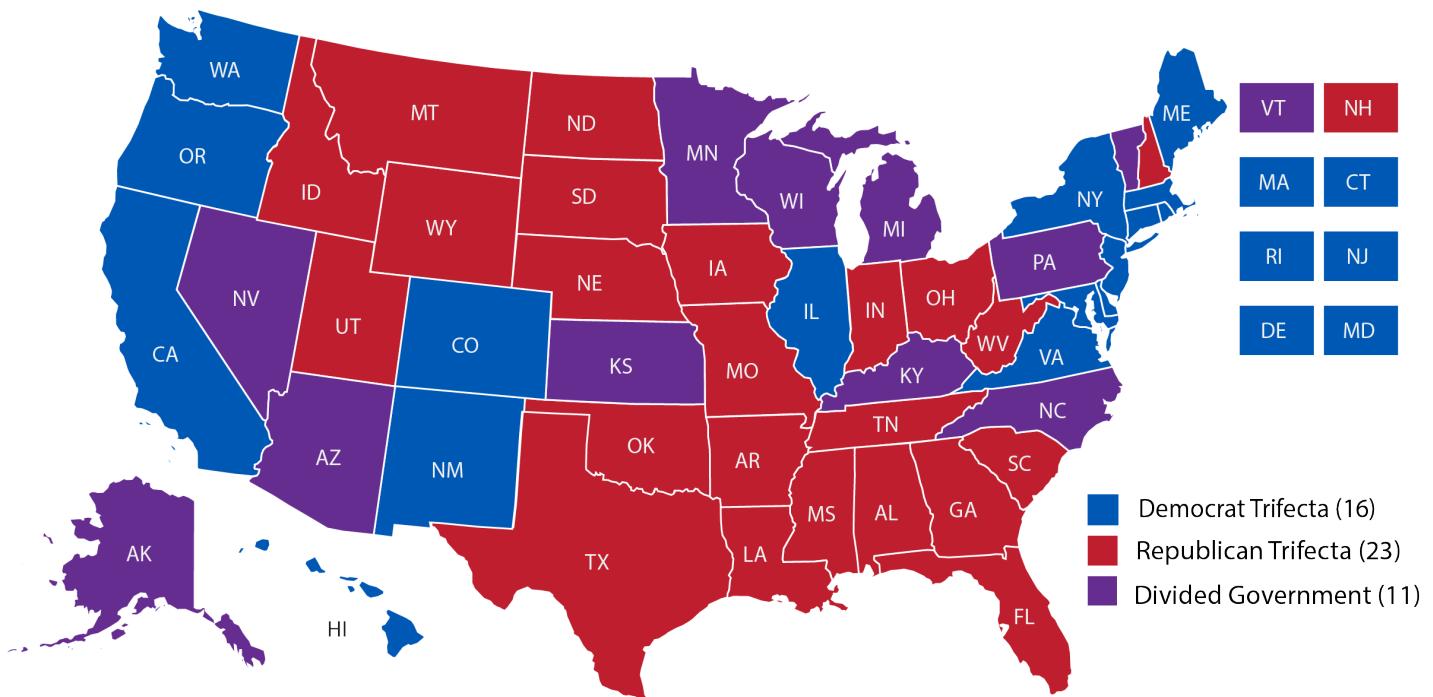


2026 STATE ELECTION PREVIEW

Overview

2026 Pre-Election Party Control

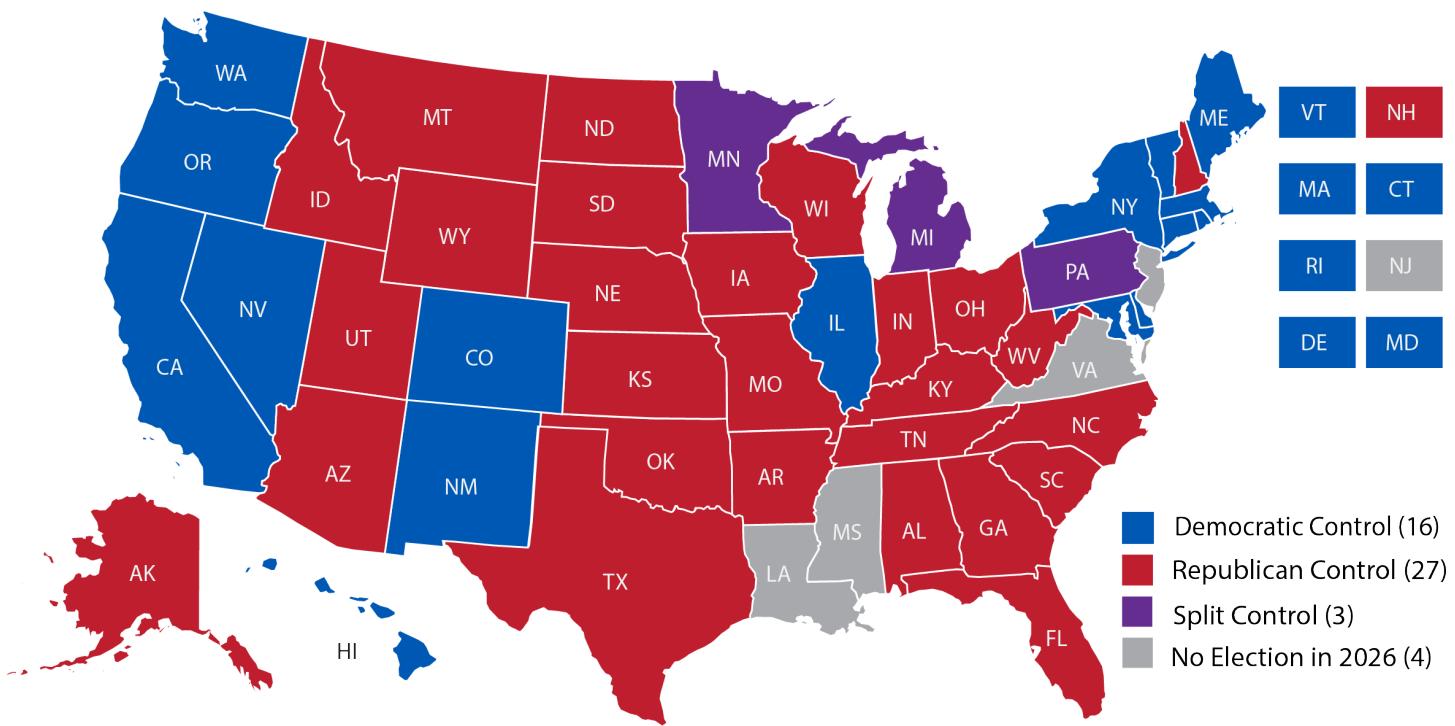


After a relatively sleepy off-year election season last year, 2026 brings November elections in almost every state. Thirty-six states are holding elections for governor, 30 for attorney general and 46 states will hold elections for at least one chamber of their legislature. With many open gubernatorial seats and several legislatures controlled by razor thin margins, both parties see opportunities for gains and hope to win new trifectas, when one party controls the governor's seat and both chambers of the legislature. Republicans currently hold 23 trifectas to Democrats' 16, with 11 states controlled by divided government. Many of the usual suspects are the states to watch, with **Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin** finding themselves once again as battleground states. Republicans are hopeful they can break the

Democratic trifecta in **Maine**, where Democratic Gov. Janet Mills is term limited and Democrats have a one-seat majority in the house.

Legislatures

2026 Legislative Elections



There are 46 states holding legislative elections in 2026 with 88 of the 99 chambers up for election. Republicans currently control 27 legislatures, while Democrats control 16. Three states have divided legislatures: **Michigan, Minnesota and Pennsylvania**. These states will see hotly contested elections as both parties try to win complete control of the legislature. Other states to watch are **Arizona, Maine and Wisconsin**, where the majority party in at least one chamber has narrow margins.

Arizona

Republicans currently control both chambers of the legislature, but with relatively narrow margins, Democrats see an opportunity to break GOP control of the legislature. A chamber flip to Democrat would be the first time since 1992 in the senate, and the first time since 1964 in the Arizona House of Representatives. All 30 senate seats and all 60 house seats will be up for election. Republicans hold a six-seat majority in the house and a four-seat majority in the senate. With such close margins in the legislature and Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs also on the ballot, trifecta control of Arizona is in play for both parties. Democrats are hoping to flip at least one legislative chamber to

prevent unified Republican control, while Republicans are aiming to defend their majorities in the house and senate and retake the governor's office to establish a trifecta.

