

# WASHINGTON

# WEEKLY



A Publication for Transamerica Political Action Committee Members

July 14, 2020

## In This Issue

[This Week in Congress](#)

[Democrats set sights on expanding House majority amid GOP troubles](#)

[Trump administration carries out first federal execution since 2003](#)

[Joe Biden Set to Release \\$2 Trillion Climate Agenda](#)

[7 things to watch on Tuesday's big primary day](#)

[2020 Primary Elections](#)

[PAC Events](#)

[Did You Know?](#)

[Trivia](#)

[Special Acknowledgements](#)

[2020 PAC Benefits](#)

## Transamerica CAN Website Update

Wondering whether you're registered to vote, or how to register if you're not? Were you planning a trip to visit D.C. that's been put on hold due to COVID, but still want to visit virtually? Come check out the new and improved [Transamerica Citizen Action Network website](#) to see all of this, plus updated features that include a new Transamerica PAC homepage, interactive candidate disbursement map, voting info, and much more.

## This Week in Congress

The House is in session this week and will conduct several hearings. No floor activity is expected.

House Appropriations will hold markups throughout the week on numerous FY2021 appropriations bills. Financial Services will hold hearings examining worker protections during the pandemic, as well as a hearing on oversight of mortgage servicers' implementation of the CARES Act.

House Administration will hold a hearing exploring the feasibility and security of technology to conduct remote voting in the House, and Small Business will conduct a hearing on oversight of pandemic programs at SBA and Treasury.

## 7 things to watch on Tuesday's big primary day

*Ally Mutnick and James Arkin, Politico*

Democrats will all but finalize their roster of candidates for a Senate takeover bid in Tuesday's primaries.

They will pick a candidate to take on Sen. Susan Collins in Maine, with state House Speaker Sara Gideon the heavy favorite to win that state's ranked-choice primary. Democrats will also pick a nominee in Texas — amid a push to turn the state blue in 2020, two years after Beto O'Rourke nearly knocked off Sen. Ted Cruz.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump's involvement in GOP primaries all around the country faces more major tests — including two races in which he has personal stakes in the outcomes.

Trump's former attorney general, Jeff Sessions, is running in a GOP primary runoff for his old Senate seat in Alabama. But Trump, still aggrieved by Sessions' 2017 decision to recuse himself from the Justice Department's investigation into the 2016 election, has piled on Sessions — not only endorsing his opponent, Tommy Tuberville, but openly mocking Sessions' comeback attempt.

Trump's endorsement has made Tuberville the favorite in Tuesday's runoff, but it's less clear if the president's backing will boost Ronny Jackson, his former White House physician, who is locked in a tight race for a Republican-heavy House seat in the Texas Panhandle.

Here are seven things POLITICO's campaign team is watching on Tuesday:

### **Jeff Sessions' last stand**

Trump has made it clear how much he despises Sessions. But will the Alabama Republicans who voted for Sessions for decades abandon him for Trump's candidate?

Sessions made a last-minute entrance into the GOP primary for his old Senate seat last fall, hoping there was enough remaining goodwill from his two decades serving the state to propel him to another term and rehabilitate his image. But since then, little has gone to plan.

Trump endorsed Tommy Tuberville, the former Auburn University football coach, a week after Tuberville edged Sessions for first place in the March 3 primary. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, what was supposed to be a March 31 runoff was postponed until July 14

Since the primary, Tuberville has done little to engage with Sessions, keeping the focus of the race for the most part on the former senator and the president. Sessions has called Tuberville weak for refusing to debate and framed him as a carpetbagger for moving to the state to run for office. Tuberville's allies have brushed off those attacks as unlikely to move voters more than Trump's endorsement.

The race is critical to Republicans' hopes to keep the Senate. Democratic Sen. Doug Jones, who won the 2017 special election to fill Sessions' old seat, is the most vulnerable senator on the ballot this fall. But he has a massive financial advantage and has been running positive ads focused on his record, while the Republicans battle it out for months.

If Sessions pulls off the upset, he'll need to quickly repair his relationship with Trump's most ardent supporters — and potentially with the president himself, if that remains possible. If Tuberville wins, he'll need to prepare for a general election against a tough opponent who was the first Democrat to win a Senate race in the state in decades.

