



**TO:** DCCC Members & Staff  
**FR:** Ben Ray Luján, DCCC Chairman  
**DT:** June 21, 2017  
**RE:** The House is in Play – Let's March into '18 Together

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Friends and colleagues,

Last night's results in Georgia were disappointing – we wanted to win and left everything on the field. Despite the loss, we have a lot to be proud of. The margin was close in this deep red district, and Jon Ossoff pushed the race to the limit in both the primary and runoff by impressively mobilizing the base and persuading independents and moderate Republicans. We will carry those key lessons forward in order to compete in districts as Republican-leaning as Georgia, and also the dozens of districts on our battlefield that are much more competitive.

Let this motivate you. Because the momentum is real and we have a lot of work to do. Why?

### **THE HOUSE IS IN PLAY.**

We have a unique opportunity to flip control of the House of Representatives in 2018. This is about much more than one race: the national environment, unprecedented grassroots energy and impressive Democratic candidates stepping up to run deep into the battlefield leave no doubt that Democrats can take back the House next fall.

I don't make this statement lightly – I've never said it before. I know the road back to a Democratic House majority will be long and hard. It necessitates fielding strong candidates with diverse profiles that fit unique Republican-leaning districts. It demands that we continue embracing a big tent mentality, listening to the voices of everyday Americans and articulating a positive vision for our future. It demands that we build the best team possible and train the next generation of campaign staff.

Just a few months into the cycle, we have already taken a number of exciting new steps. We launched *March into '18* and put organizers into Republican-held districts earlier than ever, aimed toward House Republican accountability. We developed an unprecedented national training program in DCCC-University that has already trained over 2,900 potential staffers. And we partnered with allied progressive organizations, like Swing Left, VoteVets, EMILY's List, BOLD Pac and labor allies to bolster our candidates and campaigns.

But let me be clear: we will never take anything for granted. We face an unprecedented amount of Republican special interest money that will stop at nothing to retain their grip on power. We will be outspent, but we will not be outthustled.

I have never been more confident that together we can achieve our goal united as a party, a caucus, and a family. That's why I want to share with you exactly why I believe the House is in

play in 2018.

## National Environment & Historical Trends

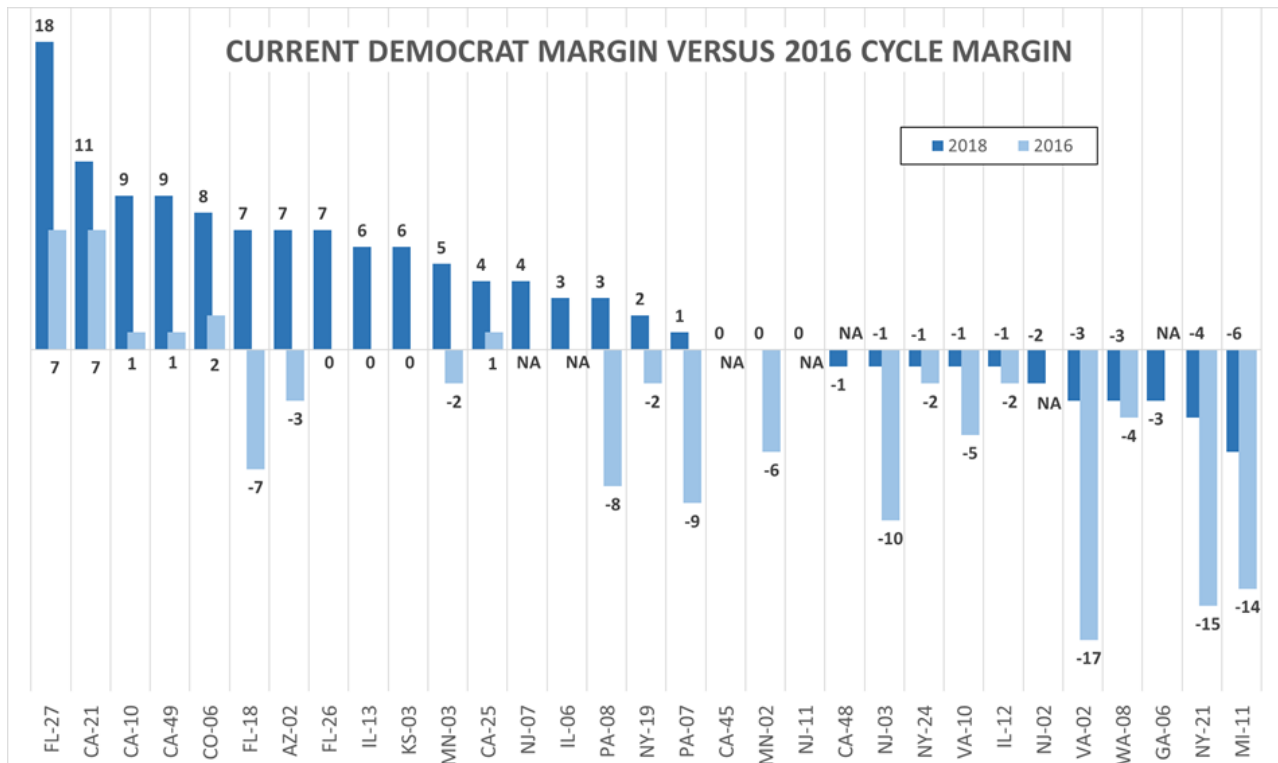
Every election cycle presents unique challenges, and we will only win races in 2018 by being close to the ground, talking to voters and earning their trust. However, the national environment and historical trends are key indicators as well, and there's no doubt that the momentum is on our side.

