeping taxes low/cutting taxes. David is also honing in on another hot-button issue for New York Republicans: bail reform. On his website he strongly announces his opposition to the reforms that have been enacted in recent years regarding the bail system.

The newly drawn map for the New York State Senate heavily favors Democratic candidate Lea Webb. According to data found through Dave’s Redistricting, the partisan lean of the 52nd New York Senate district changed from a partisan lean of 52.36% in favor of Republicans in 2018 to 59.55% in favor of Democrats in 2022, all but securing a Democratic victory in the district. David’s popularity and name recognition in the City of Binghamton, however, will play a large role in the final vote totals, and he would need heavily favorable returns from the city and surrounding urban areas to carry him to victory in this district.

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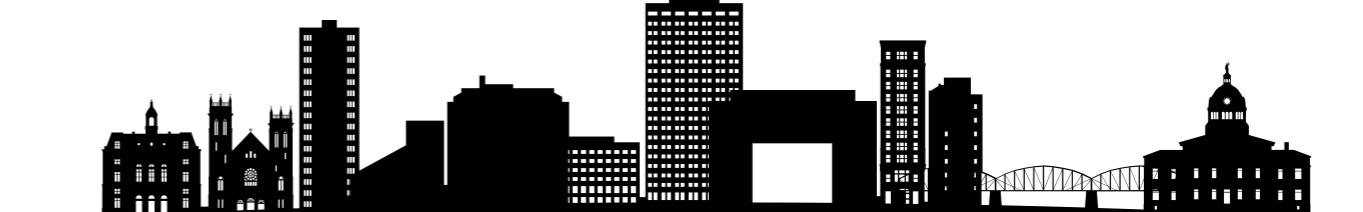
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# NY State Assembly

## District #123

Donna Lupardo vs. Sophia Resciniti

By Zach Aleba

**O**ver a **nearly two-decade** career as a state assemblywoman for New York's 123rd assembly district and a district resident for 40 years, Donna Lupardo (D) has seen it all. According to her opponent Sophia Resciniti (R), this longevity represents the very subject of her chagrin toward the political establishment.

The race for the assembly seat in NY's 123rd district, which encompasses Binghamton and the surrounding towns of Vestal and Union, is a referendum on whether the community favors the mission-based approach of Lupardo or the anti-establishment rhetoric which bolsters Resciniti's campaign.

For Resciniti, whose campaign website describes her as a "mother, wife, small business owner, social worker, and public servant," her campaign represents a desire to unseat those legislative stalwarts who she believes are responsible for the economic downturn of New York State in general, and Binghamton in particular. This is the crux of her campaign for the district's assembly seat and the main point that needs to be understood when considering the motives behind her candidacy.

The first step of her bid for election came in a primary win against the former Deputy Regional Director at Empire State Development turned legislative hopeful Robin

Alpaugh. The win was relatively substantial, with Resciniti receiving nearly 60% of the votes. In an interview with NewsChannel 34's Roy Santa Croce, Resciniti reiterated that the result strengthens her conviction that voters in the 123rd district believe "it's time for a change," and confirms that she hears her potential constituents "loud and clear."

The victory in the primary, while certainly a representation of her mandate among Republican voters, does not necessarily act as a predictor for what may happen in the general election. Lupardo has recently faced little pressure in the Democratic primary, often running unopposed. This leaves her with a stockpile of campaign funds insofar as a financial advantage can be accrued in a local election. This advantage does allow Lupardo more opportunities to distribute her message to the general public in the lead-up to the election.

In addition to this advantage, Lupardo also boasts an extensive record of supporting social issues such as mental health advocacy and recreational/industrial cannabis and hemp legalization, both of which have been hot-button political issues and are sure to make Lupardo appealing to a younger demographic.

Industry is a crucial part of the nine-time incumbent's approach to lifting the community she represents. Agriculture is one such industry that Lupardo has a particular interest in as a potential boon to the region. As the head of the Agriculture Committee, Lupardo has a unique point of view that allows her to envision the long-term benefits for her constituents in investing in agriculture. On October 7, Lupardo spoke with me via Zoom about the race and the upcoming election.



Sophia Resciniti (R)



Donna Lupardo (D)

"I took on the committee on Agriculture, not because I have a lot of farms in my district, which I don't—I have a lot of people who eat." Lupardo envisions a mutually beneficial relationship between neighboring districts, which allows for the producers, such as farmers and brewers, to have an active market for their goods while the consumers likewise have a wide availability of locally grown and cultivated food, alcohol, hemp, and cannabis (among others).