## **Can Democrats get their candidate in Texas?**

Senate Democrats have faced a handful of primaries in recent months testing their preferred candidates in battleground states. Texas is the final competitive intraparty clash before the party can turn its full attention to the fall.

MJ Hegar, a combat veteran who narrowly lost a 2018 House race, won the March 3 primary but fell far short of a majority needed to win the nomination against GOP Sen. John Cornyn. Hegar faces a runoff Tuesday against state Sen. Royce West, who narrowly finished in second place in the primary.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and EMILY's List endorsed Hegar, who has outraised and outspent West. But the longtime state lawmaker has influential endorsements in the state that could help propel him in a tight contest.

The race has turned bitter in the final stretch, with West and Hegar exchanging significant attacks, according to the Dallas Morning News. They've also gotten a push from Cornyn's campaign, which has been meddling in the race by boosting West's profile with attacks calling him too liberal for Texas, which could be viewed as a positive attribute for primary voters.

If Hegar wins Tuesday, the DSCC will have a perfect record this year in primary endorsements after an aggressive strategy of backing candidates in nearly every single competitive primary.

But the general election could prove an uphill battle, even as Texas shows signs of being vulnerable for Republicans. Cornyn starts the campaign with \$14.5 million in the bank, compared with just \$1.6 million for Hegar (and far less for West), giving the incumbent a major edge over his emerging opponent. And even polling that shows Joe Biden running neck and neck with Trump in a state that hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1976 also shows Cornyn with leads over both Democrats.

## **A huge clash — a major windfall for Gideon — awaits in Maine**

Gideon and Collins have been running general election campaigns against each other for months — but on Tuesday it will all-but-certainly become official. And her fight for a fifth term will easily be the toughest and most expensive campaign of Collins' career.

Gideon still has to dispatch Betsy Sweet and Bre Kidman, two other Democrats who have failed to gain significant traction. Gideon has taken criticism from her opponents and from Republicans for not debating more during the primary, but the race has never appeared to be particularly close.

Gideon's campaign announced she raised more than \$9 million in the second quarter, which is more than the Democrats who ran against Collins in 2008 and 2014 raised for their entire campaigns combined, according to Federal Election Commission records. Collins has also significantly upped her fundraising from previous campaigns, which she won without much trouble.

Both campaigns have been in full-scale, general-election mode for months, running millions of dollars in TV ads and airing a mixture of positive spots about their own record and early attacks against each other. Major outside groups in both parties have also been on the air, though Democrats have outspent their GOP counterparts.

All that amounts to what is likely already the most expensive race in Maine history. Still, the money is going to increase after Wednesday. In 2018, a crowd-funding effort to support Collins' future opponent was created to fund her opponent if she voted to confirm Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. After Collins' dramatic

vote for Kavanaugh, Gideon stands to be the recipient of that money, which will be a significant boost for her campaign coffers.

### **Is Trump's former doctor heading to Congress?**

The primary runoff for this deep-red swath of the Texas Panhandle pits Trump's former White House physician against Josh Winegarner, who is endorsed by the outgoing incumbent, Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas).

Jackson — a retired Navy rear admiral famous for his effusive praise of the president's health — caught two big breaks in his attempt to break out in a massive field ahead of the first round of the primary: He nabbed a coveted Twitter endorsement from Trump and then found a national platform on cable news, using his medical background to discuss the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet Winegarner has a large head start over Jackson; he beat him in the March 3 primary by 19 points. And he has outspent Jackson by about \$200,000 as of late June.

A Jackson loss would be a tough blow for Trump, whose near-perfect record in congressional endorsements has taken a hit in recent weeks. He waded into a North Carolina congressional primary runoff to endorse his chief of staff's pick — only to see her routed by a 24-year-old, first-time candidate. He also backed GOP Rep. Scott Tipton of Colorado, who lost his seat last month in a shocking upset.

### **House Republicans pick candidates in Texas and Maine targets**

The GOP will finally crown nominees in what are expected to be two of the most competitive House races in the country.