As you know, we need 24 seats to retake the majority. Our DCCC polling team and outside pollsters went into dozens of districts in the last few months to learn: Is the momentum real? Is it building to the point that we can win 24 seats and take back the House? The answer is yes. In more than 24 districts and counting, generic Democrats are leading in the polls or have already made significant shifts from the last polls of the generic available in 2016 (*Chart 1*).

It's not just the generic. We've also tested the named head-to-head between Republican incumbents and specific Democrats, and the results are staggering. Many incumbents - who won with double digits last cycle - would be in the race of their careers, including Reps. McSally (D+5), Brian Mast (D+3), Kevin Yoder (D+2) and Rodney Frelinghuysen (D+3).

And it's clear that President Trump's job approval is not only abysmal nationally, but in the House battlefield (*Chart 2*). After only 5 months of Republican-controlled Washington (Trump's supposed honeymoon), it's clear there's plenty of room for both of these data sets to worsen for House Republicans. This could also lead to further retirements that create important open seats.

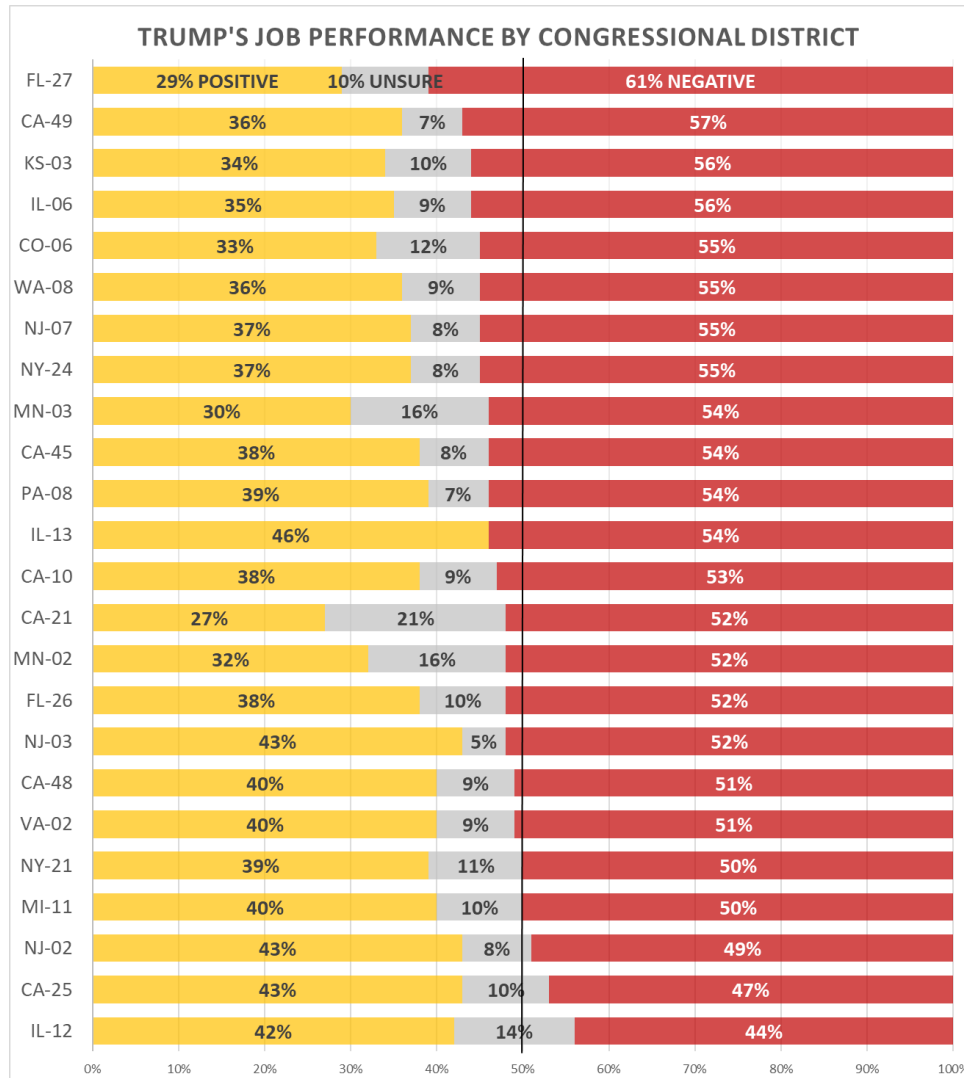
**Chart 1: Congressional Generic D vs. R**



*These polls were conducted between March 28<sup>th</sup> and June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 among likely November 2018 voters. Polls were conducted by both the DCCC and outside pollsters, and the margins of error range from 5.2% to 3.7%. All DCCC polls used a combination of IVR calls to landlines and live calls to cell phones, and all pollster surveys were conducted with 100% live calls.*

