



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Heading into a pivotal presidential election year, Sister District is thrilled to unveil our 2024 state legislative roadmap and political strategy. With Republican-controlled legislatures aggressively working to manipulate election outcomes, slash voting rights and curb abortion access, all beneath the approving gaze of a revanchist Supreme Court supermajority, it is urgent that we establish and preserve progressive power in our states. We see what we are fighting for in new trifecta states like Michigan and Minnesota, which have hit the ground running to protect abortion access and expand funding for education and health care.

State legislative Democrats enter 2024 with momentum. Outcomes will depend on smart strategy and careful execution. This memorandum describes the factors that present Democrats with opportunities to flip additional chambers, hold fragile legislative majorities, and make strategic gains in inroads states. It then presents our electoral roadmap for the year.

2022-2023: BUILDING MOMENTUM

2022 marked a significant break from the usual midterm pattern in which the President's party suffers electoral losses up and down the ballot. Fueled by outrage over the Supreme Court's deeply unpopular *Dobbs* decision dismantling federal abortion rights, and building on successful state-level organizing over the past few years, Democrats re-elected every incumbent Senator, expanded their Senate majority, secured most competitive gubernatorial races, and came within 6,600 votes of holding the U.S. House.

Democrats had significant success at the state legislative level too. Democrats gained 4 new trifectas, held on to fragile majorities in states like New Mexico and Maine, forged a governing coalition in the Alaska Senate, and flipped the Pennsylvania House. Democrats secured or preserved chamber-level supermajorities in Vermont, Delaware, and Nevada, and thwarted attempts by Republicans to achieve veto-proof supermajorities in Wisconsin and, at first, in North Carolina. Impressively, 2022 marked the first midterm since 1934 where the President's party didn't lose control of any state chamber.

State legislative Democrats continued to win in 2023. Democrats in Virginia proudly championed abortion access, successfully flipping the House of Delegates and retaining control of the Senate. And pro-choice Democratic Governor Andy Beshear celebrated re-election in Kentucky.



2024: SEEING IT THROUGH

Our general political strategy remains the same. Each year, we're looking for state legislative chambers that fall within three categories:

1. Blue Flips, where we believe Democrats can compete for a legislative majority this year;
2. Blue Holds, where Democrats have a fragile majority that must be protected; and
3. Blue Inroads, where we cannot immediately flip a chamber blue, but must build power, including breaking Republican supermajorities, to position ourselves for future success.

In any given year, the mix of chambers and seats in these three categories changes, due to the schedule of state elections, which differs year to year; the composition of chambers, which shift after each election cycle; and the urgency of other key races and broader electoral opportunities that exist in each state.

This year, we are weighting our state selections towards:

1. **Nested Contests:** presidential battlegrounds with nested competitive races that have critical implications for the future of our democracy and key issues including abortion, particularly Senate, Congressional and Gubernatorial contests, and ballot initiatives
2. **Fairer Maps:** states where redistricting commissions, courts and legislatures have produced fairer maps where Democrats can fairly compete; and
3. **Smart Defense:** states where we can break and stave off Republican supermajorities

Our efforts to drive awareness, resources, and turnout toward state legislative races nested in these battlegrounds will force-multiply up and down the ticket. The following section outlines the opportunities in each target state. Chambers identified as Expansion Opportunities are where we are eager to invest, provided we secure additional resources.

2024 STATES: BLUE FLIPS

Arizona Senate & House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Dems need to flip 2 seats in each chamber for a majority.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Arizona in 2020 with 10,000 votes (49.36%). There is a toss-up US Senate election (Sinema (I)), several competitive Congressional races (AZ CD1; AZ CD6), and a citizen-initiated ballot initiative to protect abortion access may be on the ballot (to be determined this summer), all of which will galvanize voters.
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats won critical U.S. Senate election (Kelly-D) and AZ voted for a Democratic Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. Dems also held the line in the state House and Senate. AZ remains a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing draconian abortion restrictions and election subversion, sowing seeds of distrust in election administration.



