

Election Overview

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Election Season

Election Day, November 8, is almost here.

Connecticut — the land of steady habits—will likely live up to its moniker as we do not expect drastic changes in the political landscape. Recent polls have indicated that incumbents Governor Lamont and U.S. Senator Blumenthal are leading by double digits over their respective challengers Bob Stefanowski and Leora Levy. The tightest race continues to be for the federal CT-05 district as Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (D) is trying to fend off George Logan (R). Polls have indicated this is a true toss-up. If Logan wins, he will be the first Republican Congressman from Connecticut since 2008.

At the state level, Democrats expect to retain majorities in both the House and Senate. The House is currently 97-54 Democrat. While the Democrats may lose up to 10 seats, they will likely retain a substantial majority. The Senate is 23-13 Democrat. There are true toss-up races in the CT State Senate elections, so it is possible there could be a 3-seat swing in either direction, which would still leave Democrats in control of the Senate. Connecticut has been resistant to so called “red waves” in the past, but, if challengers peak at the right time the possibility exists, there could be tighter margins.

We will also see fresh faces in the Constitutional offices. Historically, the offices of Comptroller, Treasurer, Attorney General, and Secretary of State positions have been won by Democrats. William Tong (D) is running for re- election for Attorney General, and it appears State Rep. Sean Scanlon (D) will be elected Comptroller, State Rep. Stephanie Thomas (D) will be elected Secretary of State, and CT Democratic Party Vice-Chair Erick Russell will be elected Treasurer.

Early Voting on the Ballot

On Nov. 8, Connecticut voters will also be asked a question that could change when people can head to the polls in future elections. The question will appear on the ballot as follows, "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to permit the General Assembly to provide for early voting?" Early voting would allow people to vote in-person before Election Day. Legislators previously approved asking Connecticut voters whether they should move forward in considering early voting, and that question is appearing on the ballot this election cycle. Answering “Yes” would allow lawmakers to vote on whether they would want early voting in the state of Connecticut. The legislature would have to change the wording in the state constitution to accomplish this end. That's also when lawmakers would decide how soon “early voting” would start and other circumstances surrounding early in-person voting. A confusingly

worded early voting question was on the CT ballot in 2014 and it failed by 4 percentage points.

Uncontested CGA Races

There are 39 candidates who will be elected to the CT General Assembly on Nov. 8 as they are running in uncontested races. There are another three candidates expected to easily win as they are facing challenges from minor party candidates. This accounts for a substantial 28% of the 187 elected members of the General Assembly. These seats go uncontested because their districts are so lopsided, meaning the only test at the polls comes if there is a primary. Factors such as a newer sensitivity to work-life tensions arising from irregular hours and so-so pay, combined with political factors, such as polarization and districts drawn to discourage competition, are leaving many races uncontested this year. These factors may also have resulted in 30 incumbents deciding not to run for re-election this year. Between the turnover this year, 2020, and 2018, it is expected nearly half of the legislators will have fewer than 4 years of experience when the 2023 legislative session commences.

Special Session Set for after Election

State legislative leaders are likely to call a special session shortly after the November elections to extend Connecticut's gasoline tax holiday through the winter months and discuss Covid pay for essential workers, according to House and Senate leaders. The gas tax holiday, which was initially set to run from April 1 through June 30 and was eventually extended to Nov. 30, also included fare-free service on Connecticut transit buses. The Democratic majority in both chambers also would use a session in late November or early December to add money to a badly underfunded bonus program for private-sector workers who staffed essential services during the coronavirus pandemic. Neither

Sen. Martin Looney, President Pro-Tempore nor Rep. Matthew Ritter, Speaker of the House, have committed to a specific date, but both said the extension their caucuses are considering would keep the gas tax holiday in place through February or March. And if federal funding for the winter energy assistance programs isn't enhanced, Democrats would consider boosting the state resources in this area as well.