*\*Trump job performance was not asked in all polls & Texas districts were excluded until new district lines are drawn\**

**Chart 2: President Trump Job Performance**



Beyond this district-specific data, the nationwide collapse of support for President Trump, Speaker Ryan, and the Republican Party benefits House Democrats in the midterm:

- On average, the incumbent President’s party **loses 28 seats in the president’s first midterm election.**
- In the [FiveThirtyEight.com average](#), **38.7% of Americans approve of President Trump while 55.3% disapprove.** One recent Gallup poll showed President Trump with -23 net approval rating. There are even signs that the Republican base is already starting to show cracks, with the latest [CBS poll](#) having Trump’s approval amongst Republicans at a dangerously low 72%.
- In the [FiveThirtyEight.com average](#), the **generic congressional ballot favors Democrats by 6.9% points.**
- An [average of polls](#) shows that only **29.9% of Americans hold a favorable view of Speaker Ryan**, while 49.3% hold an unfavorable view.

## Unpopular and Dangerous Republican Agenda

There is a reason that the national momentum is moving away from House Republicans: Their agenda is deeply unpopular and would wreak havoc on hardworking Americans – in all districts and across party lines. The American people deserve a Congress that will look out for their families, neighbors and communities, put country before party, and provide a fair check and balance on the Trump Administration. Unfortunately, Republicans have failed to live up to our Founders' vision for the People's House.

