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## **2022 Statehouse Primary Election Preview**

The Government Advantage Group 2022 Statehouse Primary Election Preview provides an overview of the Statehouse races to watch in this fast-approaching August 2<sup>nd</sup> election. The second primary of this year due to redistricting chaos, the August ballot will feature a total of 51 contested Statehouse races, 45 in the House and six in the Senate. Of those, 21 are incumbents facing challengers, with two Senate Republicans, five House Democrats and 14 House Republicans defending territory. The fact that Republicans are getting a lopsided share of the primary challengers is an interesting point, and may be a result of the types of issues that are rising to the forefront, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there is clearly no shortage of exciting races to watch in this historic election, our report will focus on races that involve incumbents or seem to be more competitive. Turnout will be everything in this primary, and pundits are estimating rates may be as low as 10%. However, Secretary of State Frank LaRose recently announced that he has received 44,000 absentee ballot requests for next month, which seems to indicate higher-than-normal interest for a special election. Still, awareness of the primary is extremely low among most Ohioans. For that reason and others, these races are liable to be unlike any most state legislators have prepared for before. Many legislators did not know what districts they were running in until a few months ago, and are now facing more competitive races than they anticipated or an unexpected primary challenger due to changed district lines. Campaigns are likely to be spending more money on some of these races than previously anticipated, which may impact general election finance strategies.

Here are the races to watch, broken down by chamber and party primary (*Disclaimer: information is included based on publicly available county board of election information, which may not be fully up-to-date*):

### **Ohio Senate**

**District 7 (Republican primary)** – Sen. Steve Wilson has a write-in candidate challenger in Austin Kaiser, who has run in other local Warren County races before. But there's no reason for Wilson to be worried in this matchup.

**District 13 (Republican primary)** – Senate Judiciary Chair Sen. Nathan Manning probably has the most serious primary challenge of all Senate races. State Board of Education member Kirsten Hill is running against him for the seat, and can tout support from several conservative organizations including Ohio Right to Life. The Manning name is strong up in the Lorain County area, however, so this one will be a nail-biter until the end.

**District 17 (Republican primary)** – House member Rep. Shane Wilkin has the caucus endorsement in this republican race to replace term-limited Senator Bob Peterson, who is running for Wilkin's house seat. However, Thomas Hwang, a previous candidate for the House, is seeking to give him a run for his money. The race looks good for Wilkin though.

**District 21 (Democratic Primary)** – In this heavily blue senate seat, term-limited State Rep. Kent Smith is seeking to switch chambers and is up against former State Rep. John Barnes. It is likely Rep. Smith will prevail, however, given Rep. Barnes has previously been unsuccessful in subsequent attempts to run for public office since his departure from the Statehouse in 2018.

## **Ohio House**

**District 1 (Democratic Primary)** – Incumbent freshman Dontavius Jarrells faces community organizer and advocate Carolyn Harding in this Columbus area democratic primary. Rep. Jarrells has the backing of the House Democratic Caucus, while Harding serves in local democratic county party leadership. The primary victor can slide safely to victory in November though in this district without a Republican on the ballot.

**District 2 (Democratic Primary)** – In this Columbus area seat, newer State Rep. Latyna Humphrey is battling a democratic primary opponent with some existing name recognition. Candidate Michael Cole is a member of Columbus City School Board; however, he was unsuccessful in making it past the primary in prior attempts at Statehouse runs. Regardless of who wins on August 2nd, the solidly blue seat will continue to be so after November.

**District 3 (Democratic Primary)** – This packed Columbus primary is certainly one to watch on the democratic side. Kelly Harrop, a former Statehouse aide for departing Rep. Kristin Boggs, will try to best four other democratic candidates who seem to have fewer big name endorsements. Mayo Makinde, former candidate for the seat when it was District 25, appears to be her biggest adversary as he came in third in the 2020 primary election for the seat. DaVon Marshall, Ismail Mohamed and Lamar Peoples are also running. The winner will take on Republican J. Josiah Lanning in November.

