

Will There Be a Red Wave? A Blue Surprise? Here Are House Races to Watch on Tuesday

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Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va., right, talks with a supporter at an early voting location, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2022, in Stafford, Va. (AP Photo/Steve Helber, File)

WASHINGTON — The prognosticators have prognosticated. The pollsters have asked their last round of pre-election questions. Now it's up to the voters to decide whether to stay the course or opt to give Republicans control of one or both chambers of Congress.

While several news cycles in the run-up to the election have spelled good news for the Democrats, including a Friday jobs report that showed U.S. employers adding 261,000 jobs in October, the conventional wisdom continues to be that the Republicans will flip the House on Tuesday.

Some of that, of course, comes down to history, which suggests the president's party is always buffeted by losses in the midterm elections. Some is due to the stubbornness of the current surge in inflation, which caused the Federal Reserve last Wednesday to raise its short-term borrowing rate by 0.75 percentage point to a target range of 3.75%-4% — the highest level since January 2008.

But Democrats still have some hope, thanks in large part to the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, a move that has energized voters, particularly in the suburbs, that may well determine the balance of power.

The great unknown, as always, is turnout. And Republicans need only a net gain of six seats to win the House.

So what's the near final word on the election?

Heading into the final weekend of campaigning, The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter was projecting Republicans would pick up between 12 to 25 seats on Tuesday.

"The scariest Halloween reality for House Democrats is the number of seats President Biden carried comfortably in 2020 that are at genuine risk a week out. And if you're looking for House upsets, the best places to watch might be blue states where there's no competitive statewide races driving turnout," the report said on Friday.

Meanwhile, Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball, out of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, has predicted Republicans will win at least 218 seats in the House, giving them a majority.

Below are races that are well-worth watching on Tuesday:

Virginia's 7th Congressional District

Rep. Abigail Spanberger, a centrist Democrat, former CIA officer and two-term incumbent, has represented Virginia's 7th Congressional District since 2019.

The district includes most of the northern suburbs of Richmond, as well as some exurban territory around Fredericksburg and for weeks, the race has been described as a nail-biter.

The reason, simply, is the effect of redistricting. Instead of stretching north to south across central Virginia, the district has shifted north, and is also now more centered around the I-95 corridor and the rural communities that bracket it.

That has opened the door for her Republican challenger, Yesli Vega, a former police officer, military spouse and county supervisor in Prince William County, which makes up the largest share in the redrawn district.

The race has been one of the nation's most expensive with over \$20 million in independent expenditures, according to OpenSecrets, which tracks campaign spending.

Throughout the campaign, Vega has been relentlessly trying to tie Spanberger's record to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. — a polarizing figure in many rural parts of the country.

As of Friday, the website FiveThirtyEight.com had Spanberger slightly favored to win. The Cook Political Report rated the contest a toss-up, and Sabato's Crystal Ball said the district leans Democratic.

Iowa's 3rd Congressional District

In Iowa's 3rd Congressional District, Democratic incumbent Rep. Cindy Axne is looking to hold off a spirited challenge from

Republican Zach Nunn, a former state senator and state representative.

In 2018, Axne flipped the formerly red district by beating two-term Republican Rep. David Young as part of a midterm blue wave inspired by outrage over the policies and personality of then-President Donald Trump.

Nunn is hoping to flip the district back to red by running on the state of the economy, the management of which he claims the Democrats bungled.

Like Vega in Virginia, Nunn is also hoping to capitalize on the latest redistricting, which added rural parts of southern Iowa to a district that was traditionally centered around the Des Moines metro area.

Axne has responded by touting the benefits of legislation like the American Rescue Plan and the bipartisan infrastructure law.

The race itself is considered one of the most tightly contested in the entire country.

The website FiveThirtyEight.com had Nunn slightly favored to win, while both The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district as leaning toward the GOP.

North Carolina's 13th Congressional District

North Carolina's 13th is a newly created congressional district that runs from the city of Raleigh through two suburbs and then stretches out into two rural counties.

The race features Republican Bo Hines, a 27-year-old former college football player who describes himself as a "MAGA warrior."

He's squaring off against Democratic State Sen. Wiley Nickel, who is running on experience and striving to appeal to center and center-right voters.

Both candidates have spoken extensively about the state of the economy during their campaign appearances, but Hines has also accused Nickel of being soft on crime due to his past work as a criminal defense attorney.

Nickel's campaign has responded by trying to paint Hines as an extremist due to his receiving the endorsement of Republican firebrand Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., and his description of abortion as a form of genocide.

Despite these efforts, FiveThirtyEight.com had Hines slightly favored to win, while The Cook Political Report rated the district a toss-up leaning toward the Republican candidate.

Colorado's 8th Congressional District

Colorado's new 8th Congressional District is also, by design, the state's most narrowly divided politically.

The state's new Independent Redistricting Commission prioritized competitiveness when they drew its lines and the result is a district that leans just 1.3% Democratic, based on the results of eight recent statewide elections.

While that's good news for Democrat Yadira Caraveo, a pediatrician and state legislator, political analysts inside the state say she's still in a dead heat with Republican State Sen. Barbara Kirkmeyer.