Wisconsin Assembly

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats need to flip 15 in the Assembly to gain majority. Fair maps have just been finalized.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Wisconsin in 2020 with 22,000 votes (49.45%). There is a critical US Senate election, with incumbent Tammy Baldwin (D) running for reelection, and a competitive Congressional race (CD3).
- **Contextual Factors:** Post-2020 census, Wisconsin's General Assembly produced terribly gerrymandered legislative maps, but the newly liberal state Supreme Court majority ordered them thrown out, and fair maps have just been finalized. This presents a generational opportunity for Democrats to attain majorities. In 2023, judge Janet Protasiewicz won a seat on the state's Supreme Court by 11 points, flipping to a liberal majority. The decisive win came from votes across the state - in fact, she would have won even without populous and liberal Dane County. And in 2022, Wisconsin voted for Democratic Governor, Lt. Governor (Sister District alum Sara Rodriguez), Attorney General and Secretary of State. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and pursuing draconian abortion restrictions.

Pennsylvania Senate

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Dems need to flip 4 seats in the Senate to gain majority.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Pennsylvania in 2020 with 80,000 votes (50.01%). There is a critical US Senate election, with incumbent Bob Casey (D) running for reelection, and several competitive Congressional races (CD 10, CD7, CD8, CD17).
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats flipped a US Senate seat (Fetterman (D)), and picked up 1 state Senate seat. Pennsylvania also voted for a Democratic Governor and Lt. Governor that year. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and pursuing draconian abortion restrictions.

Expansion Opportunity: New Hampshire Senate & House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats need to flip 3 seats in the Senate and 4 seats in the House to gain a majority in each chamber.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried New Hampshire in 2020 with 52.71%. There is a competitive open Gubernatorial race.
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats held on to Senator Maggie Hassan's seat and gained 21 seats in the state House, but reelected a Republican governor and lost a seat in the state Senate. Democrats won all five special elections for the House held in 2023, each of which were marked by strong Democratic overperformance.

2024 STATES: BLUE HOLDS

Michigan House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats flipped the Michigan House in 2022, and vacancies in blue districts leave the chamber in a tie. After April special elections, Democrats will need to protect a likely 2 seat majority.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Michigan narrowly voted for Joe Biden in 2020 (50.56%). There is a critical open US Senate seat (Stabenow (D) is retiring), and several competitive Congressional seats (CD7, CD8, CD10).
- **Contextual Factors:** Post-2020, MI's Independent Redistricting Commission produced fair maps, and Democrats flipped both chambers (Senate up next in 2026). In 2022, Michigan voted for a Democratic Governor, Attorney General and Secretary of State. The state is also a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives have pursued election subversion and sowed seeds of distrust in election administration, and where Democrats have fought successfully for abortion access.

Pennsylvania House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats flipped the Pennsylvania House in 2022, and after special elections they will need to protect a likely 1 seat majority.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground: Joe Biden carried Pennsylvania in 2020 with 80,000 votes (50.01%). There is a critical US Senate election, with incumbent Casey (D) running for reelection, and several competitive Congressional races (CD 10, CD7, CD8, CD17).
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats flipped a US Senate seat, with John Fetterman (D) winning by 5 points, and picked up 10 seats to flip the House. Pennsylvania also voted for a Democratic Governor and Lt. Governor that year. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and pursuing draconian abortion restrictions.

Nevada Senate and House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats have a 3 seat majority in the Senate and an 8 seat majority in the Assembly.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Nevada in 2020 by 30,000 votes (50.06%). Also a critical US Senate election, with incumbent Rosen (D) running for reelection, and a competitive Congressional seat (CD3).
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats defended a critical US Senate seat, with Cortez-Masto (D) winning by 1 point. Democrats picked up 1 seat in the Senate and 2 seats in the Assembly, resulting in a supermajority in the Assembly (lower chamber). However, Republicans elected their Gubernatorial candidate, who remains popular.



Expansion Opportunity: Minnesota House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats have a 4 seat majority.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Minnesota in 2020 with 52.3% of the vote. There is an important US Senate election, with incumbent Klobuchar (D) running for reelection.
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Minnesota reelected Democratic Governor Tim Walz along with Democrats for Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor and other positions.

