

# 2024 General Election Guide



 **Larkin Hoffman**  
**PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

# Introduction

In two weeks, Minnesota voters will go to the polls in one of the most unique elections in the state's history. Depending on the outcome, Minnesota could see a new governor and new legislative majorities in both the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate-despite the fact that neither the governor's office nor the Minnesota Senate are on the ballot this year. With several "what if" scenarios that could be defined by developments at both the state and federal levels, this election could fundamentally reshape Minnesota's political landscape for the next two years.

Larkin Hoffman's government relations team is deeply involved in Minnesota politics across all levels of government. We work with elected officials at the municipal, county, regional, state, and federal levels and have spent decades building relationships with key public policy leaders, both elected and appointed. This election guide offers a high-level overview of the numerous political contests on the 2024 ballot, highlighting some of the most competitive races and key districts likely to influence the political control of the Minnesota Legislature in January.



# 2024 Minnesota Elections

## What's On the Line?

Although the governor's office is not on the ballot in 2024, Minnesota could still have a new governor come January, as Vice President Kamala Harris selected Minnesota Governor Tim Walz (DFL) as her running mate in early August. This creates potential shifts in the dynamic of Minnesota political landscape if the Harris/Walz ticket is successful. Should Vice President Harris and Gov. Walz win the election, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flannagan would become Minnesota's first female governor and serve the remaining two years of the term.

Article 5, Section 5 of Minnesota's Constitution spells out what would happen should Lt. Gov. Flannagan assume the role as governor. It provides that the last elected presiding officer of the Minnesota State Senate would become the new lieutenant governor. This scenario would elevate Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, (DFL-Minneapolis) to lieutenant governor. If Sen. Chapman assumes this role, it would leave a vacancy in the Senate, necessitating a special election following the November general election.

The current balance in the Minnesota Senate is 33-33. The outcome of the special election, discussed in detail below, will determine which party holds the majority. However, if Sen. Champion becomes the lieutenant governor, the balance of power would be back to a 33-33 tie. Sen. Champion has publicly expressed confidence that his party would retain

his seat and he believes a special election would give the DFL control at 34-33. However, this means that the Minnesota Senate could convene in January without a clear majority.

Another factor that could impact the Minnesota State Senate majority is the trial of Sen. Nicole Mitchell, (DFL – Woodbury). Sen. Mitchell recently plead not guilty to felony charges related to her April 2024 arrest in Detroit Lakes, MN after being accused of breaking into her stepmother's home. Her trial does not start until January 27, 2025, which is about three weeks after the 2025 legislative session begins. Mitchell is also the subject of a Senate ethics investigation that has been put on hold during the criminal process. The outcome of her criminal trial could have implications on the Senate majority.

The close majority in the Senate is crucial to determining control after November, the 2024 election will also see all 134 seats in the Minnesota House of Representatives up for grabs. Several key races in the House could significantly influence which party gains control of that chamber as well.



# Key Dates

## Key 2024 Election Dates

**September 20, 2024** Early voting begins for general election

**November 4, 2024** Last day for early voting

**November 5, 2024** **General Election**

**January 14, 2024** Start of the 2024 legislative session

# Federal Races to Watch

## U.S. Senate

### Sen. Amy Klobuchar vs Royce White

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar is seeking a fourth term in the United States Senate, having won her last three races by relatively comfortable margins. She is being challenged by Republican nominee Royce White, a former professional basketball player, who won a primary race in August after having secured the Republican endorsement at a contested convention in May.

## U.S. House of Representatives

While all eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are on the ballot this year, there are two seats that appear to be particularly competitive.

### Rep. Angie Craig vs Joe Teirab: U.S. House of Representatives, Congressional District 2

Minnesota's Second Congressional District encompasses much of the south Twin Cities metro area, including all of Dakota, Scott and LeSueur counties, and parts of Washington and Rice counties. With Republicans holding a slim four-vote majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, this race is considered the most competitive congressional race in the state. Rep. Angie Craig has held this seat since 2018 and has had to appeal to the "purple" nature of the district. She won her last election by five percent, which was considered a wide margin.