Three Republicans are vying for a chance to take on Democratic Rep. Jared Golden of Maine: former state Rep. Dale Crafts, 2018 Senate nominee Eric Brakey and Adrienne Bennett, a former aide to then-Gov. Paul LePage. But the contest is very likely heading to a ranked-choice runoff, which is required by law if no one hits 50 percent on the first ballot.

At least one independent public poll suggests Crafts is in a commanding position to win the nomination. Brakey is the top fundraiser, but Crafts has a compelling personal story — a motorcycle accident left him paralyzed from the waist down — and an endorsement from LePage.

It will be a top battleground no matter who emerges from the primary. Trump carried this rural Maine district by 10 points in 2016, and Golden won it last cycle in a ranked-choice runoff after the votes of two third-party candidates were redistributed.

Meanwhile, Republicans are locked in a vitriolic runoff for a suburban Houston seat that is among the most diverse in the nation. GOP megadonor Kathaleen Wall has spent millions on TV ads tarring Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls for his response to the sex trafficking crisis in his community. (Another ad says China "poisoned our people" with the coronavirus.)

Nehls, who won the March primary by 21 points, is favored to nab the nomination — but he'll emerge from the race with no money and high negatives. Meanwhile, Democrat Sri Kulkarni avoided a runoff and is sitting on \$1.1 million in his campaign account.

### **Democrats tap nominees in two Texas battlegrounds**

House Democrats will choose nominees in two competitive Texas seats that will have big implications on the House majority.

The primary runoff for retiring GOP Rep. Kenny Marchant's seat in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs has become especially heated. The Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and some progressives have lined up behind Candace Valenzuela, a former school board member who was homeless as a child. Veterans' groups have coalesced behind Kim Olson, a retired Air Force colonel who ran statewide in 2018. Olson took first place in the March primary, but a recent Data for Progress poll showed Valenzuela ahead by double digits.

The seat has all the trappings of a Democratic pickup. Marchant barely won this seat in 2018 against an underfunded challenger, and Trump's 2016 victory margin was 16 points smaller than Mitt Romney's in 2012. In a sprawling central Texas seat, which spans from Austin to the Houston suburbs, 2018 nominee Mike Siegel will face off against physician Pritesh Gandhi. 314 Action, an outside group that supports Democratic scientists and doctors, has been spending to boost Gandhi, but Siegel won the first round by 11 points and has residual name ID from his last run. And because Gandhi is a practicing doctor, the pandemic has hampered his ability to campaign and fundraise.

Yet some national Democrats worry that Siegel, who supports "Medicare for All" and the "Green New Deal," is a poor fit for Rep. Mike McCaul's seat that Trump carried by 9 points.

### **Safe red seats and a potential Pete Sessions comeback bid**

Former Rep. Pete Sessions, a former chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, is attempting a comeback bid 100 miles south of the Dallas-area seat he lost in the 2018 midterms. That has put him at odds with the retiring incumbent, GOP Rep. Bill Flores, and other local officials who are aligned behind businesswoman Renee Swann.

Sessions led the crowded primary field in March, beating Swann 32 percent to 19 percent. But he has yet to post the prolific fundraising for which he was renowned and is facing accusations of carpetbagging.

Two seats are open this cycle after retirements by Republican Reps. Bradley Byrne and Martha Roby in Alabama. Both of Tuesday's runoffs quickly turned into a race to see who is the Trumpiest.

In Roby's district, the contest is between businessman Jeff Coleman and ex-state Rep. Barry Moore, who claims to be the first elected official in the country to back Trump. Former state Sen. Bill Hightower faces Mobile County Commissioner Jerry Carl for the nomination to replace Byrne, who finished third in the Senate primary behind Tuberville and Sessions.

Tuesday will be a big test for the Club for Growth's influence, which has backed Hightower and Moore.

## **Joe Biden Set to Release \$2 Trillion Climate Agenda**

*Timothy Puko and Eliza Collins, The Wall Street Journal*

Former Vice President Joe Biden is set to lay out a \$2 trillion investment proposal Tuesday for a progressive and far-reaching green infrastructure program, according to senior Biden campaign officials.

