

2022  
**Primary Election**  
*Preview*



Larkin  
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## INTRODUCTION

With the seemingly ubiquitous presence of social and digital media in American life, it can easily seem as though each election is the most high-stakes moment in recent history. At least until the next one that is.

Heading into this November's mid-term election, it is clear that ongoing concerns over COVID-19, record-breaking inflation across the globe, increasing crime rates domestically, and the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* have a combined potential to create a major shift in political power and political discourse.

This primary election guide is intended to localize national discussions and give an overview of the primary races in Minnesota that have the greatest potential to influence state and local government as well as the Minnesota delegation's role in the U.S. House of Representatives.

# 2022 MINNESOTA ELECTIONS

## WHAT'S ON THE LINE?

The governor and all three statewide constitutional offices (Secretary of State, Attorney General, and State Auditor) are up for election in 2022, along with all eight of Minnesota's U.S. House of Representative seats. Additionally, all 201 of Minnesota's legislative seats are not only up for grabs but have new borders as well.

Every ten years the state of Minnesota is constitutionally required to redraw its electoral maps to reflect the state's population more accurately. New electoral maps usually bring on a surge of political retirements, this is especially true for the 2022 election cycle as the legislature will lose nearly 600 years of combined legislative experience, a total of 39 legislators announced retirement last spring— 20 are planning on seeking a different office. Additionally, 2022 is the mid-term of President Joe Biden's first term as president and historically midterm elections see a shift in support from the president's party to the opposing party.

Capitalizing on the Republican base's major opposition to Covid-19 shutdowns and vaccine

mandates, a group called Action4Liberty has levied serious challenges against sitting Republicans, accusing a number of being insufficiently conservative. For example, Sen. Paul Utke (R- Park Rapids) fell victim to Action4Liberty's organizing efforts during the May endorsement process despite his voting record. The August 9th primary will set the stage for this year's general election, which for many is of utmost importance, voter turnout will be critical on August 9th and will dramatically impact state politics.

Creating even more uncertainty around this year's election is the Supreme Court's recent decision to overturn the decades old legal precedent created by the court case Roe v. Wade which guaranteed the federal right to abortion. Democrats at both the federal and state level have pushed for new legislation that would guarantee the right to an abortion and ensure protections for those traveling to receive the procedure. Some Republicans have voiced concerns that the ruling will mobilize voters for the midterm elections and shift the focus away from the economy and inflation.



# 2022 Election Key Dates

## Key 2022 Election Dates

- **Aug 8** Last day for in-person early voting for primary
- **Aug. 9** **MN primary election / CD-1 Special Election (general)**
- **Sept. 23** Early voting begins for general election
- **Nov. 7** Last day for in-person early voting
- **Nov. 8** **General Election**

# Primary Election Attorney General

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

Minnesota Republicans have not won a state-wide attorney general race since 2006. Frontline Foundation board member and Harvard law graduate **Jim Schultz** is believed by many to be the answer to Republicans' 16-year state-wide drought.

Winning the party endorsement in early May, Schultz faces a contested primary challenge from 2018 GOP attorney general nominee **Doug Wardlow**. Backed by My Pillow CEO and notable supporter of former President Trump, Mike Lindell, Wardlow has appealed to more conservative voters within the Republican party base. The winner will face current **Attorney General Keith Ellison** in the November general election.

# Primary Election Hennepin County Attorney

## HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY

In late 2021, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman announced his intention to retire at the end of his current term.

Traditionally, county attorney races are low-profile affairs. However, the murder of George Floyd by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin has shown a national spotlight on concerns about county prosecutors' ability, and sometimes willingness, to convict police charged with misconduct.

At the same time, calls to “defund” the Minneapolis Police Department, a wave of officer resignations, and a recent increase in violent crime have also ensured that public safety remains a primary issue of debate.

While the position of county attorney is non-partisan, the Hennepin County DFL held an endorsing convention in mid-May and 31-year public defender **Mary Moriarty** emerged as the DFL endorsed candidate.