Her challenger, Joe Teirab is a former marine and federal prosecutor. Teirab has the support of both Washington and Minnesota State Republican leaders who have campaigned for him around the district. It is well known that both candidates must appeal both to the party base, as well as independent voters in their district, in order to be victorious.



## **Kelly Morrison vs Tad Jude: U.S. House of Representatives, Congressional District 3**

Encompassing suburban Hennepin County and a small portion of Anoka County, Minnesota's Third Congressional District is known to have one of the highest voter turnout rates in the country. The district was represented by Republicans for almost two decades before current congressman Rep. Dean Phillips flipped the seat in 2018. Rep. Phillips opted not to run for congress, but instead made a brief run for president, leaving the seat open heading into November.

Shortly after Phillips announced his intention not to run for reelection last November, then state Sen. Kelly Morrison (DFL-Deephaven) announced her intention to seek the seat. Having secured the party's endorsement last spring, Morrison stepped down from the Minnesota Senate to ensure that the special election for her former Senate seat (SD 45) would align with the general election in November. First elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2018, Morrison served two terms before being elected to the Minnesota Senate in 2022 where she served as Vice Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Republican nominee Tad Jude is former state legislator, county commissioner, and judge. Beginning his career in 1972, Jude was a member of the Minnesota DFL when he was first elected to the Minnesota House. Jude became a district judge in 2010, and then unsuccessfully ran for Hennepin County Attorney in 2020.



# Minnesota Senate

## Race to Watch

### Ann Johnson Stewart vs Kathleen Fowke: Senate District 45

Following former State Sen. Kelly Morrison's decision to step away from the Senate to run for congress, Gov. Walz called a special election to fill the vacancy. Scheduled for the same day as the general election, the special election will, at least initially, determine which party has the majority heading into the 2025 legislative session. Senate District 45 covers all of Lake Minnetonka, including the cities of Minnetonka and Wayzata. In 2020, President Joe Biden won the area with less than one-thousand votes collectively, while Gov. Walz won both sides of the newly drawn district in 2022.

Returning to the campaign trail is former DFL State Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart. Elected in 2020, Stewart only served a two-year term before losing the DFL endorsement to then Rep. Kelly Morrison for the '22 election cycle. In August, Stewart emerged from a three-way primary race to officially become the DFL nominee. Stewart served on the Senate Transportation and Capital Investment committees during her two years in the Senate.

The Republican nominee is Kathleen Fowke. A local political activist, Fowke previously ran for the Minnesota Senate against Kelly Morrison in 2022, losing 56.3% to 43.7%. Capital insiders suspect that because this race is so consequential, it could be one of the most expensive races of this election cycle.



# Minnesota House of Representatives

## Races to Watch

### **Rep. Roger Skraba vs Harley Droba vs Rich Tru: House District 3A**

After successfully flipping the historically blue district, House Republicans are hoping to hold the seat in what could be a contested three-candidate race. In 2022, Rep. Roger Skraba (R – Ely) unseated a four-term incumbent, former Rep. Rob Eklund (DFL – International Falls) by a mere 15 votes. Skraba, the former Mayor of Ely, sits on the House Capital Investment, Environment, and Legacy committees, all considered to be crucial assignments considering the district’s industrial roots.

The DFL nominee is Harley Droba, a former International Falls city councilman. Droba has the support of numerous labor organizations in the district. Rich Tru, a third-party candidate, has filed to run as a member of Minnesota’s newest third-party, the MN Forward Party.

