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Arizona Primary Election Update

Competitive Legislative District Analysis, July 2026 Primary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At Rose Law Group, we strive to provide clients with insights that extend beyond traditional election coverage and polling. With Arizona just 104 days remaining until the Arizona's November 3, 2026 General Election, we analyzed voter turnout in the state's most competitive legislative districts to identify early shifts in the political landscape. We compared the 2026 primary with 2024 because these races offer the most meaningful comparison: in both cycles, Republicans had competitive statewide primaries while Democrats largely did not. While primary elections are not definitive predictors of general election outcomes, they provide an early indicator of voter enthusiasm and the political environment heading into the general election. Because State House races have unique voting dynamics, this analysis primarily relies on State Senate results to measure changes in the electorate.

MARICOPA COUNTY

Maricopa County’s primary turnout shifted modestly toward Democrats between the 2024 and 2026 primary elections, driven almost entirely by a decline in Republican turnout. The number of Republican ballots cast fell by approximately 76,300 (18%), from 434,000 to 357,800, while Democratic remained essentially the same, increasing by roughly 2,700 ballots (1%), from 298,100 to 300,800. As a result, Republicans’ share of the two-party primary vote declined from 59% to 54%, while Democrats rose from 41% to 46%. The Republican turnout advantage also narrowed significantly, shrinking from approximately 135,900 ballots in 2024 to 57,000, a reduction of roughly 78,900 (58%).

Metric	2024	2026	Change
Republican Ballots	434,000	357,800	-76,300 (-18%)
Democratic Ballots	298,100	300,800	+2,700 (+1%)
Republican Share	59%	54%	-5 percentage points
Democratic Share	41%	46%	+5 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 2 – POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PICKUP IN SENATE

SHAWNA BOLICK (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. AMELIA GALLITANO (D.)

JUSTIN WILMETH (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. PAUL CARVER (R.)

STEPHANIE SIMACEK (INCUMBENT, D.); UNCONTESTED

LD 2's State Senate primary electorate became much more competitive between 2024 and 2026. Democratic votes rose from about 14,300 to 14,800, an increase of about 500 votes, or 3%, while Republican votes fell from roughly 19,600 to 16,300, a decline of about 3,300 votes, or 17%. The district's reduction in turnout came almost entirely from Republican ballots cast.

That shift narrowed the GOP advantage from about 5,300 votes to 1,500. Democrats increased their share of major-party Senate votes from 42% to 48%, while Republicans fell from 58% to 52%.

Sen. Shawna Bolick faces physician Amelia Gallitano in what may be Republicans' most statistically vulnerable swing district based on electorate change. Democratic turnout increased between the 2024 and 2026 primaries, while Republican participation declined, narrowing the GOP's traditional advantage. Although Gallitano entered the race relatively late, she has demonstrated sufficient fundraising strength to mount a competitive campaign. These dynamics make this one of the most closely contested legislative races in the state.

In the 2024 cycle, Democrats improved from 42% in the primary to 47% in the general election, while Republican participation dropped from 58% to 51%. Repeating that movement in 2026 would point to an outcome around 53% Democratic and 45% Republican, assuming a comparable third-party vote.

	2024	2026	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~14,300	~14,800	+500 (+3%)
Republican Senate Votes	~19,600	~16,300	-3,300 (-17%)
Democratic Share	42%	48%	+6 percentage points
Republican Share	58%	52%	-6 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 4 – POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC TOSSUP IN SENATE AND HOUSE

CARINE WERNER (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. AARON LEIBERMAN (D.)

MATT GRESS (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. PAMALA CARTER (R.)

KAREN GRESHAM (D.) VS. TAMMY CAPUTI (D.)

LD 4's State Senate primary electorate became more balanced from 2024 to 2026 as Republican turnout fell more sharply than Democratic turnout. Democratic votes dropped about 1,100 (5%), from 23,600 to 22,500, while Republican votes fell by about 5,400 (18%), from 30,700 to 25,300.

The Republican share of major-party Senate votes fell from 57% to 53%, while the Democratic share rose from 43% to 47%. The GOP vote advantage narrowed from about 7,100 votes to 2,800, reflecting steadier Democratic participation and a sharper Republican decline.