The former Hennepin County Chief Public Defender, Moriarty has positioned herself as the police accountability candidate. However, her path to victory is complicated by a crowded field, including former judge Martha Holton



Dimick, former Minnesota Bar Association president Jarvis Jones, former Minneapolis City Council Member Paul Ostrow, assistant Ramsey County Attorney Saraswati Singh, and Minnesota House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler.

# U.S. House of Representatives

## Congressional District 1 (GOP Primary)

Spanning Minnesota's southern border, the first congressional district was vacated following the death of U.S. House Rep. Jim Hagedorn (MN-01). Gov. Walz called for a special election to be held on August 9, 2022 (the same date as the normal primary) with a special election primary held on May 24, 2022. Former state representative and Director of USDA Rural Development for Minnesota **Brad Finstad** earned 38.1% of the vote in a crowded Republican primary, narrowly defeating state **Rep. Jeremy Munson** (R- Crystal Lake) who received 36.9%. Meanwhile, former Hormel CEO **Jeff Ettinger** emerged from a crowded DFL primary with a dominant 64.4%.

Finstad and Ettinger now face off against two pro-cannabis candidates in the August 9 special election while also standing for election on their respective party's primary ballots. Finstad is again challenged by state Rep. Munson while Ettinger has only taken Democratic opposition. This unique dynamic sets up a possibility of a special election victory for Finstad on the same day he could conceivably lose the primary and his place on the November general election ballot.

# U.S. House of Representatives

## Congressional District 4 (DFL Primary)

The fourth congressional district includes the state's capital and east metro communities and is currently represented by long-time U.S. House Rep. **Betty McCollum** (MN-4).

Winning the CD-4 nomination with 64%, McCollum beat progressive activist, **Amane Badhasso**. McCollum, a former educator, has represented Minnesota's 4th congressional district since 2001 and is a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee where she currently serves as chair of the Defense subcommittee.

Badhasso was born in a rural village in Ethiopia and came to Minnesota through a refugee resettlement program when she was 13 years old. Badhasso is an international human rights advocate and community organizer and in 2020 was a MN campaign staffer for President Joe Biden.

Rep. McCollum is extremely popular in the district, however, Badhasso has the support of Minnesota's ever-growing east-African population.

## Congressional District 5 (DFL Primary)

Covering all of Minneapolis and a portion of the southwest metro city of Edina, the fifth congressional district features a primary race between U.S. House Representative and 'Squad member' Rep. **Ilhan Omar** (MN-5) and four other contenders including former Minneapolis Councilman **Don Samuels**.

Entering her third election cycle, Rep. Omar has often drawn criticism from both sides of the aisle for controversial comments made to the media, particularly in the area of foreign policy. That being said, she has comfortably defeated primary challengers in both of her other campaigns.

Samuels, however, has emerged as a viable challenger having raised \$600,000 this year, nearly \$200,000 more than Rep. Omar.





# Minnesota Senate

## Minnesota Senate Overview

All 67 seats in the Senate are up for election this November. However, Minnesota's once-in-a-decade redistricting cycle brings a host of new challenges, including a wave of new political hopefuls. In addition to redistricting, the political environment on hot topic issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and inflation have sparked many primary challenges for current GOP incumbents on the basis that the current GOP hasn't done enough to curtail Gov. Walz' emergency powers.

This particular election cycle consists of 23 primary contests in the Senate alone with nine challenges aimed at sitting Senators. The Senate GOP faces the majority of those challenges with seven, while first-term Senator Omar Fetah (DFL- Minneapolis) and veteran legislator Sandra Pappas (DFL- ST. Paul) are the only two sitting Senate Democrats facing primary challengers.

# Minnesota Senate

## Republican Primaries of Note

### **Senate District 1 (Northwest Minnesota) Sen. Mark Johnson (R- East Grand Forks) v. Dave Hughes**

**Sen. Mark Johnson** began his time in the legislature in 2016 as a co-owner with his father in their family's concrete business and a partner at a small law firm. As chair of the once-in-a-decade Senate Redistricting Committee and a resident of one of the most conservative areas in Minnesota, Sen. Johnson received the hotly contested SD 1 primary endorsement over longtime congressional hopeful **Dave Hughes**.