For Lupardo, who moved to the area in the mid-70s to pursue a graduate degree from Binghamton University, public service is an opportunity to give back the best way she knows how. Lupardo, recounting her entry into politics, remarks that her experiences as an adjunct professor at Binghamton University and her subsequent stint working in community mental health services revealed to her the problems in Albany. "I had this interest in policy and issues, but most of [my interest in public service] stemmed from protecting this community and helping this community grow."

It is through firsthand experience that she witnessed the changing fortunes in Binghamton's urban center and the surrounding villages. "I arrived at a heyday starting to deteriorate," Lupardo explained to me. "After I graduated from graduate school, I decided I wanted to stick around. I got interested in helping the community rebuild its manufacturing base and rebuild its mission in life."

Lupardo is fiercely interested in combating the palpable sense of internalized pessimism that she admits exists in Binghamton and the surrounding area. As we discussed her guiding principles for her legislating style, she noted that an ability to listen and empathize is vital to progress. "When people would move here oftentimes the first question would be 'Why would you come to a place like this?... For me, it's understanding how people feel, understanding what they've been through, how their perspective has been changed by this economic decline, and trying to explain how I think I can help [my constituents]."

## Staff Biographies

This disillusionment with the condition of the 123rd district is a parallel between the two campaigns. Resciniti's website, while light on policy plans, does drive home the essence of her campaign for state assembly: the establishment must change drastically to improve the district. Her website pledges to "lower taxes for homeowners and small businesses, term limits to clean up Albany, support [for] our police...fight the bad policies driving out businesses and families." Additionally, her website condemns Albany's bail reform as a "disaster."

The aforementioned issues track closely with recent Republican talking points on a national level, and these identity politics have made for good policy to run on for first-time Republican candidates in a number of elections nationwide. Resciniti is positioning herself as the tough-on-crime, anti-establishment Republican archetype. This tends to appeal to the disillusioned middle class, which sees career politicians as a scourge on the current political climate.

In Lupardo's case, she has legislated in a way that prioritizes reasonable compromise as the only path forward for the region. She notes that she frequently attempts to talk with "the other side of the aisle" on any number of issues, although she acknowledges that economic issues, not social matters, are the areas where compromise is most likely on a regular basis.

Having served 18 consecutive years as a state assemblywoman for the district, Lupardo has no desire to leave her current role, at least not by choice. Lupardo is well aware of the credit she has built within this community through a track record of legislating in what she believes is in the best interest of economic and social development in the area. Lupardo sees herself as a public servant through and through and points to her senior status in the assembly as a position that allows her to affect change in a significant way that a newcomer may not be able to provide.

Although she has a pedigree of winning elections and feels optimistic about her prospects for November 8, Lupardo feels fulfilled with the role that she has served for NY's 123rd district, win or lose. For Lupardo, it has always been a concerted, conscious, and mission-based effort to improve her adopted home. "I've been a huge cheerleader because I chose this place," Lupardo told me. "I chose not only to come here to school, but I chose to stay here and then take on this mission."

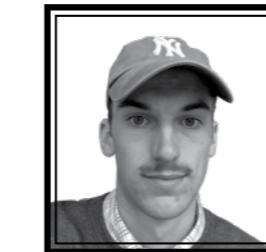
Resciniti, likewise, has a level of confidence as the general election looms just over the horizon. In her interview with Santa Croce, she positioned herself as having "seen the disastrous results of bail reform." While it is an uphill battle to unseat the long-time incumbent in Lupardo, it certainly cannot be said that Resciniti is lacking in conviction or confidence.

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**Zach Aleba** is a senior majoring in English. Prior to attending BU, he earned an A.A. degree in liberal arts from Borough of Manhattan Community College. He hails from Whitney Point, a small town about twenty minutes north of Binghamton. Zach has previously had work published on Parents.com, where he contributed to a young adult advice column. Aside from writing, he enjoys watching mixed martial arts and training Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and spending as much time outdoors as possible.



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## How to Vote in Binghamton

**Election day is November 8!** Voter engagement is essential to a strong democratic republic. Without it, democracy will crumble like the temples of its creators. Make sure to read this election edition of Happy Medium Magazine so that when the time comes to cast your ballot, you are informed and prepared.

Polls in New York are open 6 am – 9 pm.

**On Campus:** if you registered to vote with an on-campus address, you can vote in the University Union on election day.

**Off Campus:** if you registered to vote with a local off-campus address, **scan the QR code to find your polling location.**

Early voting will take place in New York from October 29 to November 6.