Sen. Carine Werner won the seat in 2024 by about three points and remains a strong fundraiser from the GOP’s more moderate wing. Democrat Aaron Lieberman, a former two-term state representative, is likely able to self-fund part of his campaign. The race remains a toss-up, but if the Republican turnout decline carries into November, the seat could be at real risk of flipping.

The 2024 pattern shows Democrats gaining ground from primary to general election, moving from 43% to 48% as Republicans slipped from 57% to 52%. If LD 4 follows a similar trajectory in 2026, the general election would land near 52% Democratic and 48% Republican, putting the seat within reach for Democrats.

Like 2024, Democrats are running two House candidates instead of using the single-shot strategy that won them a seat in 2022. Former Scottsdale City Councilmember Tammy Caputi is a strong recruit with significant fundraising ability and is better positioned to reach voters than incumbent Pam Carter, but winning both seats remains difficult. Republican Matt Gress is a well-funded incumbent and relentless campaigner, making a Democratic sweep unlikely. Running two candidates gives Democrats a path to one or even two seats in a strong Democratic year, but it also increases the risk of being shut out.

	2024	2026	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~23,600	~22,500	-1,100 (-5%)
Republican Senate Votes	~30,700	~25,300	-5,400 (-18%)

Democratic Share	43%	47%	+4 percentage points
Republican Share	57%	53%	-4 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 9 – POSSIBLE REPUBLICAN PICKUP IN SENATE

KIANA SEARS (INCUMBENT, D.) VS. BRIDGET FITZGIBBONS (R.)

LORENA AUSTIN (INCUMBENT, D.) VS. JACOB MARTINEZ (D.) VS. BRAD BETTENCOURT (R.) VS. SAGE STROH (R.)

LD 9's State Senate primary electorate shifted sharply toward Democrats from 2024 to 2026. Democratic votes rose about 1,100 (10%), from 11,100 to 12,200, while Republican votes fell about 4,600 (30%), from 15,200 to 10,600.

The shift was dramatic: Republicans went from 58% of major-party Senate votes in 2024 to 47% in 2026, while Democrats rose from 42% to 53%. LD 9 moved from a GOP turnout advantage of about 4,100 votes to a Democratic advantage of about 1,500. Mesa City Council elections may have helped sustain Democratic turnout, though the results alone do not prove causation. Kiana Sears is vulnerable this cycle, but Democrats remain the slight favorites given the fact that no Democrat has lost a State Senate race after winning the primary vote since 2016. A Sears underperformance could also endanger one of Democrats' two House seats, especially after Rep. Seth Blattman's narrow 2024 win against two Republicans. Two Republicans are challenging, likely taking the seat off the map for Republicans.

In 2024, LD 9 Democrats made the largest general-election jump among these districts, rising nearly 10 points to about 52%, while Republicans fell

to 48%. Carrying that pattern into 2026 would project an especially strong Democratic result, around 63% to 37%.

	2024	2026	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~11,100	~12,200	+1,100 (+10%)
Republican Senate Votes	~15,200	~10,600	-4,600 (-30%)
Democratic Share	42%	53%	+11 percentage points
Democratic Share	58%	47%	-11 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 13 – POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PICKUP IN SENATE AND HOUSE

JULIE WILLOUGHBY (R.) VS. KRISTIE O'BRIEN (D.)

JANET WENINGER (R.) VS. KEVIN HARTKE (R.)

RACQUEL ARMSTRONG (D.) VS. JACOB WEINBERG (D.)

LD 13’s State Senate primary electorate shifted in favor of Democrats from 2024 to 2026 as Democratic participation increased and Republican turnout declined. Democratic votes rose from about 15,700 to 17,100, an increase of about 1,400 votes, or 9%, while Republican votes fell from roughly 23,000 to 20,300, a decline of about 2,700 votes, or 12%.

That shift narrowed the Republican turnout advantage from about 7,300

votes to 3,200. Democrats increased their share of Senate votes from 41% to 46%, while Republicans fell from 59% to 54%. Competitive local races, including the Chandler mayoral election and Gilbert Town Council contests, may have helped sustain Democratic turnout, though the results alone do not prove causation.

