

What NYS Dems Are Doing to Flip the House in 2024

By Wendy Diller

It's no secret that New York State is at the center of the fight to determine control of the US House of Representatives in 2024.

Seven NY Congressional seats are purple—i.e. flippable this fall--of which five are currently held by Republicans, while two are represented by Democrats, according to Lizzy Weiss, coordinated director of the New York State Democratic coordinated campaign, the state Democratic Party organization. Weiss, who spoke to Three Parks in December, recently provided an update on organizing efforts as campaigns enter the crucial post-primary summer-fall seasons.

The state Democratic Party has a paid organizational staff aimed at helping its candidates up and down the ballot and is in the process of opening offices and hiring staff, Weiss says. The current Republican districts in play are: NY-1 and NY-4 (both on Long Island); NY-17 and NY-19 (both in the Hudson Valley), and NY-22 (Syracuse area). Vulnerable Democrats represent NY-3 on Long Island (Tom Suozzi, who won the high-profile special election in February) and NY-18 in the Hudson Valley (Pat Ryan, who won by a less than 2% margin in 2022). Also on

the agenda is maintaining the Democratic super majority in the state legislature and re-electing Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and President Joe Biden.

Efforts will gear up post the June 25 primary, although only two of the Congressional seats have Democratic primaries (NY-1 and NY-22). As of early June, the state organization has opened 12 offices across the state, with plans to expand further. It has hired regional organizing directors, field staff, constituency organizers who are specifically tasked with reaching out to communities of color, and college/youth organizers. It also has 33 paid fellows who are students on college campuses, says Weiss. Most important for organizations like Three Parks, it has hired a full-time, highly experienced coordinator to liaison with out-of-district grassroots organizations that are eager to support candidates statewide. Her mandate is to ensure that these groups' efforts are impactful and optimally efficient, Weiss says.

During the summer, NYS Dems will continue to build infrastructure, motivate volunteers, and do persuasion outreach to voters, with main activities ramping up in September post-Labor Day. Raising turnout rates of low-propensity-to-vote Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents will be a key to success in NYS, Weiss says.

Among the districts in play, the state party considers NY-4 (on Long Island's south shore) to be one of the most flippable seats.

It is currently represented by Republican Anthony D'Esposito, but Biden won it by 14 points in 2020. Forty percent of the voters in the district are under-represented minorities. In NY-3 (mostly on Long Island's north shore), which Democrat Tom Suozzi won in a special election in February, Democrats have the power of incumbency along with a well-organized staff.

NY-19, which Miriam Rabban writes about in this issue of the newsletter, NY-17 and NY-18 are all in the Hudson Valley and within reach of New York City campaigners.

Briefly, NY-17, which covers parts of Westchester and Dutchess counties, as well as Putnam and Rockland counties, is currently represented by Republican Mike Lawler. Mondaire Jones, a progressive Democrat who previously represented the district from 2021-2023, is running against him. Lawler is a tough opponent, but Jones has a highly disciplined campaign and is a top fundraiser.

NY-18, which covers Orange, Dutchess, and Ulster counties, is currently represented by Democrat Pat Ryan, who faces a first-time Republican opponent, Alison Esposito, a former NYPD veteran, who ran unsuccessfully as Congressman Lee Zeldin's running mate in the 2022 gubernatorial election. The race will be tight, with many opportunities for out-of-district Democrats to canvass in urban areas like Newburgh and Poughkeepsie.