### **Rep. Natalie Zeleznikar vs Mark Munger: House District 3B**

Minnesota’s Iron Range has a long history of electing Democrats. However, the once reliably Democratic area has shifted, and almost all Iron range seats are now represented by Republican legislators. However, the Minnesota DFL sees an opportunity to roll back the growing Republican influence, starting with the areas just outside of Duluth. House District 3B features Hermantown, a notably Democrat suburb of Duluth. The district also covers a much smaller geographic area than its counterpart, District 3A.

Rep. Natalie Zeleznikar (R - Fredenberg Township) unseated former Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) a 46-year incumbent, by only 33 votes in 2022. A graduate of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with a degree in healthcare administration, Rep. Zeleznikar focused much of her first term on health and human services and early childhood policy. She’s been endorsed by Minnesota’s business community and the Minnesota Peace and Police Officer’s Association.

The DFL nominee, Mark Munger, is a retired judge and former attorney for the city of Proctor. Munger, currently a small business owner and author and has been endorsed by the legislature’s progressive caucus, which features fellow northeast Minnesotan Sen. Jennifer McEwen (DFL – Duluth).

### **Cal Warwas vs Lorrie Janatopoulos: House District 7B**

House District 7B is located squarely within Minnesota’s Iron Range and includes the cities of Chisholm, Virginia, and Mountain Iron. This legislative seat is expected to be hotly contested as 3-term legislator and House Property Tax Chair Rep. Dave Lislegard (DFL – Aurora) surprised many when he announced he would not be running for re-election. Lislegard won the seat in 2022 by only 470 votes.

DFL nominee Lorrie Janatopoulos is the former director of CareerForce Center & Programing for the Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry, (DEED). She has also worked as the planning director for the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Center.

Republican nominee Cal Warwas emerged with a decisive primary victory in August. Warwas is a third-generation miner and served on the board of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (“RAMS”). He is also a member of the St. Louis County Association of Townships.



## **Rep. Bernie Perryman vs Abdi Daisane: House District 14A**

The St. Cloud area used to lean more Republican. However, recent demographic changes have made the area more politically competitive. First term Rep. Bernie Perryman (R- St. Augusta) narrowly won the seat in 2022 by only 199 votes against Tami Calhoun. In her first biennium as legislator, Rep. Perryman served on the House Commerce, Economic Development, and Health Finance committees. Authoring 13 bills, Rep. Perryman focused her legislative efforts largely on capital improvement projects in her district.

Abdi Daisane, the DFL nominee, hopes to flip the seat. Daisane is a small business owner who centered his campaign around climate change, housing, and investments in education.

## **Rep. Dan Wolgamott (DFL – St. Cloud) vs Sue Ek: House District 14B**

House District 14B, which consists of St. Cloud, Minden Township and Haven Township, is just as competitive as House District 14A. The district flipped from Republican to DFL control in 2018 by 2,245 votes. However, Republicans have steadily closed the gap over the past few election cycles with Rep. Dan Wolgamott (DFL-St. Cloud) only winning by 540 votes in 2022.

Incumbent and DFL nominee, Rep. Wolgamott, won his first election in 2018 by unseating 8-term Republican incumbent Jim Knoblach. Since joining the legislature, Rep. Wolgamott has served on the House Higher Education, Rules & Administration, and Capital Investment committees. He also served as the Speaker Pro-temp and often presides over House sessions when Speaker Meissa Hortman is unavailable.

Republican nominee, Sue Ek, serves on the St. Cloud Transportation and Infrastructure Advisory Board. She has positioned herself as a pro-life, pro-law enforcement, and pro-parental choice candidate. Ek has been endorsed by the conservative women's group, Women Lead.



### **Rep. Jeff Brand vs Erica Schwartz: House District 18A**

House District 18A features a small portion of Mankato as well North Mankato and St. Peter. The area has seen significant electoral turnover lately, as the DFL occupied the seat in 2018, Republicans claimed it in 2020, and the seat flipped back to DFL in 2022. No more than 108 votes decided the competition in 2020 while 411 votes were the deciding factor in 2022.