Rep. Julie Willoughby is running against Democrat Kristie O’Brian to replace the termed-out incumbent. LD 13 has consistently elected Republicans to the State Senate, and Willoughby is viewed as a slight favorite given her moderate profile, Capitol reputation, and fundraising advantage. Still, Chandler’s mayoral race is a warning sign for Republicans: Democratic-aligned Councilman Matt Orlando defeated GOP Rep. Jeff Weninger, giving Chandler its first Democratic mayor in more than 30 years and a 5-2 Democratic City Council majority.

Using 2024 as the benchmark, Democrats moved from 41% in the primary to 47% in the general election, while Republicans declined from 59% to 53%. A similar 2026 shift would produce roughly a 52% Democratic to 48% Republican result, indicating a narrow Democratic advantage.

Like in LD 4, Democrats successfully won a House seat in this district in 2022 when they ran a single shot strategy. This year they are running two candidates, a strategy that shut them out in 2024. With a better year, there is a chance Dems can flip one or both seats but their chances of once again being shut out are much higher than they would be if they ran one candidate, where a flip would be virtually guaranteed.

	2024	2026	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~15,700	~17,100	+1,400 (+9%)

Republican Senate Votes	~23,000	~20,300	-2,700 (-12%)
Democratic Share	41%	46%	+5 percentage points
Republican Share	59%	54%	-5 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 16 – SAFE SENATE SEAT, POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PICKUP IN HOUSE

T.J. SHOPE (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. ELAINE ALDRETE (D.)

**CHRIS LOPEZ (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. TERESA MARTINEZ (INCUMBENT, R.) VS.
JULIA GUSSE (D.)**

LD 16's Senate primary electorate become more evenly balanced between 2024 and 2026 primary election, driven largely by a significantly steeper decline in Republican turnout. Democratic votes decreased modestly by approximately 500 ballots (3%), falling from about 14,200 to 13,800. In contrast, Republican turnout declined by roughly 3,500 ballots (17%), dropping from approximately 19,900 to 16,400.

That shift narrowed the Republican turnout advantage from about 5,700 votes in 2024 to approximately 2,700 votes in 2026. Democrats increased their share of the major-party Senate vote from 42% to 46%, while Republicans fell from 58% to 54%.

Sen. T.J. Shope remains one of the Legislature's best-known Republican incumbents and begins the general election as the favorite. The greater risk for Republicans may be in the House races, where Democrat Julia Romero Gusse is running a single-shot campaign against Republican incumbents

Chris Lopez and Teresa Martinez. Democrats successfully used the same strategy in 2022, when Keith Seaman won one of the district's two House seats despite the district's Republican lean. With the 2026 political environment appearing more favorable to Democrats than 2022 and Republican primary turnout declining significantly, the House race could prove more competitive than the Senate contest.

The 2024 general election showed Democrats improving from 42% in the primary to 44% in November, while Republicans declined from 58% to 56%. If a similar shift occurs in 2026, the district would be expected to finish around 48% Democratic and 52% Republican, suggesting Republicans remain favored but by a narrower margin than in recent election cycles.

	2024	2026 (Current)	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~14,200	~13,800	-500 (-3%)
Republican Senate Votes	~19,900	~16,400	-3,500 (-17%)
Democratic Share	42%	46%	+4 percentage points
Republican Share	58%	54%	-4 percentage points

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 17 – POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PICKUP IN SENATE AND HOUSE

CHRIS KING (R) VS. EDGAR SOTO (D)

RACHEL KESHEL (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. JOHN WINCHESTER (R.) VS. KEVIN VOLK (INCUMBENT, D.) VS. HOLLY LYON (D.)

LD 17's State Senate primary electorate became more balanced from 2024 to 2026, driven by a sharper decline in Republican turnout. Democratic votes increased by about 700 (2%), from 28,100 to 28,800, while Republican votes fell by roughly 5,300 (14%), from 38,800 to 33,500.

As a result, Republicans' share of the two-party Senate vote declined from 58% to 54%, while Democrats' share increased from 42% to 46%. The GOP turnout advantage also narrowed significantly, shrinking from approximately 10,700 votes in 2024 to 4,700 votes. With between 2,000 and 5,000 ballots still outstanding, these figures remain preliminary, but the overall pattern is unlikely to materially change.