The program fully merges climate policy with economic development over a framework of four years, a more ambitious investment and accelerated timeline compared with the \$1.7 trillion over a decade he had proposed last summer. The investment is part of a broader economic plan the presumptive Democratic nominee began releasing last week, when he announced a \$700 billion economic-revival program.

It would attempt to eliminate carbon emissions from the power grid by 2035, put Americans into electric vehicles and zero-emissions mass transit, and rebuild roads, bridges and other infrastructure. The plan would devote spending to minority communities and bolster rules to support unions, part of a promise to ensure the benefits go primarily to the poor and working class.

Mr. Biden is seeking to draw parallels between climate change and the coronavirus pandemic as he makes the case for his wide-sweeping initiative. He blames President Trump for a slow response to the outbreak and for feeding an economic decline by failing to heed scientific advisers.

Climate change is another impending crisis, the Biden campaign says in its plan, promising to take guidance from scientists. The plan's emphasis on urgent progress mirrors recommendations from the United Nations-led scientific panel that says the world must drastically reduce and even reverse greenhouse-gas emissions in the coming decades to avoid climate change's most catastrophic outcomes.

The Trump administration has ignored that report and Mr. Trump personally said he doesn't believe the U.S. government's own dire scientific assessments of climate change. His administration has been undoing much of the country's climate policy as part of a deregulatory agenda, calling Obama-administration initiatives legal overreach that hamper U.S. manufacturing and energy businesses.

Mr. Biden's climate plan adds to the more than \$7 trillion in new federal spending Mr. Biden has proposed over the next 10 years, according to campaign and think-tank estimates.

Biden officials said the program would be paid for with a mix of tax increases on corporations and the wealthy and stimulus spending, likely related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Mr. Biden has previously released a tax plan that would revert the top individual income-tax rate for individuals with incomes above \$400,000 from 37% under current law to 39.6%. He would also raise the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%.

Mr. Biden is set to announce the policy Tuesday afternoon in Wilmington, Del.

A campaign official said the plan would be a mix of executive action and congressional legislation. The House is currently led by Democrats but Republicans hold the Senate, posing a likely obstacle to some of Mr. Biden's biggest promises if they remain in control.

"The reality is we'll be facing a country that will be in dire need of the types of investment that will be made here," said a campaign official. "He is of course making sure he is campaigning in every state needed to make sure we win every Senate seat we possibly can to further that goal."

Mr. Biden has been criticized by some progressives who were looking for a more aggressive approach to climate change. During the primary, activists from climate groups such as the Sunrise Movement showed up at his events to protest.

However, since Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who had proposed investing \$16 trillion over a decade into a climate agenda, dropped out of the race in April, Mr. Biden and his aides have been in discussion with members of these groups and other activists.

Last week, a task force made up of allies of both Messrs. Biden and Sanders released a set of recommendations focused on how to tackle climate change, including eliminating carbon emissions from power plants by 2035 and creating a climate corps and climate-justice initiatives. Mr. Biden has adopted variations of those plans on his own.

Despite the progressive proposal, a campaign official said Mr. Biden's stance on fracking hasn't changed. He intends to ban it, but only for oil and gas production from federal lands, not more broadly as his public comments have sometimes suggested.

## Trump administration carries out first federal execution since 2003 after late-night Supreme Court intervention

*Mark Berman, The Washington Post*

The Trump administration on Tuesday morning carried out the first federal execution since 2003, following a series of court battles and a Supreme Court order, released shortly after 2 a.m., clearing the way for the lethal injection to take place.

Federal officials executed Daniel Lewis Lee, 47, who was convicted in 1999 of killing a family of three, at a penitentiary in Terre Haute, Ind. Lee was pronounced dead at 8:07 a.m. Tuesday, the Bureau of Prisons said.

"I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, but I'm not a murderer," Lee said when asked if he wanted to make a final statement, according to the pool report. His final words were: "You're killing an innocent man."

Although the death penalty has been in decline nationwide for years, with executions and death sentences down significantly, the Justice Department has publicly pushed against that trend for nearly a year. The department has argued in court and in public statements that it needed to carry out lawful sentences, citing the gravity of the crimes involved.