Maine

Democrats currently control both chambers of the legislature and the governor's office, giving the party a trifecta. That said, Democrats only hold a six-seat majority in the senate and a one-seat edge in the house. With all 35 senate seats and 151 house seats up for election, Democratic control of the legislature hangs closely in the balance. Democratic Governor Janet Mills is not on the ballot, so Democrats will focus on defending their slim majorities to preserve unified control, while Republicans need to flip just one seat in the house to break the Democratic trifecta.

Michigan

All 38 senate seats and all 110 house seats will be on the ballot and Michigan Republicans will look to continue their momentum from the 2024 election that saw them break a Democratic trifecta and take control of the house.¹ Republicans enter the cycle with a six-seat advantage in the house, while Democrats hold a slim one-seat majority in the senate. With Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer term-limited and not on the ballot, an opportunity for trifecta control exists for both parties.

Minnesota

All 134 house seats and 67 senate seats will be up for election in the legislature this year, setting up Minnesota's 2026 election cycle as one of the most contested in the country. Republicans currently control the house by one seat, while the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party have a one seat advantage in the senate. With DFL Governor Tim Walz declining to run for a third term² and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D) announcing her run on January 30th, 2026, control of the state legislature may be decided by a small number of competitive districts.

Pennsylvania

With the senate controlled by Republicans, and the house by Democrats, both parties hope to take control of another chamber while defending their own. Half of the 50 senate seats will be up for election, and all 203 house seats are up. Democrats have a narrow one-seat majority in the house, while Republicans have a four-seat majority in the senate. With Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro also on the ballot for a second term, Democrats are hoping to establish trifecta control in this battleground state.

¹ NPR, *Outspent 4-to-1, Republicans still made gains in state legislative elections*, at <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/14/nx-s1-5191885/legislature-election-results-2024> (November 22, 2024).

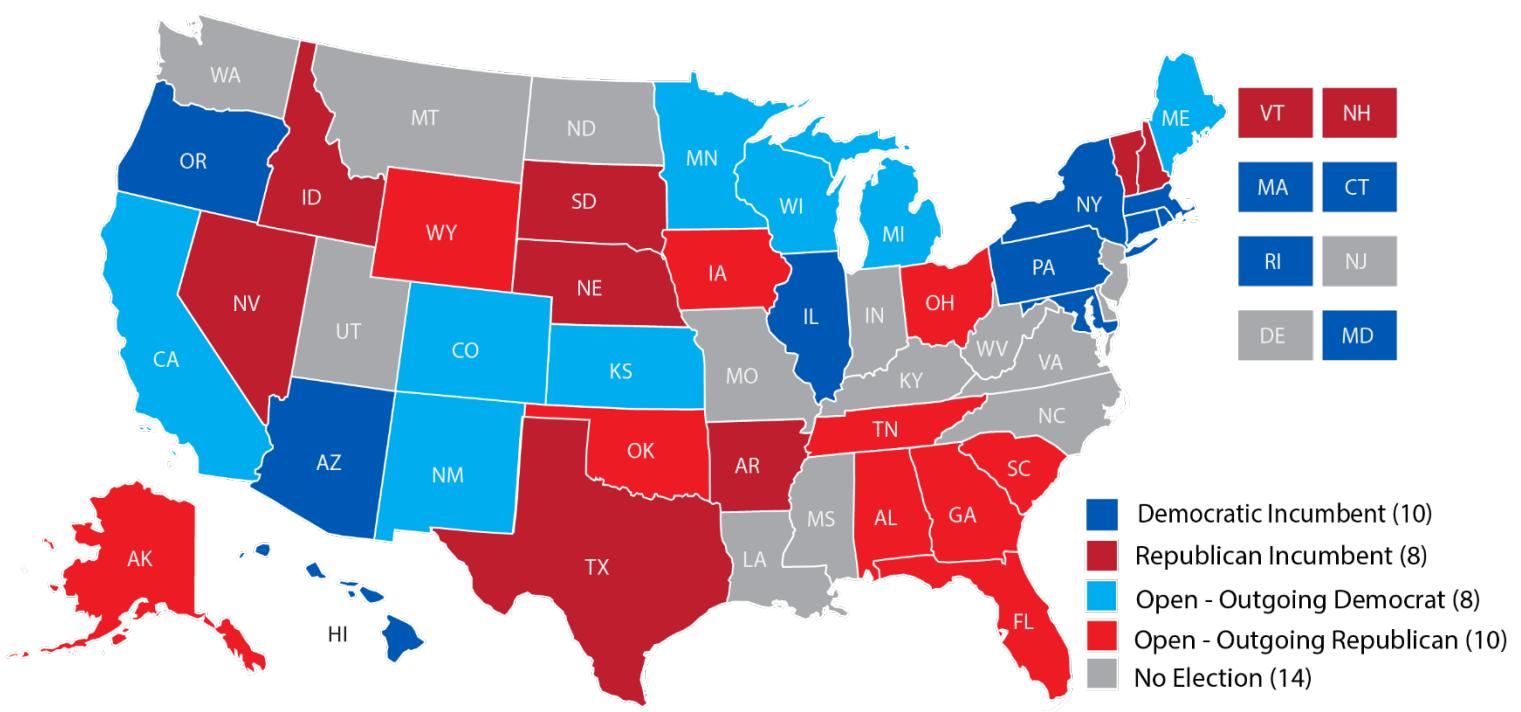
² Politico, *Tim Walz drops out of Minnesota governor's race, Klobuchar considers jumping in*, at <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/01/05/tim-walz-out-minnesota-00710541> (January 5, 2026).