LD 17 is expected to be one of Arizona's top legislative battlegrounds.

Democrat Edgar Soto, who has spent more than 30 years in various roles at Pima Community College, will face Republican Chris King, a Vail school board member who emerged from the primary as the more moderate GOP nominee. The district has shown a gradual shift toward Democrats in recent election cycles, highlighted by Kevin Volk's 2024 House-seat flip. Meanwhile, the district's remaining Republican legislators are aligned with the party's conservative wing. With Gov. Hobbs expected to improve on her 2022 performance in the district, both the Senate and House races are poised to be among the most competitive legislative contests in Arizona.

The 2024 general election also showed room for Democratic growth in LD 17: Democrats climbed from 42% in the primary to 49% in November, while Republicans fell from 58% to 51%. If that same seven-point Democratic improvement were to occur in 2026, Democrats would be favored to win the

district by roughly 53% to 47%.

	2024	2026 (Current)	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~28,100	~28,800	+700 (+2%)
Republican Senate Votes	~38,800	~33,500	-5,300 (-14%)
Democratic Share	42%	46%	+4 percentage points
Republican Share	58%	54%	-4 percentage points

**LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 23 – SAFE SENATE SEAT,
POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC PICKUP IN HOUSE**

**BRIAN FERNANDEZ (INCUMBENT, D) VS. MICHELLE ALTHERR (R)
MARIANA SANDOVAL (INCUMBENT, D.) VS. EMILIA CORTEZ (D.) VS.
MICHELLE PEÑA (INCUMBENT, R.) VS. GARY SNYDER (R.)**

LD 23's State Senate primary electorate shifted further toward Democrats between 2024 and 2026 as Republican turnout declined much more sharply than Democratic turnout. Democratic Senate votes fell by just 1%, while Republican votes declined by 16%. As a result, Democrats increased their share of the major-party vote from 54% to 59%, while Republicans dropped from 46% to 41%. These figures remain preliminary, but with outstanding ballots still to be counted, Democratic turnout is likely to remain stable or increase slightly, reinforcing the overall trend.

The Senate race appears less competitive than it was in 2024. Incumbent Brian Fernandez will face Republican Michelle Altherr in a rematch of their narrowly decided 2024 general election, but the primary results suggest Fernandez enters November in a stronger position.

The House races, however, are likely to be the district's most competitive contests. Unlike in 2024, Republican Michelle Peña is not running a single-shot campaign and will instead share Republican votes with perennial candidate Gary Snyder. That dynamic divides the Republican vote between two candidates, improving Democrats' chances of gaining a House seat.

The 2024 general election demonstrated how competitive LD 23 has become. If the district follows a similar primary-to-general pattern in 2026, Democrats would again be well positioned to hold the Senate seat while the House races remain highly competitive.

	2024	2026 (Current)	Change
Democratic Senate Votes	~11,500	~11,400	-100 (-1%)
Republican Senate Votes	~9,700	~8,100	-1,600 (-16%)
Democratic Share	54%	59%	+5 percentage points
Republican Share	46%	41%	-5 percentage points

CONCLUSION

While primary elections are not reliable predictors of general election outcomes, they do provide an early snapshot of the political environment heading into November. Across nearly every competitive legislative district analyzed, Democratic turnout remained relatively stable while Republican participation declined, creating a more favorable landscape for Democrats than in 2024. If historical primary-to-general election trends hold, several Republican-held legislative districts could emerge as legitimate pickup opportunities for Democrats.

Republican legislative candidates have historically outperformed the top of the ticket by a few points, reflecting the party's traditional strength in down-ballot races. Republicans still have ample opportunity to regain momentum before November, but the current turnout data suggests Democrats are entering the general election with greater enthusiasm and a stronger electoral position. Ultimately, two factors are likely to have the greatest influence on the outcome of Arizona's legislative races: Gov. Hobbs' performance at the top of the ticket and whether public sentiment toward the presidential administration improves or continues to decline in the months leading up to Election Day.

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