Last year, the department laid out a new lethal injection protocol — using one drug, pentobarbital — and said it would begin carrying out executions, leading to extended legal challenges. Attorney General William P. Barr had said recently that officials "owe it to the victims of these horrific crimes, and to the families left behind."

On Monday, Lee's lethal injection — originally scheduled for 4 p.m. that afternoon — was left on hold following a judge's order that he and other death-row inmates could pursue their court cases arguing that the new lethal-injection protocol is unconstitutional.

An appeals court said late Monday that it would not let the executions take place as planned, but a divided Supreme Court weighed in overnight saying they could proceed.

In an unsigned 5-4 order, the court's conservative justices said the prisoners on death row had "not made the showing required to justify last-minute intervention."

"It is our responsibility to ensure that method-of-execution challenges to lawfully issued sentences are resolved fairly and expeditiously, so that the question of capital punishment can remain with the people and their representatives, not the courts, to resolve," said the opinion, which quoted court precedents.

Although the author is unclear, the opinion was the work of Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel A. Alito Jr., Neil M. Gorsuch and Brett M. Kavanaugh.

The court has just finished a term that at times blurred the ideological lines that divide the justices. But the death penalty remains an area where their differences remain stark.

The court's four liberal justices wrote two dissents. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan, said that the court was "hastily" ending the inmates' challenges and that as a

result, there would “be no meaningful judicial review of the grave, fact-heavy challenges” they brought. Justice Stephen G. Breyer, joined by Ginsburg, reiterated his view that the court should examine whether the death penalty itself is unconstitutional.

Media witnesses at Lee’s execution on Tuesday morning saw him strapped to a gurney and with an IV in his left arm and both arms restrained, according to the pool report. When the lethal drug was being injected, his breathing appeared to become labored, his chest eventually stopped moving and his lips appeared to turn blue.

Ruth Friedman, an attorney for Lee, decried the government’s decision to execute him during the coronavirus pandemic.

“It is beyond shameful that the government, in the end, carried out this execution in haste, in the middle of the night, while the country was sleeping,” she said in a statement. “We hope that upon awakening, the country will be as outraged as we are.”

Lee had challenged his execution on his own and along with other death-row inmates. Relatives of victims in his case had also fought against his execution, asking that it be called off or at least postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, saying they would have to put their lives at risk to witness his death.

Lee and another man were convicted of murdering three people, including Nancy Mueller and her 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Powell. He and this other man, Chevie Kehoe, were part of a group intending to create a white supremacist community in the Pacific Northwest, and they traveled to Arkansas in 1996, where they robbed and murdered William Mueller, a firearms dealer, along with his wife and the child, court records show. The men placed plastic bags over their heads and threw them into a bayou, the records show.

Three of their relatives opposed the execution, which was first scheduled to take place last year before being delayed several months by other court challenges. They said it was unfair that Lee was given a death sentence while Kehoe, who officials described as the ringleader in the killings, was sentenced instead to life in prison, a position echoed later by the judge and lead prosecutor from the trial.

In a court case filed last week, the three relatives — Earlene Peterson, Nancy Mueller’s mother; Kimma Gurel, Mueller’s sister; and Monica Veillette, her niece — had asked that the execution be postponed. Although they did not support the execution, the relatives said, they still felt obligated to attend.

But all three said they have existing health issues, so they faced “grave risk” if they traveled during the pandemic and went to a federal prison. They asked that it be postponed so they did not have to choose between staying home or risking infection.

“No other family should have to make this decision . . . the families of victims should not be put in a position where they have to risk their lives or give up their right” as a witness, Veillette said in an interview. “That is not how we should be treating the families of victims in this country.”

Lee’s execution had been put on hold and then cleared to proceed multiple times in recent days. A federal judge in Indiana last week blocked it from proceeding because of the relatives’ court challenge, while an appeals court panel on Sunday evening said it could take place.

The relatives ultimately decided not to travel to Indiana because they had determined that the health risks were too great. The appeals court’s ruling also came too late for them to travel as planned, they said.