Wisconsin

After picking up four senate seats in 2024, Democrats are hoping to again capitalize on the new voting district maps that were drawn after the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled the old Republican-leaning maps unconstitutional. Republicans control the senate by only three seats.³ Republicans also control the assembly, but by a more comfortable nine seats. If Republicans can hold onto both chambers and flip the governor's seat, they'd establish trifecta control in Wisconsin.

Governors

2026 Governor Elections



Thirty-six states are holding gubernatorial elections in 2026. There are 10 Republican incumbents running for re-election and 10 Democrats. Half of the 16 open seats are currently held by Democrats, and half by Republicans. Despite these even numbers, Democrats will be on the defense this year as they look to keep vulnerable seats in **Arizona, Kansas, Michigan and Wisconsin**. Republicans' only vulnerable states, on the other hand, are **Georgia and Nevada**.

³ Wisconsin Public Radio, *Fight for control of Wisconsin Senate is shaping up ahead of 2026 election*, at <https://www.wpr.org/news/fight-for-wisconsin-senate-shaping-up-2026-election> (July 23, 2025).

Arizona

Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs is running for a second term in a state that Republican President Donald Trump won by five and half percent in 2024. If Republicans hold their majorities in the house and senate, unseating Governor Hobbs would give them trifecta control of the state.

Currently U.S. Representative Andy Biggs, Representative David Schweikert, and attorney Karrin Taylor Robson, who ran in the 2022 Republican primary, have declared their candidacies for the Republican nomination.

Georgia

Republican Governor Brian Kemp is term limited and ineligible to run for reelection. While Georgia still leans right at the state level, two Democrats were elected to the Public Service Commission in 2025, marking the first time a Democrat won a non-federal statewide election since 2006.⁴ If Democrats can flip the governor's seat, it would break the Republicans' trifecta.

Republican candidates for governor include Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr, Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. Democrats have a crowded primary, with former Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, former Republican Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan, state senator Jason Esteves of Atlanta, state representative Derrick Jackson or Tyrone, and still others jumping into the race.

Kansas

Kansas is Republicans' best opportunity for a gubernatorial flip, where Democratic Governor Laura Kelly is term limited and ineligible to run for reelection. While Governor Kelly remains popular, Kansas is a solidly red state, and a third consecutive Democratic term seems unlikely.⁵ A Republican win would reestablish the party's trifecta control in the state.

Republican candidates include former Governor Jeff Cloyer, Senate President Ty Masterson of Andover, Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt and Secretary of State Scott Schwab. Democratic candidates include state senator Ethan Corson of Fairway, and state senator Cindy Holscher of Overland Park.

⁴ Race to the WH, *The 2025-2026 Governor Forecast*, at <https://www.racetothewh.com/governor/26> (accessed January 13, 2026).