In addition to making the 8th essentially a fair-fight district, the redistricting committee also created the state's most ethnically diverse congressional district, with Latinos making up nearly

40% of the population and another 8% being Black, Asian American or Indigenous.

Both candidates have spent a considerable amount of time courting the Latino vote, running ads and distributing flyers in both English and Spanish.

FiveThirtyEight.com rated Kirkmeyer the likely winner in the contest, with The Cook Political Report rating the district a toss-up leaning Republican.

Texas' 34th Congressional District

Rep. Mayra Flores, R-Texas, grabbed the headlines earlier this year after she won a special election in the state's 34th Congressional District over Democrat Dan Sanchez, filling the remainder of Democratic Rep. Filemon Vela's unexpired term.

But the district Flores currently represents and the 34th Congressional District she's now running to represent are very different thanks to redistricting, and she's now engaged in a highly competitive reelection bid against Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, D-Texas, who currently represents the 15th Congressional District.

FiveThirtyEight.com said Friday that the race is now a dead heat. Both The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district a toss-up leaning Republican.

California's 22nd Congressional District

The race for California's 22nd Congressional District will determine if another House Republican who voted to impeach former President Trump for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection will be defeated or if he will continue on for another term.

Incumbent Republican Rep. David Valadao is one of two House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump running for reelection in November.

The other eight either lost their primaries to Trump-backed challengers or chose to not run for reelection.

Valadao is running against Democrat Rudy Salas, a California state assemblyman.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Valadao as slightly favored to win. Both The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district a toss-up leaning Republican.

New Jersey's 11th Congressional District

New Jersey's 11th Congressional District was dominated by Republicans for more than 30 years until Democrat Rep. Mikie Sherrill ran in the 2018 midterm elections.

Since then, the star of the former Navy helicopter pilot and federal assistant prosecutor has only continued to rise.

She's actively discussed as a possible future U.S. Senate candidate or a candidate for the governor's office in 2025.

Political analysts in the state said winning a third term this year would cement her status as the frontrunner for either job.

She is running against former Passaic County Assistant Prosecutor Paul DeGroot, a Republican who is taking the unusual step this year of telling voters he's actually not against all things Democratic and considers Joe Biden to be his legitimate president.

While the race, on paper, looks like a laugh for Sherrill — FiveThirtyEight.com has said she's clearly favored to win — DeGroot has been picking up pockets of support.

Sabato's Crystal Ball rates the district as likely Democratic.

Michigan's 7th Congressional District

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., represents one of only a handful of districts that President Trump and a Democratic House candidate both won in 2020.

She was first elected in 2018 by a few percentage points and won reelection in 2020 by about the same margin.

This year, she is facing Republican Tom Barrett, a Michigan state senator and member of the state's National Guard.

Barrett raised his profile before the race by being a persistent, vocal opponent of Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's use of emergency powers during the coronavirus pandemic.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Slotkin as slightly favored to win. Both The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district a toss-up.

Nebraska 2nd Congressional District

Three-term incumbent Republican Rep. Don Bacon won his last election by over 4 percentage points despite the fact his district was the only one in the state to go for Joe Biden in the presidential contest.

That showing would have appeared to set Bacon up for a relatively easy reelection bid this year, but his Democratic opponent, State Sen. Tony Vargas has proven to have real staying power in the race.

In a sign of how important that district is to both parties, House Minority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., have both campaigned in the state in recent weeks on behalf of their respective candidates.

FiveThirtyEight.com rates Bacon as clearly favored to win, but neither The Cook Political Report or Sabato's Crystal Ball is as confident. Both rate the district a toss-up, leaning Republican.

New Jersey's 7th Congressional District

The contest here is one of the year's rare rematches of a 2020 contest, and it happens to be occurring in a district with a long history of swinging between the parties.

Incumbent Democratic Rep. Tom Malinowski defeated Republican Thomas Kean Jr., the son of a former governor and former minority leader of the state Senate, by only 5,000 votes last time around — roughly 1% of the votes cast.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Kean favored to win. Sabato's Crystal Ball says the district is leaning Republican.

New Hampshire's 1st Congressional District

Two characteristics tend to define elections in New Hampshire's 1st Congressional District: they are always hotly contested and no one in recent memory seems to be able to win more than two consecutive terms there.

Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas is trying to beat the odds in his run for a third term against Republican Karoline Leavitt, a 25-year-old former assistant in the Trump administration's press office.

During the Republican primary race, in which she defeated Matt Mowers, a former Trump campaign staffer who later worked in the State Department, Leavitt was endorsed by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo.

Political analysts have said since the outset of the contest that Pappas is potentially one of the most vulnerable Democratic incumbents as Republicans seek to retake the House.

FiveThirtyEight.com, however, now has him slightly favored to win on Tuesday, while The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball have the district rated a toss-up leaning Democratic.

Oregon's 6th Congressional District

Another newly drawn congressional district, the contest here has Democratic State Rep. Andrea Salinas squaring off against Republican Mike Erickson, a supply chain consultant.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Salinas slightly favored to win on Tuesday. The Cook Political Report rates the district a toss-up leaning Democratic.

Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional District

Incumbent Democratic Rep. Jim Langevin opted not to seek reelection this year after holding this seat for two decades.

Seth Magaziner, the general treasurer of Rhode Island, is the Democrat hoping to hold onto the state for his party. He is running against Republican Allan Fung, the former mayor of the city of Cranston.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Magaziner slightly favored to win on Tuesday. Both the Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district a toss-up leaning Democratic.

Washington's 8th Congressional District

Two-term Democratic incumbent Rep. Kim Schrier is facing off against Republican candidate Matt Larkin, a one-time speechwriter for former President George W. Bush.

Biden won the district in 2020 by 7 percentage points, FiveThirtyEight.com favors Schrier to win. The Cook Political Report rates the seat as a toss-up, while Sabato's Crystal Ball has the district leaning Democratic.

Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District

Another district currently represented by a retiring lawmaker.

Democratic Rep. Ron Kind announced last year that he would not be seeking reelection, after serving in the House for 25 years.

The open seat is now considered one of Republicans' best pickup opportunities in the House.

The contest features Democratic State Sen. Brad Pfaff and a retired Navy SEAL, Republican Derrick Van Orden, who lost against Kind in 2020 as the GOP nominee.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Van Orden favored to win. Sabato's Crystal Ball also puts the district in the likely column for the GOP.

New York's 3rd Congressional District

Democratic Rep. Tom Suozzi's decision to forgo reelection in the 3rd congressional district in favor of a quixotic campaign for governor has opened the door to a Republican potentially grabbing a win in a district, which includes parts of Nassau County, on Long Island, and parts of Queens.

The race features Democrat Robert Zimmerman, a businessman, and Republican nominee George Santos, a financier, who are both openly gay — something that's not happened before in a congressional contest.

Zimmerman has the higher profile of the two, having been a long-time Democrat and a frequent guest talking politics on local television, while Santos ran and lost against Suozzi two years ago.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Zimmerman slightly favored to win this year, while both The Cook Political Report and Sabato's Crystal Ball rate the district a toss-up leaning Democratic.

New York's 4th Congressional District

Another potential pickup for the Republicans.

This race features Republican Anthony D'Esposito and Democrat Laura Gillen, both of whom have deep political ties to the town of Hempstead, on the populous south shore of Long Island's Nassau County.

D'Esposito, a former New York Police Department detective, is a current member of the Hempstead town board; Gillen is a former Hempstead town supervisor.

Not surprisingly, D'Esposito has made crime and the economy major pillars of his campaign. Gillen, meanwhile has been running on protecting abortion rights and strengthening gun control laws.

As the campaign has drawn to a close, D'Esposito has been buffeted by newspaper reports that he had difficulty following the rules during his time as a police detective.

Records obtained by the New York Daily News show that in 2015 D'Esposito's gun was stolen after he left it unattended in a car. He was found guilty of failing to secure a firearm and had to fork over 20 vacation days as punishment.

The records show that he was also investigated in 2007, with the department concluding he "wrongfully engaged in conduct prejudicial to the good order, efficiency or discipline of the department." The punishment was the loss of 15 vacation days.

The prejudicial conduct in question included working as a DJ and serving alcohol without permission, according to NYPD records.

Mike Deery, a campaign spokesperson, told the Daily News, that the theft of D'Esposito's gun is an example of why Congress

needs people like him to crack down on crime.

“Just as many residents have fallen prey to dangerous criminals, Detective D’Esposito had his police firearm stolen from a gun safe that was bolted to the chassis of the vehicle he used as the volunteer chief of the Island Park Fire Department,” Deery said.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Gillen favored to win this year. The Cook Political Report, however, rates the district as a toss-up.

New York’s 25th Congressional District

For weeks this race in a deeply blue district was considered a slam dunk for incumbent Democratic Rep. Joe Morelle, though a last minute \$275,000 ad buy by the House Majority PAC suggests the party has gotten worried about signs that his Republican opponent, La’Ron Singletary, is gaining ground.

Like D’Esposito, Singletary, a former Rochester police chief, has staked his campaign on rising crime rates in New York.

Singletary’s tenure at Rochester’s police department ended shortly after the death of Daniel Prude, a Black man who died in March 2020 after being physically restrained by Rochester police officers.

He has accused Morelle of not speaking out against those who support the “defund the police” movement.

FiveThirtyEight.com has Morelle clearly favored to win on Tuesday. But The Cook Political Report has downgraded the district from solidly Democratic to merely likely Democratic.

California’s 47th Congressional District

Democratic Rep. Katie Porter is seeking a third term, running against Republican Scott Baugh, an attorney who previously

served in the California state assembly and is a former Orange County Republican Party chair.

Like other incumbent Democrats this year, redistricting has made Porter's district much more competitive than in elections past.

Despite this, FiveThirtyEight.com still has Porter favored to win on Tuesday and Sabato's Crystal Ball rates the district leaning Democratic. The Cook Political Report, meanwhile, moved the district from leaning Democratic to a toss-up.