Then on Monday morning, a federal judge blocked the government from executing Lee or two other men scheduled to face lethal injections this week. Wesley Purkey, who was convicted in 2003 of raping and

murdering Jennifer Long, a teenage girl, and Dustin Lee Honken, who was convicted in 2004 of killing five people, including two young girls.

Purkey's execution is scheduled for Wednesday, although another court has temporarily stayed it on other grounds, while Honken's is scheduled for Friday. The Justice Department is also asking the Supreme Court to let Purkey's execution proceed, but the court has not ruled on that yet.

In a separate case, spiritual advisers for Purkey and Honken are seeking to have their executions delayed and arguing that they face health risks if they minister during the pandemic.

U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan of the District of Columbia wrote in an order Monday that she was blocking all of their executions, and another set for August, because it was necessary to let the inmates' legal challenges to the government's lethal-injection protocol play out in court. They had argued that lethal injection is unconstitutional, saying it amounts to cruel and unusual punishment.

The Justice Department quickly appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and the Supreme Court. Late Monday night, hours after Lee's execution was originally scheduled, the D.C. Circuit appeals court declined to let the lethal injections proceed and said the inmates' challenges could move forward.

In its early morning orders on Tuesday, the Supreme Court also rejected a case brought to them by the relatives of victims in Lee's case, seeking to have his execution postponed because of their coronavirus-related fears. The court denied that without comment.

## Democrats set sights on expanding House majority amid GOP troubles

*Rachel Bade, The Washington Post*

Just two months ago, House Republicans had been upbeat about their 2020 prospects following the surprise victory of GOP Rep. Mike Garcia in a California special election to replace Democratic Rep. Katie Hill, who had resigned.

But President Trump's bungled coronavirus response, and his embrace of Confederate statues and other divisive messages in the wake of the nationwide racial justice protests, are now causing heartburn for downballot Republicans, allowing Democrats to go on offense in hopes of expanding their majority in the House, where they hold 233 seats.

In recent days, nonpartisan political handicappers have moved several races in Texas as well as GOP seats in suburban areas from Indiana to Pennsylvania in Democrats' favor. At the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, political aides are eyeing races in Alaska and Montana, two GOP-held states the party never dreamed would be potentially in play.

Across the nation, Democrats and Democratic candidates are also announcing impressive fundraising hauls, war chests that House lawmakers say will fortify their changes at growing their numbers next Congress.

"Today, we would pick up seats," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) predicted in an interview, noting that the environment has shifted considerably in recent weeks — but also that it could shift again. "We didn't have a pandemic six months ago. We didn't have beautiful George Floyd losing his life before our very eyes two months ago. And we didn't have Russian threats to our troops in Afghanistan one month ago, so who knows what comes next?"

The shift in fortunes marks a turnabout for House Democrats, who originally predicted trouble for 31 members representing seats Trump won in 2016. As recently as February, the party was sweating Republican attempts to tie their vulnerable members in swing districts to prominent self-described democratic socialists such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) as well as progressive policies such as Medicare-for-all and the Green New Deal. Some also feared political blowback for their votes to impeach Trump, who used the effort to solidify his own base.

But Trump's political standing in many of those same districts has fallen, as Biden has taken a clear lead in public polling. Plus, 37 of the most vulnerable front-line Democrats raised more than \$500,000 last quarter, with 34 now stockpiling more than \$2 million cash on hand, according to the DCCC.

"I think that if you had asked me a year and half ago, would we be in this situation electorally, I wouldn't have said that some of these races would be where they are," said Abby Curran Horrell, executive director of the House Majority PAC, a super PAC helping elect House Democrats. "Now Biden is ahead in many of these [Trump] districts . . . [The president is] just out of touch with where voters are, and that continues to be a drag on these Republican candidates."

House Republicans counter that the election is still nearly four months away and that Democrats holding seats in districts that Trump carried by double digits — including Reps. Kendra Horn in Oklahoma, Anthony Brindisi in New York and Collin C. Peterson in Minnesota — face an uphill battle no matter how much money they raise.

"Democrats crowning themselves victors in July after their 2016 debacle is too perfect," said Michael McAdams, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee. "House Republicans are fighting in favorable territory across the country and have ample evidence to show voters how Democrats' socialist agenda will hurt middle-class families."