**District 16 (Democratic Primary)** – In one of the more headline-worthy primaries this year, two democratic incumbents are in a faceoff for this suburban Cleveland seat. Rep. Bride Sweeney, Ranking Member on House Finance Committee, recently earned the endorsement of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, while Rep. Monique Smith, former Lakewood City Councilmember, can tout some local endorsements for her candidacy. The caucus is backing Rep. Sweeney in the race, citing a previous agreement where Rep. Smith had confirmed she would run in a different district.

**District 17 (Republican primary)** – Longtime legislator Tom Patton is vying to keep his House seat against young challenger Ryan McClain, a self-described "outsider and an America First conservative." McClain previously attempted a run for the House in 2018 against Rep. Sweeney, but Rep. Patton has all the organizational support in the race. This district will be competitive in the general election, and Democrat Troy Greenfield awaits the primary victor.

**District 18 (Democratic Primary)** – After former Sen. Sandra Williams withdrew from this House race to take a position in the private sector, District 18's democratic primary has two

candidates remaining: Darnell Brewer and Vincent Rosemond. Brewer may have the leg up, as he recently earned the endorsement of the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The primary winner will sail smoothly through the general election in this deep blue district.

**District 20 (Democratic Primary)** – Incumbent Terrence Upchurch is fending off a primary challenger in former candidate for Cleveland City Council Michael Seals. We don't expect this to be much of a fight for Rep. Upchurch, who is Ranking Member on the Economic and Workforce Development Committee. Upchurch also recently earned the endorsement of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

**District 22 (Democratic Primary)** – Cleveland incumbent Rep. Juanita Brent, Chair of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus, will face two primary opponents on August 2nd: trauma counselor and activist Danielle Dronet, who has been planning her run since last year, and educator Vincent Stokes II. All signs point to this race not being a tough one for the incumbent.

**District 24 (Democratic Primary)** – This open Cincinnati-area seat is host to a democratic primary between Dani Isaacsohn and former State Rep. Dale Mallory (2007-2014). Isaacsohn, with a history working on national political campaigns, has the endorsement of all major democratic Cincinnati officeholders, potentially because Mallory previously left office under a cloud of scrutiny after pleading guilty to misdemeanor counts related to false lobbying disclosures in 2014. The victor in this primary will face Republican Adam Koehler for what should be an easy general election for Democrats in November.

**District 28 (Republican primary)** – Former Hamilton County Commissioner Republican Chris Monzel is hoping to best fellow primary candidate Kim Georgeton to win the opportunity for a rematch in the general with incumbent Democrat Rep. Jessica Miranda, now Minority Whip. Rep. Miranda won the last election for the seat by less than 3,000 votes, and this district will be one to watch again in November.

**District 30 (Republican primary)** – Veteran Statehouse legislator Bill Seitz has a primary opponent in Angela Hymer. But no one expects this to be a tough one for Seitz.

**District 31 (Democratic Primary)** – There's a democratic primary in this district, currently held by Republican Rep. Bill Roemer. Lucas Blower and Rita Darrow are vying for the chance to flip this seat, which barely favors Democrats by 50.39%.

**District 41 (Democratic Primary)** – In this Toledo area district that leans democratic by barely over 51%, law student Colin Flanagan is up against retired mental health professional Nancy Larson for the democratic nod. Flanagan has the endorsement of departing member Michael Sheehy, while Larson has been touting her experience on the campaign trail. The winner will take on Josh Williams in November.

**District 46 (Republican primary)** – Incumbent freshman legislator Thomas Hall is fighting for this seat against Matt King, who, at 27, is only one year older than Hall and employed by Hightowers Petroleum Co. Local politics is everything in this race, as King has the backing of a prominent local elected, while Rep. Hall can point to substantive legislative victories in his short time at the Statehouse.

**District 47 (Republican primary)** – State Rep. Sara Carruthers has a primary opponent in real estate agent Cody Harper. Meanwhile, 19-year-old Sam Lawrence has already started his general campaign against Rep. Carruthers, assuming she will be victorious.