Gaining notoriety as the perennial Republican challenger to former Congressman Collin Peterson (MN-7), Hughes decided to try his hand at state politics after losing the 2020 CD-7 GOP primary to Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach (MN-7). Hughes stirred up some controversy during the 2020 election cycle for touting his 2018 Trump endorsement, despite orders from the White House to cease doing so.

### **Senate District 3 (North Central Minnesota): Kelsey Johnson vs. Andrea Zupancich**

In a race to replace outgoing Sen. Tom Bakk, **Kelsey Johnson**, a former lobbyist and president of the Iron Mining Association of Minnesota, announced she returned to her family's property (late March-early April) in Gnesen Township and announced her return to her family's property in Gnesen Township and her intention to seek the Republican nomination against the Republican endorsed candidate, Mayor **Andrea Zupancich** of Babbitt, Minnesota.

Zupancich, who served as mayor for the last eight years, was endorsed by the Republican Party in April.

The winner will face Grant Hauschild in the November general election in what many see as the seat that could decide the majority in the Minnesota Senate.

# Minnesota Senate

## Republican Primaries of Note

### **Senate District 5 (North Central Minnesota): Sen Paul Utke (R-Park Rapids) v. Bret Bussman**

**Sen. Paul Utke** was first elected to the Minnesota Senate in 2016, having previously owned his own retail hardware and equipment rental store. The former small business owner and insurance salesman lost the Republican battle for the endorsement to **Bret Bussman**, a retired army veteran and CFO of Randell VFW. Bussman won the endorsement with 62% of the vote.

Following redistricting, Senate District 5 is mostly new territory for Sen. Utke and is one of the most reliably conservative areas in the entire state. Bussman has positioned himself as a constitutional conservative claiming Sen. Utke is not conservative enough for the district. The winner faces A. John Peters in November.

### **Senate District 15 (Southwest Minnesota) Sen. Gary Dahms (R-Redwood Falls) v. Larvita McFarquhar**

**Sen. Gary Dahms** is currently vying for his 5th senate term, beginning his Senate career in 2010. Sen. Dahms began his work in government as a Redwood County commissioner after retiring from a career as an insurance agent. Sen. Dahms has chaired the Senate Commerce & Consumer Protection Committee since 2016, but now faces a primary challenge from **Larvita McFarquhar**.

Emerging as a prominent critic of the Covid-19 shutdowns and federal vaccine mandates, McFarquhar is a small business owner and political newcomer focusing her campaign on limited government. McFarquhar is backed by Action4Liberty. The winner of this matchup will go on to face Anita Gaul in November.

# Minnesota **Senate**

## Republican Primaries of Note

### **Senate District 23 (South Central Minnesota) Sen. Gene Dornink (R- Brownsdale) v. Lisa Hanson**

**Sen. Gene Dornink** is currently vying for his second term after defeating long-time DFL Senator Dan Sparks in the 2020 general election. The former union carpenter and small business owner currently serves on the Senate Agriculture & Rural Development Finance and Policy, Capital Investment, Human Services Licensing Committees and is the vice chair of the Labor & Industry Policy Committee.

Sen. Dornink won the Republican endorsement over vocal Gov. Walz critic **Lisa Hanson**. Hanson is a former business owner and is known to be a frequent critic in the media opposing government shutdowns. She has also received a wave of conservative grassroots support from Action4Liberty. The winner faces Brandon Lawhead in November.

### **Senate District 54 (Scott County) Sen. Eric Pratt (R- Prior Lake) v. Natalie Barnes**

**Sen. Eric Pratt** was first elected in 2012 after spending a short tenure on the Prior Lake-Savage school board. Currently Sen. Pratt serves as the chair of the Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Committee. Sen. Pratt lost his endorsement to political newcomer and Action4Liberty backed nurse **Natalie Barnes**.

As a nurse, Barnes has centered her campaign around opposition to vaccine mandates and referred to herself as the pro “health freedom” candidate. The winner takes on Alicia Donahue in the November general election.