According to a Monmouth University poll released July 2, Democrats maintain an eight-point advantage in the generic congressional ballot, with 50 percent of voters saying they would back a Democrat for Congress over 42 percent preferring a Republican. That's similar to the seven-point margin Democrats held in the same poll in June 2018 before they went on to flip 40 House seats.

Democrats say the potential political realignment is most apparent in Texas, where the party flipped several GOP-held suburban seats in 2018. Democrats saw additional Republican vulnerabilities in the Lone Star State, however, so the DCCC sent staff members to Texas early this cycle to "kick-start the campaigns of Democrats running in once ruby-red districts," according to Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.), chairwoman of the DCCC. She said the investment "paid off" — three of the party's top Texas targets retired rather than face difficult reelections, putting Democratic challengers in strong positions to pick up those posts.

Those include a suburban Houston district being vacated by retiring GOP Rep. Pete Olson, the district that former House majority leader Tom Delay held for 20 years. Democratic candidate Sri Preston Kulkarni, a former diplomat, raised more than \$950,000 in the second quarter of 2020, a stunning sum in an area that went for Trump by eight points in 2016.

On Tuesday, in the sprawling border district represented by retiring centrist Republican Will Hurd, GOP voters will choose between Raul Reyes, a conservative candidate backed by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), and Tony Gonzales, who has been endorsed by GOP establishment and House Republican leaders.

Either way, Democrats feel confident that their own candidate, Gina Ortiz Jones, a 39-year-old ex-intelligence officer who raised \$800,000 in the second quarter, will give the winning Republican candidate a run for his money. Ortiz Jones lost to Hurd, the well-known incumbent, by less than one point in the midterms.

Democrats are also targeting the open seat being vacated by GOP Rep. Kenny Merchant in the suburbs between Fort Worth and Dallas, as well as those held by Reps. Michael McCaul and John Carter, though the latter are tougher fights. They also note that Wendy Davis, who ran for Texas governor in 2014, raised an eye-popping \$1.4 million last quarter, giving her a total of \$2.8 million cash on hand in her bid to unseat Rep. Chip Roy in the suburbs of San Antonio and Austin.

That's to say nothing of four GOP-held Texas districts that political handicapper Larry Sabato at the University of Virginia's Center for Politics recently moved from "safe" to "likely" Republican in a sign of the changing landscape. "[I]f Biden wins the state without much ticket-splitting . . . there could be some unpleasant surprises down the ballot for Republicans in Texas," Sabato's analysis read, pointing out vulnerabilities for Reps. Dan Crenshaw, Van Taylor, Roger Williams and Ron Wright.

Democrats are pushing the election battlefield into additional GOP-held suburban areas in other parts of the nation as well. An open Indiana seat held by retiring Rep. Susan Brooks, which Trump carried by 11 points in 2016, is now looking increasingly competitive. Democrats are also eyeing Rep. Ann Wagner (R-Mo.), who leads the House Republicans' Suburban Caucus, as well as another Trump-carried suburban Atlanta district long held by conservative Rep. Rob Woodall.

Democrats also like their chances of winning the remaining GOP-held districts that Clinton carried in 2016. Those include the suburban areas north of Philadelphia, where Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R) is in the fight of his political life, as well as the suburbs of Syracuse and Rochester in New York, turf held by Rep. John Katko (R).

Many Democrats are betting they can repeat Pelosi's 2018 playbook, focusing their message on a single issue: "health care, health care, health care," as the speaker often says. Pelosi predicted that access to affordable coverage will become even more salient this fall because of the pandemic, as well as Trump's attempt to ax the Affordable Care Act in court at a time when coronavirus infection numbers are climbing.

Despite the current political climate, however, Pelosi has her eye on two outside factors that could cause problems for her members: She expressed concern about Trump being at the top of the ticket, which could draw out additional Republican voters who didn't show in 2018. And she's worried about Trump and GOP efforts to thwart voting, hindering would-be Democratic supporters and upping the pressure on Democrats to turn out the vote.