⁵ *Ibid.*

Michigan

Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer is term limited and ineligible to run for reelection. Without an incumbent, both parties are looking to capitalize in this perennial swing state. Complicating things for Democrats is Mike Duggan, the former Democratic mayor of Detroit, who is running as an Independent. Polling shows that support for Duggan is largely coming from Democratic-leaning voters.⁶

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is the frontrunner in the Democratic primary after Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist dropped out of the race to run for secretary of state.⁷ On the Republican side, U.S. Representative John James is leading a crowded field that includes former Attorney General Mike Cox, former House Speaker Tom Leonard and Senator Aric Nesbitt of Porter Township.

Nevada

Republican governor Joe Lombardo is running for a second term. Democrats, who control both chambers of the legislature, are looking to establish a trifecta in a state that Republican President Donald Trump won by three percentage points in 2024. Governor Lombardo will likely face Democratic Attorney General Aaron Ford.

Wisconsin

Democratic Governor Tony Evers is retiring at the end of his second term, leaving an open seat in this purple state. Republicans, who control both chambers of the legislature, are hoping to establish a trifecta. Democrats, however, will also be trying to flip control of the legislature.⁸

A crowded Democratic primary finds former Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes facing off against current Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez. Many others are running including Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, state Representative Francesca Hong of Madison, and state Senator Kelda Roys of Madison. The Republican field is much smaller with Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann running against U.S. Representative Tom Tiffany.

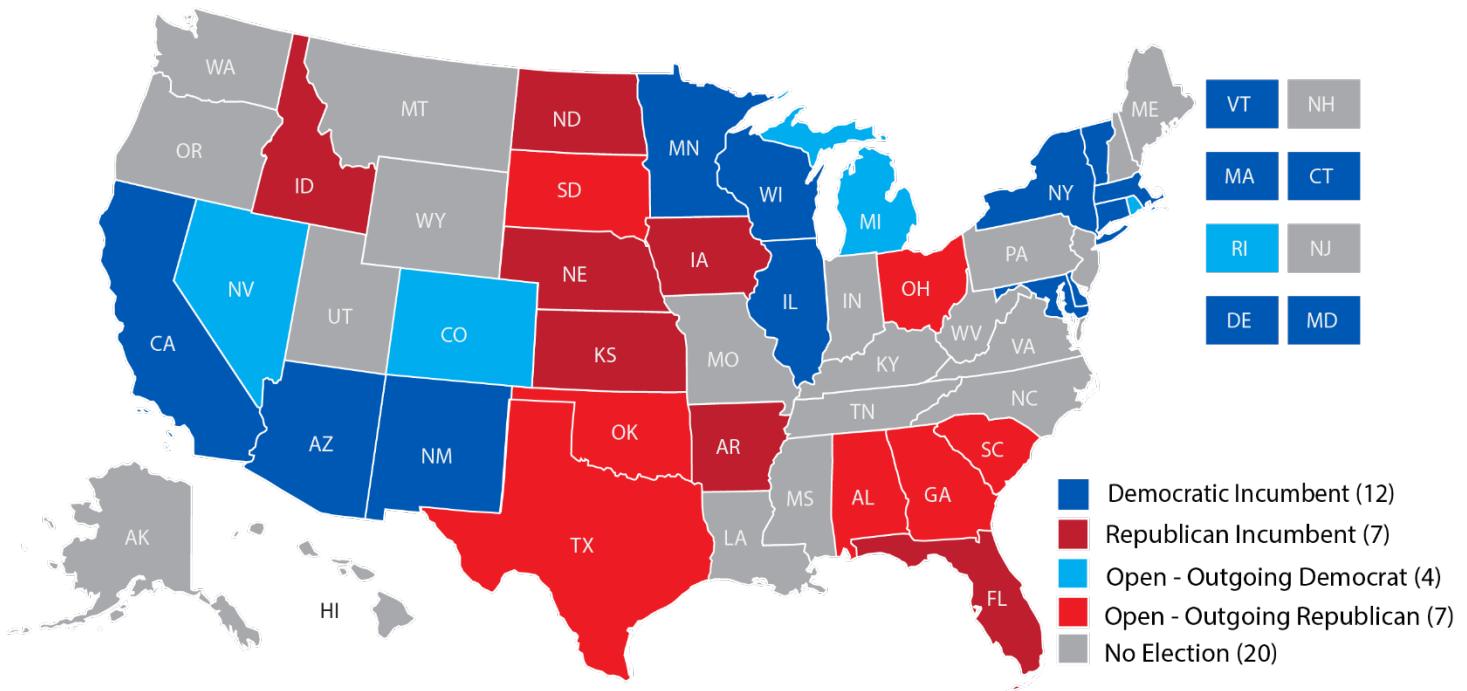
⁶ WLNS, *James lead Michigan governor race; Duggan sways Dems*, at <https://www.wlns.com/election-2026/michigan-gubernatorial-primaries-leads/> (December 2, 2025).