# Minnesota **Senate**

## DFL Primaries of Note

### **Senate District 38 (Brooklyn Park) Huldah Hilstley v. Susan Pha**

After a hotly contested convention, Democrats did not endorse in Senate District 38. Brooklyn Park City Council Member and author **Susan Pha** and **Hulda Hilstley**, president of Mwanyagetinge, a Kenyan immigration organization now face off in the primary.

Hilstley maintained a slight lead over Pha throughout the convention, however, she didn't crack the 60% threshold needed for the official endorsement. The winner will face off against Republican nominee Brad Kohler in the November general election.

### **Senate District 56 (Apple Valley) Justin Emmerich vs. Erin Maye Quade**

In an opened district that spans Apple Valley, Rosemount and southeastern Eagan, **Justin Emmerich**, former Senate staffer, coach, and DFL endorsed, is running against **Erin Maye Quade**, a former state representative who ran alongside Sen. Erin Murphey in 2018 as the DFL endorsed candidate for lieutenant governor.

Maye Quade made national headlines when she gave a convention speech while in active labor before ultimately withdrawing, sparking debate about the fairness of the endorsement process. The winner will face Jim Bean in November.



# Minnesota Senate

## DFL Primaries of Note

### **Senate District 62 (South Minneapolis) Sen. Omar Fateh (DFL-Minneapolis) v. Shaun Laden**

**Sen. Omar Fateh** gained notoriety for winning the endorsement and beating long-time Minneapolis Senator Jeff Hayden during the 2020 DFL primary. However, he recently landed himself in the news as the subject of a Senate ethics complaint. Sen. Fateh has worked for the Minnesota Department of Revenue, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the City of Minneapolis before seeking public office.

Having won the DFL endorsement, Sen. Fateh will go head-to-head with primary challenger **Shaun Laden**. As the president of the Minneapolis teachers union, Laden led the first teachers strike in Minneapolis in 52 years this past winter. Laden also worked as an educator in Minneapolis and a community organizer. The winner will face Andrew Schmitz in November.

### **Senate District 65 (Saint Paul) Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL- St. Paul) v. Zuki Ellis v. Sheigh Freeberg**

**Sen. Sandy Pappas** was first elected to the Minnesota Senate in 1990 after serving six years in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The former Senate President received her master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy school at Harvard University. Sen. Pappas won the primary endorsement over a crowded field of primary challengers including St. Paul School Board member **Zuki Ellis**. First elected to the school board in 2015, Ellis served as its chair for two years.

Union organizer **Sheigh Freeberg** is also vying for the DFL nomination. The winner will face Republican challenger Paul Holmgren in November.

# Minnesota House of Representatives

This year, 20 state representatives will retire at the end of the year while 11 others will try filling some of the vacancies left by retiring senators. Only 19 primaries are set for August 9th as compared to the Senate's 23 contested races. This is noteworthy because the Minnesota House is twice the size of the Minnesota Senate. Some of the House Republicans' most conservative members are currently vying for Senate seats which, if elected, may cause a major shift in caucus dynamics for both GOP caucuses.

Centering their message on increasing crime and record-breaking inflation, House Republicans led by Minority Leader Kurt Daudt (R- Crown), feel they are poised to retake the House from the DFL after four years in power. However, re-energized by the recent Roe v. Wade decision, the House DFL caucus believe they have the right message to reach a key voting demographic that could be paramount to in deciding next year's majorities. As candidates settle into their new districts both parties will have to pivot on messaging during this election – as it is believed by many to be a tossup.

# Minnesota House of Representatives

## House District 27B (North Sherburne County): Minority Leader Kurt Daudt (R- Crown) v. Rachel Davis

**House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt** has led the House GOP as both minority leader and speaker of the house. The six-term legislator faces primary challenger Rachel Davis. Positioning herself as significantly right of center, Davis' campaign focuses on election fraud and opposition to vaccine mandates. Davis is supported by Action4Liberty and will likely enjoy strong grass-roots support. The winner faces Brad Brown in November.