DFL nominee and incumbent Rep. Jeff Brand (DFL – St. Peter) won the election in 2018, lost in 2020, and returned to the legislature in 2022. The two-term incumbent served on the House Workforce Development committee as Vice Chair and served on the House Taxes, Transportation, and Environment committees.

Republican nominee Erica Schwartz is resident of Nicollet, Minnesota and has positioned her campaign on three key issues, inflation, education, and public safety. She currently works for her family's business, the Nicollet Mart.

### **Sarah Kruger vs Aaron Repinski: House District 26A**

House District 26A encompasses the entirety of Winona County. The seat was previously held by longtime legislator Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL – Winona) who represented the area since 1986. However, even though the area had DFL representation for almost 40 years, the actual politics of the area seem to be very moderate. With Rep. Pelowski's retirement, Republicans believe they can flip the seat. Emerging victorious from his primary against formerly Republican-endorsed candidate, James Doerr, Aaron Repinski hopes to succeed Rep. Pelowski. Repinski is an at large city council member for the city of Winona and small business owner. Repinski's past public service also includes serving on the Winona and Fountain City fire departments.

Sarah Kruger emerged as the DFL nominee having won a contested primary over Dwayne Voegeli. Running in the Winona area for the second time, Kruger unsuccessfully challenged Sen. Jeremy Miller (R – Winona) in 2022. Kruger currently works at FairVote MN, a non-profit that advocates for the expansion of ranked choice voting. Rep. Pelowski endorsed Kruger for the general election.

### **Rep. Matt Norris vs Alex Moe: House District 32B**

House District 32B features a large portion of the north metropolitan suburb of Blaine and the City of Lexington. Gov. Walz won the district with 51% of the vote in 2022. Blaine has historically favored Republican representation, however, newly drawn electoral maps and changing demographics may have contributed to the DFL's recent success in that area.

Rep. Matt Norris (DFL – Blaine) first ran in 2020 against former Rep. Don Raleigh only to come up short by about 98 votes. However, after the redistricting cycle in 2022, he was able secure victory over Rep. Raleigh by roughly 400 votes. Before elected, Rep. Norris was seen around the capital advocating for an organization called Youthprise. In his first biennium as a state representative, he served on the House Taxes, Housing, Transportation, and Veterans committees.

Republican nominee Alex Moe, an Anoka County court administrator, is looking to unseat the one-term incumbent. Moe is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Duluth and is currently studying law at Mitchell-Hamline Law School.

### **Rep. Zach Stephenson vs Josh Jungling: House District 35A**

House District 35A features the north metropolitan suburbs of Anoka and Coon Rapids. Gov. Walz won the district by more than 1200 votes in 2022, while Rep. Stephenson won his re-election by 856 votes against former House Rep John Heinrich. Stephenson was first elected in 2018 and was named chair of the House Commerce Committee after only one term. He led efforts to legalize adult-use recreational cannabis. Stephenson will face Republican nominee Josh Jungling, a small business owner and the charitable gambling manager for the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association.

### **Kari Rehrauer vs Steve Pape: House District 35B**

This seat is currently held by outgoing state Rep. Jerry Newton (DFL – Coon Rapids), who previously served as state senator for the area before the 2022 redistricting cycle. DFL nominee, Kari Rehrauer, currently serves on the Coon Raids City Council where she has served since 2020. Rehrauer is a former middle school teacher and field staffer for Education Minnesota. Running in 2022 against incumbent Sen. Jim Abeler (R – Anoka) for the 35<sup>th</sup> Senate seat, Rehrauer lost by only 186 votes. Also vying for the seat is Republican nominee Steve Pape.

### **Rep. Elliot Engen vs Jenelle Calhoun: House District 36A**

In what used to be a largely Republican area in the northeastern suburbs, this district area has now flipped to a largely Democratic area. The seat was previously held by two-term Rep. Ami Wazlawik (DFL – White Bear Township) who won her last election in 2020 against current Rep. Elliot Engen (R – Lino Lakes) by only 100 votes.