**District 55 (Republican primary)** – Incumbent Health Committee Chair Scott Lipps is fending off a challenge from adjunct Miami University instructor Thomas Goodwin. Goodwin is focusing his campaign on pledging to offer increased communication and accessibility with the public than the incumbent.

**District 58 (Republican primary)** – Current State Rep. Al Cutrona has a write-in to contend with in Jeff Green, but the real fight for him will be in the general election with the district drawn bluer than it was in the past. He will face Canfield Councilman Bruce Neff in November.

**District 59 (Democratic Primary)** – The democratic primary is packed to replace Michele Lepore-Hagan, who is not running again, in this new Youngstown district. John Dyce, a two-time candidate against current Columbiana County Rep. Tim Ginter, is looking for a better chance at reaching the Statehouse now that he's been drawn into this bluer seat. He'll be up against Youngstown Councilwoman Lauren McNally and School Board Member Ronald Shadd, however. Young veteran Wayne Penny Jr. is also on the ballot, although he appears not to have the institutional support of some of the others.

**District 61 (Republican primary)** – The current occupant of the new district 61 has only been in office since March when he replaced Rep. Rick Carfagna, who departed for a job at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. That incumbent, Shawn Stevens, is being primaried by Beth Lear, who previously unsuccessfully ran in a primary for the seat in 2016. Stevens has the support of the caucus, but his name recognition may be lower than a traditional incumbent.

**District 64 (Democratic Primary)** – Bria Bennett and Vince Peterson II are facing off to earn the spot of democratic candidate in this blue Trumbull County seat being vacated by term-limited Michael O'Brien. Bennett may have some additional name recognition as one of the plaintiffs in a redistricting lawsuit filed against the state. Peterson has done district work for area Congressman Tim Ryan. The winner will face Nick Santucci, who has put together an impressive campaign thus far, in November.

**District 65 (Republican primary)** – State Rep. Mike Loychik is the incumbent in this primary race against well-known Randy Law, who served in the Statehouse many years ago. Recently though, Law has been an unsuccessful candidate for this district, although he did win a role as County Party Chair. The caucus is backing Loychik in the race.

**District 68 (Republican primary)** – It's a rematch between State Rep. Mark Fraizer and businessman candidate Thaddeus Claggett for the Republican spot on the general election ballot in this Licking County seat. The former race between these two got nasty, especially after former speaker Larry Householder weighed in on the race with financial support. It's safe to say both candidates are likely taking nothing for granted in this primary.

**District 70 (Republican primary)** – State Rep. Brian Lampton is looking to defend his seat against business owner Katherine Shutte, who is seeking to challenge him from the right. The general election Democrat is Eric Price.

**District 78 (Republican primary)** – House Families & Aging Committee Chair Susan Manchester is also being challenged from the right in her Republican primary against pathologist J.J. Sreenan. Manchester is seen as a rising Republican star at the Statehouse, although Sreenan can tout endorsements from a variety of conservative groups. This one may be close depending on voter turnout.

**District 85 (Republican primary)** – Departing legislator Nino Vitale’s wife, Lilli Vitale, is hoping to keep this district in the Vitale name by running for her term-limited husband’s seat. She faces business owner Tim Barhorst and former Champaign County Republican Party Central and Executive Committee leader Rochiel Foulk on August 2nd. In this district, the primary election is the race.

**District 86 (Republican primary)** – Incumbent Tracy Richardson faces Honda employee Michael Bohland in the Republican primary. Bohland is campaigning to “fix Ohio politics,” but Army Reservist Richardson has a lot of respect in her community.

**District 90 (Republican primary)** – Rep. Brian Baldrige is fending off a primary challenge from Calvin Robinson, who does not appear to have much of a campaign presence. This Republican district should see an easy general election though.

**District 98 (Republican primary)** – Third-term incumbent Darrell Kick is facing attorney and political consultant Scott Pullins on August 2nd. Pullins, a longtime Knox County conservative who is politically vocal, is running to the right of Rep. Kick with a focus on healthcare freedom and proposing a redistricting constitutional amendment.