## House District 50B (Bloomington) Steve Elkins (DFL- Bloomington) v. Andrew Carlson (DFL- Bloomington)

It is not uncommon for legislators of the same caucus to be drawn into the same districts as one another. Members take different approaches to reconciling this issue, some members move, other retire, and some go head-to-head in a primary. This is the case for two primary races this election cycle, one of which features **Rep. Steve Elkins** who came to the legislature in 2018. After previously serving as Bloomington's city council member and as a member of the city's planning commission Rep. Elkins decided to use his transportation-oriented background in the legislature as a member of the House Transportation committee.

Also seeking the seat is fellow DFL legislator **Rep. Andrew Carlson**, who started his tenure as a House Representative in 2016. Also a former Bloomington city council member, Rep. Carlson is a graduate of Iowa State University where he received a Bachelor's degree in community planning. No endorsement was given for House district 52A. The winner of the hotly-contested primary will go on to face Republican challenger Beth Beebe.



# Minnesota House of Representatives

## House District 52A (Eagan) Rep. Liz Reyer (DFL-Eagan) v. Rep. Sandra Masin (DFL- Eagan)

A second contest between suburban incumbents is taking place in Eagan. **Rep. Liz Reyer** is running for her second term having been first elected in 2020. The executive coach and former Star Tribune business advice columnist is a 25-year resident of Eagan and sat on the board of the Eagan Athletic Association. Running as the endorsed candidate in House District 52A, Rep. Reyer faces long-time Eagan politician **Rep. Sandra Masin**.

Serving in the Minnesota House of Representatives since 2006, Rep. Masin first began her career in politics as a moderator on the Burnsville/Eagan tv show 'Legislative Update'. As one of the most senior members of the House DFL Caucus, she chairs the House Local Government Division. The winner faces Republican challenger Fern A. Smith.

## House District 54A (Shakopee): Rep. Erik Mortenson v. Bob Loonan

Since joining the legislature in 2020, **Rep. Erik Mortenson** has become one of the most controversial figures in the legislature. Rep. Mortenson faces former State Rep **Bob Loonan** for the third consecutive election. Neither candidate was endorsed this spring and the winner will face off against former House Rep. Brad Tabke.



# Minnesota House of Representatives

## **House District 62A (South Minneapolis): Rep. Aisha Gomez (DFL-Minneapolis) v. Osman Ahmed**

Second term legislator **Rep. Aisha Gomez** currently chairs the House Preventing Homelessness Division. The former Minneapolis City Council staffer won the DFL endorsement but faces a challenge from **Osman Ahmed**. A former Director of Outreach for United States Senator Tina Smith (MN), Ahmed is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities with a bachelor's in political science and received his master's degree in education from Augsburg University.

## **House District 66A (Northern St. Paul, Falcon Heights, South Roseville) Leigh Finke v. Dave Thomas**

Outgoing legislator Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL- Falcon Heights) served in the Minnesota state House for 17 terms, equating to 34 of the nearly 600 years in combined outgoing legislative experience. **Leigh Finke**, if elected, would be the first transgender person to serve in either body of the Minnesota legislature. Coming into the race with a background in journalism, Finke works for the Minnesota chapter of the ACLU. Facing off against Finke is teacher and Iraq war veteran **Dave Thomas**. The winner will take on Trace Johnson in the November general election.

## **House District 67A (East St. Paul): Rep. John Thompson v. Liz Lee**

Political activist **Rep. John Thompson** (DFL- St. Paul) earned notoriety for leading a protest outside the Minneapolis Police Union leader Bob Kroll's house. In Rep. Thompson's two-year tenure at the legislature, he has been embroiled in several scandals that resulted in his removal from the House DFL Caucus. He is challenged by endorsed candidate **Liz Lee**. Graduating from Yale University, Lee has worked to shorten the achievement gap among students of color. The winner faces GOP contender Beverly Peterson.

# Larkin Hoffman's Government Relations Team



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This document provides Larkin Hoffman's analysis of the 2022 Primary Election in Minnesota. It highlights a number of contested primaries 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 2022 campaign and highlight a handful of competitive primaries 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.