"Republicans seems to think [it] is their mission in life to diminish the number of days that people can vote, the hours they can vote, the location in which they can vote, standing in the way of voting at home," Pelosi said, later adding: "But as I say, one advantage we have this time over the last is people are vigilant. They are attuned. . . . I say, 'Own the ground; don't give one grain of sand; get everybody out. . . . No wasted time, no underutilized resources and no regrets the day after election.'"

## 2020 Primary Elections

State primary dates, registration information and results can be found [here](#).

## PAC Events

**Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO)**, who is up for reelection in November. Gardner spent the majority of the call talking about his reelection race and the demographics and politics of Colorado. The event was attended by representatives from multiple industries and Sen. Gardner was asked questions on a variety of topics. Transamerica PAC mentioned its support for the life insurance industry's two part tax proposal concerning ordinary tax treatment of debt instruments and Section 7702, as well as the single payer defined benefit funding provisions included in the HEROES Act.



**Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH)** who serves on the Senate Finance Committee. After introductions, Hassan spent the majority of her time discussing the Administration's failure to address the COVID-19 pandemic, saying the federal government needs a better national strategy to deal with crisis, including using the Defense Production Act to quickly domestically manufacture more PPE for first responders and others. Transamerica PAC took the opportunity to mention its support for the life insurance industry's two-part tax proposal concerning the ordinary tax treatment for debt instruments and Section 7702, as well as the single payer defined benefit funding provisions included in the HEROES Act.

## Did You Know...

...John Adams died on the same day as his archrival Thomas Jefferson? Both men passed away on Independence Day of all days: July 4, 1826.

## Trivia

Which president invented the swivel chair?

[Send in your answer!](#)

There was no winner this week, but some good guesses!

**Last Issue's Question:** Whose face appeared on the first U.S. \$1 bill?

**Answer:** Salmon P. Chase

## Special Acknowledgement

### President Club Members

Bradie Barr, Jim Beardsworth, Mark Bloom, Joe Boan, Blake Bostwick, Kent Callahan, Sean Cassidy, Joel Coleman, Catherine Collinson, Louise Costikyan, David Coughlin, Tom Dempsey, Phil Eckman, Mike Gugig, David Hopewell, Seth Miller, Mark Mullin, Jay Orlandi, Maurice Perkins, Brent Phillips, David Schulz, Bill Schwegler, Frank Sottosanti, Julie Spore, George Vega

### Cabinet Club Members

George Chuang, Jim Demopolos, Bonnie Gerst, Patrick Gustafson, Mark Halloran, Wade Hampton, Eric Martin, Chad Meyers, Mark Pinocci, Karyn Polak, Lori Pope, Jody Puffett, Michael Rathje, Laurie Renko, Kate Schulze, Marijn Smit, Ben Wadsley, Tom Wald, Annie Young

To see the full list of members, [click here](#).

## 2020 PAC Member Benefits

All 2020 PAC Contributors will receive full access to the Washington Weekly newsletters. Individuals who are currently in or sign up for the levels listed will receive the benefit(s) below for 2020.

Club Level	Recognized on Website	Quarterly Calls	Annual PAC Gift	Premium PAC Gift	Recognized in WW	President Club Gift*
Congressional Staffer Club (\$260/year)	★	★				
Representative Club (\$650/year)	★	★	★			
Senate Club (\$2,000/year)	★	★	★	★		
Cabinet Club (\$3,000/year)	★	★	★	★	★	
President Club (\$5,000/year)	★	★	★	★	★	★

\*President Club Gift is given to those individuals who contribute \$5,000 in the calendar year

The Transamerica Corporation Political Action Committee (Transamerica PAC) is a voluntary employee fund supporting candidates for federal office. Contributions are voluntary and you may choose not to contribute without any reprisal. Contribution amounts are only a suggestion. Employees may give more or less than the suggested amount, and the corporation will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of their contribution. Contributions must be made in your name. Federal law requires PACs to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and employer for each individual contributor aggregating more than \$200 in a calendar year. In order to contribute to Transamerica PAC, you must be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident. If you are not eligible and received this communication in error, please delete and contact PAC Treasurer, [Sean Cassidy](#), to be removed from future communications. 202-909-4965.

Contributions to Transamerica PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.