



## MEMORANDUM

July 12, 2020

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FR:** Nicole Hobbs, Executive Director, EveryDistrict

**RE:** **Predicting the States in November:** The Promise of a Major Democratic Wave

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Over the past three years, EveryDistrict has aggregated unique data resources in the state legislative landscape. These resources have included our public Legislative District Index, which reliably assesses the competitiveness of state legislative districts across the country,<sup>1</sup> and the [Purple States Report](#), the only public analysis of the demographics of the most critical state legislative districts available online.

This memorandum summarizes our analysis of how the current polling in the presidential race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden could affect state legislative outcomes in twelve critical states in November 2020. Here are the key findings:

- In a tight 2020 election scenario, Democrats would be expected to only win the Minnesota Senate and Pennsylvania House.
- If Biden continues to perform at his present polling and his margins are matched by downballot candidates, Democrats could add eight additional chambers:
  - Arizona Senate and House;
  - Florida House;
  - Iowa House;
  - Michigan House;
  - Minnesota Senate;
  - North Carolina House; and
  - Pennsylvania House.
- Democrats are in competitive positions to beat Republican supermajorities in:
  - Kansas Senate and House; and
  - Ohio Senate and House.
- Biden's current polling permits Democrats to pick up major gains and have a chance at a majority in:
  - Georgia House;
  - Iowa Senate;
  - North Carolina Senate;
  - Texas House; and
  - Wisconsin Senate and Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> Our 2020 reality-check found that EveryDistrict LDI scores were 93% correlated with 2018 and 2019 election results.



- In our 12 studied states (and 20 studied chambers), Democrats could win as many as 112 districts in a convincing Biden victory or as few as 40 districts.
- The obstacles to Democrats realizing these gains include:
  - Candidate recruitment and quality;
  - Fundraising; and
  - Downballot drop-off effects.

### Our Analysis Approach

We developed a conservative and optimistic estimate for potential state legislative gains in 2020. Our conservative model replicates conditions from 2018 performance at the state legislative level. While 2018 was a positive year for Democrats up and down the ballot, state-level gains were more muted in the state legislative races that are currently at the center of the battle for the states. Our optimistic model takes our Legislative District Index for each chamber and incorporates a “Biden bounce.” The LDI provides a score for the relative competitiveness of each district. That district-level score is rooted in a state-level baseline. In a convincing victory scenario, we would see Democrats outperform the LDI of their district consistent with Biden’s overperformance in their district. The number of district pickups in each model run are summarized in the table below.

State	Chamber	District Wins Needed	Conservative Model Pickups	Optimistic Model Pickups
Arizona	Senate	3	1	<b>3</b>
	House	2	0	<b>4</b>
Florida	Senate	4	1	2
	House	14	2	<b>16</b>
Georgia	Senate	8	0	1
	House	16	3	6
Iowa	Senate	8	3	<b>6</b>
	House	4	3	<b>7</b>
Kansas	Senate	3*	2	<b>3*</b>
	House	1*	0	<b>2*</b>
Michigan	House	4	3	<b>8</b>
Minnesota	Senate	2	0	<b>5</b>
North Carolina	Senate	5	1	3
	House	6	0	<b>6</b>
Ohio	Senate	3*	1	<b>3*</b>
	House	2*	1	<b>6*</b>
Pennsylvania	Senate	5	2	3
	House	9	8	<b>23<sup>2</sup></b>
Texas	House	9	3	7

<sup>2</sup> While this gain seems large, Senator Casey and Governor Wolf won 30 seats held by Republicans in 2018.



State	Chamber	District Wins Needed	Conservative Model Pickups	Optimistic Model Pickups
Wisconsin	Senate	3	1	2
	Assembly	14	5	10
<b>Totals</b>		<b>116</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>112</b>

*\*Asterisked states include the numbers needed to beat the Republican supermajority.*

## Obstacles to Success

*Candidate Recruitment and Quality* – This year, Democrats have recruited a banner class of candidates who are well-poised to perform well in these districts. However, there are still gaps in Democratic recruitment and there are still many Republican incumbents with strong connections to their districts. Additional support is needed for candidates to effectively message against these well-liked incumbents.

*Fundraising* – Even with Democratic top-of-the-ticket performance where it needs to be for a big night in November, far too few Democratic state legislative candidates have the resources they need to successfully compete. We have written articles in April and June this year already on the continued fundraising challenges.

*Downballot Drop-off* – Without the resources they need or endorsements from well-known top-of-the-ticket candidates, many Democratic state legislative candidates will suffer from the effects of so-called downballot drop-off. Too often, Democratic candidates at the state legislative level lose because Democrats voting for federal offices do not make their way to these state districts. That can lead to underperformance even if Biden wins in the 100+ districts where his current margin could create an opportunity.

## About EveryDistrict

EveryDistrict PAC is a political organization focused on winning state legislatures through data and dollars. EveryDistrict's analysis of the competitiveness of every state legislative district is available at [www.EveryDistrict.us/The-EveryDistrict-Map](http://www.EveryDistrict.us/The-EveryDistrict-Map). Since 2017, EveryDistrict has provided direct financial contributions to over 100 state legislative candidates across seven states through grassroots fundraising efforts.