Republican state Rep. Elliot Engen is seeking re-election in one of the most competitive districts in the metro area. Rep. Engen secured his first electoral victory in 2022 by 642 votes against Susie Strom. In his first term, Rep. Engen served on the House Human Services, Public Safety, and Rules committees. He will face DFL challenger Janelle Calhoun, a non-profit executive from Lino Lakes Minnesota. Calhoun has a background in conflict resolution and identifies as an environmentalist who supports clean energy initiatives.



## **Wayne Johnson vs Lucia Wroblewski: House District 41A**

Currently held by Rep. Mark Wiens (R-Lake Elmo), House District 41A is considered to be the most competitive half of the broader senate district.

Former Washington County Commissioner Wayne Johnson won his primary against Republican-endorsed, Grayson McNew. Johnson served as county commissioner for roughly four years and previously served on the Cottage Grove City Council. DFL nominee Lucia Wroblewski, a retired St. Paul police officer and Afton City Councilmember, is also vying for the seat.

## **Jen Fox vs Tom Dippel: House District 41B**

DFL nominee Jen Fox currently serves on the Hastings City Council. Fox is a former employee of the Department of Commerce working as the Director of Consumer Outreach and Community Relations. She faces returning challenger and Republican nominee, Tom Dippel. In 2022, Dippel ran for the Minnesota Senate, eventually losing to Sen. Judy Seeberger (DFL – Afton) by 321 votes. Dippel is also a small business owner in the area.

## **Rep. Lucy Rehm vs Caleb Steffenhagen: House District 48B**

House District 48B encompasses a large portion of Carver County, including most of Chanhassen and parts of Chaska. This area has a long history of Republican representation, but the Minnesota DFL was able to make inroads in 2022 when Rep. Lucy Rehm (DFL – Chanhassen) beat two-term Republican incumbent Greg Boe by 417 votes. Rep. Rehm currently serves on the House Agriculture, Climate & Energy, Education Finance, and Sustainable Infrastructure committees. The Republican challenger, Caleb Steffenhagen, is currently working as a teacher and National Guard Officer.

## **Rep. Brad Tabke vs Aaron Paul: House District 54A**

House District 54A covers the City of Shakopee and Jackson Township. Like House District 18A, House District 54B has seen a lot of back and forth in the last six years. The area was represented by the DFL in 2018, Republicans in 2020, and the DFL since 2022. The district is currently represented by Rep. Brad Tabke (DFL – Shakopee) who won his 2022 election against incumbent Rep. Erik Mortensen (R-Shakopee) by 1,320 votes. Rep. Tabke lost his 2020 election to Mortensen by 554 votes. Currently serving as Assistant Majority Leader in the House DFL Caucus, Rep. Tabke is being challenged by Republican nominee Aaron Paul, an active-duty police officer.

## **Rep. Jeff Witte vs Brian Cohn: House District 57B**

House District 57B features a large portion of the south metro city of Lakeville and is currently represented by first term Rep. Jeff Witte (R – Lakeville). Rep. Witte is a retired police officer who serves on the House Public Safety and Taxes committees. He will face DFL challenger Brian Cohn, an executive for the Product Development and Management Association and the Project Management Institute.

## **Note to Readers**

*This document provides Larkin Hoffman's analysis of the 2024 General Election in Minnesota. It highlights a number of contested races on both sides of the aisle and discusses their potential impact on the Minnesota Legislature. The goal is not to prognosticate or predict the outcome of individual races, but rather provide a general feel for the tenor of the 2024 campaign and highlight a handful of competitive races that are worth noting.*

*As always, please feel free to contact us if you have questions about any particular race or how various results might impact your ongoing engagement with the State of Minnesota or the Minnesota Legislature.*

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