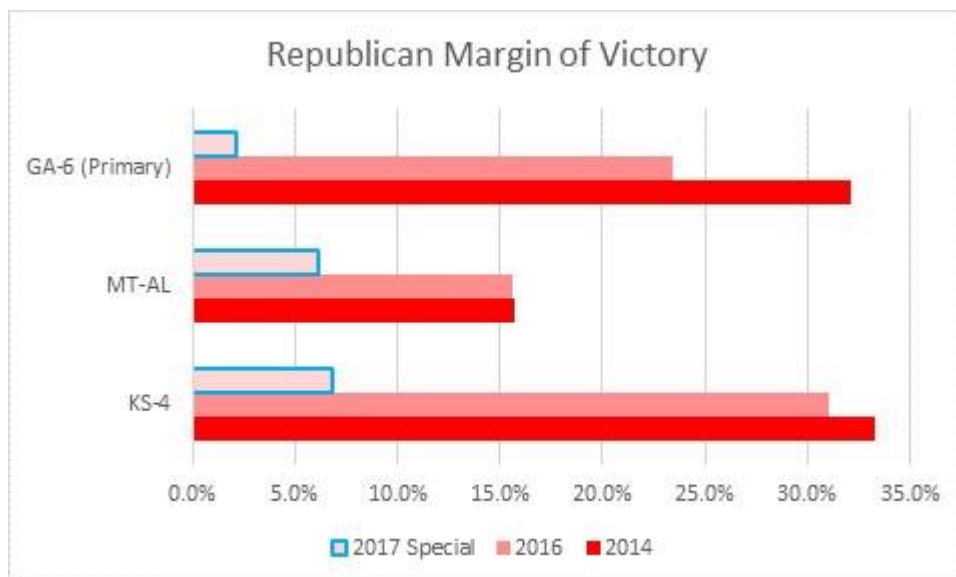
Look no further than their healthcare repeal bill. It will rip health care away from 23 million Americans, impose an unfair age tax on folks over 50, jack up your costs, and undermine protections for people with pre-existing conditions. Poll after poll has shown that Americans strongly reject this bill. A recent New York Times [analysis](#) found that the Republican bill isn't supported by a single state in the country. Shamefully, Republicans are still standing confidently behind their support of this bill. Their decision to do so will haunt every single House Republican through Election Day.

It's not just health care. Republicans continue to undermine and attack everything from women's health to investments in rural America and our education systems, and voters are rightfully furious. Americans understand that Republicans have full control of Washington and now they know what that looks like.

## Special Election Trends

Recent special elections have offered a real-time look at the toll of the national environment and Republican agenda on their electoral prospects. Newt Gingrich's deep red seat in Georgia should never have been in play, yet Jon Ossoff only narrowly lost and dramatically outperformed the typical Democrat in this district.

Let's put this into context for our work ahead: there are somewhere between 94 and 71 Districts more competitive depending on how you measure it. We will take the many lessons learned from Georgia's 6<sup>th</sup> District and apply them to the battlefield, which consists of many districts that are fundamentally far more competitive.



## **Where We Go From Here: Recruitment Blitz**

We are going to build the largest House battlefield in a decade and [we've already made incredible progress with recruitment](#). Thank you for your hard work and success this early in the cycle.

In order to continue capitalizing on this environment, we need top-tier candidates to fill the remaining holes in our map. Let's look outside of the traditional mold to keep recruiting local leaders, veterans, business owners, women, job-creators, and health professionals. Let's take the time to find people who fit their districts, have compelling stories, and work hard to earn support from voters.

This week and into July, we will deploy senior DCCC staff as well as partners and DCCC alumni who have ties to targeted districts to continue our recruitment push. Our goal will be to use the momentum from Tuesday's close race to lock in top recruits, initiate conversations with prospective candidates, and further engage current candidates, local leaders and activists. I will be joining you on the road, and plan to visit Maine, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Missouri and Illinois in the coming weeks.

We have our work cut out for us. Taking back the majority will not be easy – despite the grassroots energy and the winds at our backs, we have a number of real structural disadvantages in these districts.

Every single one of us must give it our all if we are going to be successful in 2018. We all answer the call to action – and do this work - for different reasons, but we have the same goal: A Democratic House majority.

Thank you for being part of the team – I could not do this without you. Now let's get back to work.

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