2024 STATES: BLUE INROADS

Wisconsin Senate

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Democrats need to flip 6 seats in the Senate to gain majority and 1 seat to break Republican supermajority. Fair maps have just been finalized. Only half of the chamber is up for election this year.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Wisconsin in 2020 with 22,000 votes (49.45%). There is a critical US Senate election, with incumbent Tammy Baldwin (D) running for reelection, and a competitive Congressional race (CD3).
- **Contextual Factors:** Post-2020 census, Wisconsin's General Assembly produced terribly gerrymandered legislative maps, but the newly liberal state Supreme Court majority ordered them thrown out, and fair maps have just been finalized. With 18 seats that voted for both Biden and Evers, Democrats have a clear path to majority. In 2023, judge Janet Protasiewicz won a seat on the state's Supreme Court by 11 points, flipping to a liberal majority. The decisive win came from votes across the state - in fact, she would have won even without populous and liberal Dane County. And in 2022, Wisconsin voted for Democratic Governor, Lt. Governor (Sister District alum Sara Rodriguez), Attorney General and Secretary of State. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and pursuing draconian abortion restrictions.

Georgia House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** Legislative maps remain gerrymandered in favor of Republicans, but open seats and new districts provide Democrats with opportunities.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - Joe Biden carried Georgia narrowly by 12,000 votes (49.47%) in 2020.
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats defended critical US Senate seat (Warnock (D)), but came up short in the state legislative and gubernatorial races. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and pursuing draconian abortion restrictions.

North Carolina Senate & House

- **State Legislative Opportunity:** New legislative maps remain gerrymandered in favor of Republicans, and will stand this year despite litigation. Open seats and new districts provide opportunities for Democratic inroads and to break the Republican supermajority in each chamber that allows them to override the Governor's veto.
- **Nested Electoral Opportunities:** Critical Presidential battleground - In 2020, Donald Trump carried North Carolina with just 49.93%. This year, there are open Gubernatorial and Attorney General elections, and a competitive Congressional race (CD1).
- **Contextual Factors:** In 2022, Democrats lost 2 seats in the Senate, falling into superminority. Democrats lost 2 seats in the House, but initially held enough seats to keep from superminority. However, a House Democrat switched party affiliation, delivering the GOP a veto-proof supermajority that allowed them to override the Democratic governor's veto. The state is a democracy and abortion battleground, where GOP legislators and operatives are pursuing election subversion and sowing seeds of distrust in election administration, and have implemented draconian abortion restrictions.

**Note: chamber composition as of February 12, 2024. We may not ultimately endorse candidates in all of the chambers listed above - final selections will depend on a number of factors, including final map competitiveness and candidate readiness.*

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

Democrats enter 2024 well-positioned to maintain control of vulnerable chambers, flip a few more, and make inroads in longer-term strategic states. But we know that it will take a tremendous amount of resources, energy, and attention to win at this level of the ballot.

At Sister District, **we are ready to face the challenge head-on**. Our data-driven chamber and district targeting process is both quantitatively rigorous and qualitatively inclusive to identify the chambers and districts where we can make the largest impact. The result is a rich, data-forward approach that enables us to make early, strategic, and targeted investments.

Each state on our roadmap is also a presidential battleground, and many have critical Senate, Gubernatorial, and Congressional contests as well as relevant ballot initiatives this year. By leveraging organizing opportunities in areas with overlapping races, our work at the state legislative level will reverberate up to the top of the ballot.

Our research has shown that the control of state chambers is often decided by **astonishingly small margins**, and that down-ballot Democrats experience ballot **roll off much more frequently than down-ballot Republicans** (where a voter ticks the top of the ballot, but doesn't vote all the way down). It'll take all of us working together to help our candidates win by raising small grassroots dollars, communicating with voters, and providing candidates with battle-tested strategy and guidance. We will announce our first wave of candidate endorsements in April, with a second wave expected in June.

For press and other inquiries, please contact info@sisterdistrict.com.

