

Democrats Rally Behind Key Senate Hopefuls for 2026 Elections

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Democrats are strengthening their push to reclaim the United States Senate majority in the 2026 midterm elections, following North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's high-profile entry into the race to replace outgoing Republican Senator Thom Tillis. This marks a significant recruitment win for the Democratic Party as they aim to flip at least four Republican-held seats in their favor.

With Cooper's candidacy now official, Democrats are hoping to replicate that success in other battleground states. In New Hampshire, Representative Chris Pappas has launched an expected Senate campaign, while in Georgia, incumbent Democratic Senator Jon Ossoff benefits from Republican Governor Brian Kemp's decision not to enter the race. Democrats are also eyeing a potential challenge in Maine, hoping that Governor Janet Mills will step up to face long-time Republican Senator Susan Collins.

Michigan presents one of the more complex challenges for Democrats. The open Senate seat has drawn several Democratic hopefuls, including Representative Haley Stevens, state Senator Mallory McMorrow, and progressive activist Abdul El-Sayed. While Stevens has gained establishment support, including endorsements from key figures like former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, there remains concern among Democratic strategists about a divisive primary. According to CNN, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand are reported to be quietly backing Stevens, reflecting the broader party preference to consolidate early behind a single candidate.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Michigan have largely united behind former Representative Mike Rogers, who is benefiting from a clearer path to the nomination and improved early fundraising. His supporters argue that Rogers is in a stronger position than during his 2024 Senate campaign against Elissa Slotkin.

In Texas, a brewing intra-party conflict between incumbent Senator John Cornyn and State Attorney General Ken Paxton, aligned with the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, is creating uncertainty. Paxton's candidacy could complicate Republican prospects in the general election, and his ongoing legal controversies, paired with personal developments like his wife filing for divorce, add further volatility. Democrats see an opportunity if Paxton emerges as the nominee, but they are also facing their internal divisions. Former Representative Colin Allred has launched a campaign, while former Senate and gubernatorial candidate Beto O'Rourke is actively touring the state, possibly signaling another run. Others, including Representative Joaquin Castro and State Representative James Talarico, are also being encouraged to pursue statewide roles.

In states like Iowa and Ohio, Democrats remain hopeful but cautious. In Ohio, much depends on whether former Senator Sherrod Brown will return to challenge appointed Republican Senator Jon Husted. In Iowa, speculation surrounds Republican Senator Joni Ernst's future. Ernst has denied retirement rumors, telling Radio Iowa that she has "a lot left to do" in the Senate. Should she step down, Representative Ashley Hinson is viewed as a

frontrunner for the Republican nomination. The Democratic field in Iowa includes state Representative J.D. Scholten, state Senator Zach Wahls, and Knoxville Chamber of Commerce Director Nathan Sage.

Lastly, Alaska remains a long shot for Democrats, but former Representative Mary Peltola could make the race competitive if she chooses to challenge Republican Senator Dan Sullivan. Peltola, who previously lost her House seat, remains one of the few Democrats with statewide name recognition and bipartisan appeal in Alaska.

While the political landscape remains fluid, Democrats are attempting to avoid bruising primaries and instead focus on consolidating strong candidates early. However, divisions in states like Michigan and Texas highlight the ongoing difficulty of building a unified front. With the United States Senate majority hanging in the balance, both parties face a pivotal and high-stakes road to 2026.