⁷ The Detroit News, *Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist ends bid for governor to run for secretary of state*, at <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2026/01/12/garlin-gilchrist-ends-bid-for-michigan-governor-to-run-for-secretary-of-state/88135995007/> (January 12, 2026).

⁸ The Cap Times, *Control of Wisconsin government truly up for grabs in 2026*, at https://captimes.com/news/government/control-of-wisconsin-government-truly-up-for-grabs-in-2026/article_1ee967a0-4f25-4af0-baa2-b437206f0392.html (December 23, 2025).

Attorneys General

2026 Attorney General Elections



There will be 30 elections for state attorney general in the 2026 cycle, with 11 open seats where incumbents are not seeking reelection. Eleven incumbent attorneys general are currently unopposed in their reelection campaigns, mostly coming from Democratic strongholds, like **California** and **Maryland**, or deeply Republican states, such as **Idaho** and **Nebraska**. Like the races for governor, Democrats will have an uphill battle to defend control of seats in the swing states of **Arizona**, **Michigan**, **Nevada** and **Wisconsin**.

Georgia

Outgoing Republican Attorney General Chris Carr leaves an open seat as he joins the gubernatorial race. On the Democratic side, state Representative Tanya Miller of Douglas and former state House Minority Leader Bob Trammell have declared their candidacy. The Republican field includes state senator Bill Cowser of Clarke and state senator Brian Strickland of DeKalb.

Kansas

Democratic challenger Chris Mann will face incumbent Republican Attorney General Kris Kobach in a rematch of the 2022 election, which was decided by fewer than two

percentage points. Attorney General Kobach is highlighting endorsements from U.S. Senator Ted Cruz and U.S. Senator Roger Marshall as part of his campaign.

Michigan

Outgoing Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel is term-limited and ineligible to seek reelection, creating an open seat and a crowded field of candidates. Democrats will choose between Karen McDonald, who is currently the party's fundraising leader, and Mark Totten, the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Michigan. County prosecutor Eli Savit is also running with support from more progressive and left-leaning groups. The Republican field includes lawyer Matt DePerno, who unsuccessfully ran for the office in 2022 and faces felony charges related to election tampering, as well as lawyers Kevin Kijewski and Doug Lloyd.

Nevada

With Democratic Attorney General Aaron Ford term-limited and beginning a campaign for governor, an open seat is left behind in an important swing state. Looking to replace him are Democratic candidates state senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro of Clark, and State Treasurer Zach Conine. On the Republican side, the field includes Adriana Guzman Fralick, chair of the cannabis compliance board, and county commissioner Danny Tarkanian.

Texas

Outgoing Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton is running for the U.S. Senate, opening the race for his successor. The Republican field includes Aaron Reitz, a former Paxton aide who has been endorsed by the attorney general, state Senator Joan Huffman of Brazoria, who oversaw recent Texas redistricting, state Senator Mayes Middleton of Brazoria, and U.S. Representative Chip Roy, who has been endorsed by prominent national Republicans including U.S. Senators Ted Cruz, Mike Lee, and Rand Paul. On the Democratic side, candidates include former Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski and state senator Nathan Johnson of Dallas.

Wisconsin

Republican challenger Eric Toney hopes to unseat Democratic incumbent Josh Kaul in a rematch of a 2022 race that was decided by fewer than two percentage points. Attorney General Kaul, who was rumored to be looking at a gubernatorial run, will instead seek a third term as Wisconsin's top law enforcement official.

Conclusion

The 2026 election cycle will be a consequential one, with control of governorships, legislatures, and attorney general offices in play across nearly the entire country. Narrow margins, a relatively high number of open seats, and shifting political dynamics in key battleground states create multiple pathways for both parties to gain or lose trifecta control. Keep an eye on states like **Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin** for the possible shifts in control. AFSA will continue to track the 2026 elections and their implications for state-level policymaking.