



# 5 U.S. Senate Races to Watch and How a Shakeup in the Balance of Power Could Impact Employers

Insights

8.15.24

The 2024 election season has been a whirlwind. From a failed assassination attempt to the sitting president's decision to bow out of the contest, D.C. insiders and employers alike are struggling to keep up. While all eyes have been glued to the race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket, down ballot races will play a pivotal role in determining which policies will become law in a presidential administration. Below are several races that will help determine the balance of power in an already closely divided Senate – in which Democrats are defending multiple vulnerable incumbents and Republicans are hoping to regain control. In addition to passing laws, the Senate also confirms key officials such as EEOC commissioners, NLRB members, Labor Department officials, and judges and both sides are seeking to expand their voting margins in November. Here are the top five races to watch in the U.S. Senate.

## Ohio

### **Sherrod Brown (D) vs. Bernie Moreno (R)**

Once the quintessential battleground state, Ohio has leaned Republican over the past few election cycles. Incumbent Senator Sherrod Brown, the Buckeye State's last remaining statewide-elected Democrat, is facing off against Bernie Moreno, a Trump-backed businessman and car dealership owner in a state the former president won by just over 8 points in 2020. Brown, who first won the seat in 2006, boasts a 100% lifetime score from the AFL-CIO and is closely aligned with the state's unions. Moreover, if Donald Trump and J.D. Vance win the election in November, Republican Governor Mike DeWine has the opportunity to pick Vance's replacement in the Senate. The race has become one of the most expensive this cycle and the outcome will almost certainly be razor-thin.

- **Cook Political Report Ranking: Tossup**

## Pennsylvania

### **Bob Casey (D) vs. Dave McCormick (R)**

In the race for the White House, all roads lead through Pennsylvania. The same can be said when it comes to control of the Senate. Democratic incumbent Bob Casey is running for his fourth term against former George W. Bush administration official Dave McCormick. McCormick, who narrowly

against former George W. Bush administration official Dave Freese. Freese, who narrowly lost the Republican Senate primary in 2022 to Dr. Mehmet Oz, has close ties to the business community from his time as the CEO of Bridgewater Associates, one of the largest global hedge funds. In Congress, Casey is a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee's Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety as well as the bipartisan Paid Family Leave Working Group. Given the polarized nature of the American electorate, whichever party wins the commonwealth's 19 electoral votes at the presidential level will likely also win this race.

- **Cook Political Report Ranking: Lean Democrat**

## **Montana**

### **Jon Tester (D) vs. Tim Sheehy (R)**

Like his colleague Sherrod Brown, Senator Jon Tester is also familiar with being his state's last remaining statewide-elected Democrat. A farmer, Tester is somewhat of an anomaly in a party that has recently ceded electoral ground in rural communities. He is also known for breaking with rank-and-file Democrats on some issues, including voting in favor of a Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution seeking to overturn the Labor Department's ESG rule on retirement investing and introducing a CRA resolution opposing the Biden administration's nursing home staffing rule. Tester's opponent, political newcomer Tim Sheehy, is a former Navy SEAL and founder of Bridger Aerospace, one of the state's few publicly traded companies. Though the contest is not expected to be close at the presidential level (Donald Trump won Montana in 2020 by nearly 17 points), Tester's popularity and name ID in a sparsely populated state could be enough to carry him over the finish line, albeit by the slimmest of margins.

- **Cook Political Report Ranking: Tossup**

## **Nevada**

### **Jacky Rosen (D) vs. Sam Brown (R)**

While Senator Jacky Rosen may not be a household name like the aforementioned incumbents on this list (she is only completing her first term in the Senate), the race between the Silver State's junior senator and retired Army Captain Sam Brown will certainly be as closely watched. Remarkably, Rosen won in 2018 despite winning just two of the state's 17 counties. To unseat her, Brown will need to consolidate GOP support that was split during the crowded 12-person GOP primary and run up the numbers with working class voters of color, who make up a large portion of the state's electorate. Compared to other states, Nevada also has a high number of service industry jobs, with many workers openly expressing concern their positions could be lost to artificial intelligence.

- **Cook Political Report Ranking: Lean Democrat**

## Wisconsin

### Tammy Baldwin (D) vs. Eric Hovde (R)

Nearly all aspects of Wisconsin politics are an evenly divided partisan split. The Badger State has a Republican-controlled state assembly with a Democratic governor, a 4-3 state supreme court, and is one of only five states where its two senators are from opposing parties. One of these senators, Democrat Tammy Baldwin, is currently running for her third term in the Senate against wealthy banking executive, Eric Hovde. In addition to her seat on the HELP Committee, Baldwin also chairs the Appropriations Committee's powerful Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee, which is responsible for determining the Labor Department's annual budget. If Republicans regain control of the Senate, OSHA, the Wage and Hour Division, and other offices would likely face funding cuts similar to those attempted by the House of Representatives during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

- **Cook Political Report: Lean Democrat**

### Conclusion

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