

PA-08 District Primer

In 2024, Republican Rob Bresnahan won this seat by 6,252 votes. *That's close!* Dems lost this district by just over *one vote per precinct*. If we can persuade just two voters per precinct, we can win this year. With your help, we're going to **FLIP** this key seat and secure a Democratic House majority in 2026.

Key dates

Filing Deadline: March 10

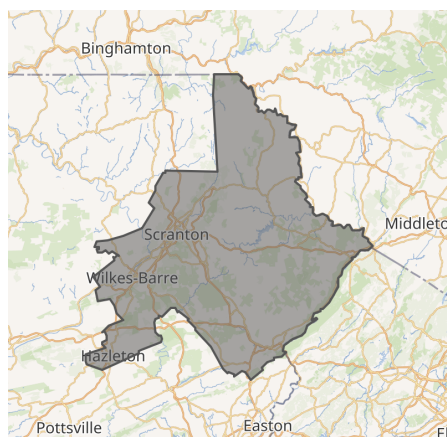
Primary: May 19

Midterms: November 3

Recent Election Results

2024 Presidential Election	2024 House Election	2022 House Election
Trump: 210,245 (53.8%) Harris: 177,063 (45.4%)	Rob Bresnahan (R): 195,663 (50.8%) Matt Cartwright (D): 189,411 (49.2%)	Matt Cartwright (D): 146,956 (51.2%) Jim Bognet (R): 139,930 (48.8%)

District Facts & Stats



Largest Cities

- Scranton, pop. ~76,000
- Wilkes-Barre, ~45,000
- Hazleton, ~30,000

Geography

Located in northeastern PA, the district is a mix of suburban and rural communities centered on Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. It includes all of Lackawanna, Pike, and Wayne counties, plus much of Luzerne and Monroe. The area has a history of coal and iron mining which has nearly disappeared in the 21st century.

Citizenry

The district is slightly older, whiter, and less affluent than national averages. The district was re-drawn in 2018 to be less Democratic, with parts of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre being replaced with more conservative, rural counties of Wayne and Pike. Major employers are primarily in healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics. There are more than ten colleges and universities in the district, including the University of Scranton, Penn State Scranton, and Geisinger Medical School.

The Local Vibe

In virtual town halls hosted by Rep. Bresnahan, cuts to Medicaid and Social Security have been the dominant concerns.

An ICE detention center in Pike County houses 240 detainees. There were anti-ICE rallies in downtown Scranton in January 2026 following the shooting of Renee Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis.

No Kings protests in October 2025 drew hundreds in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. In March 2026, hundreds turned out for protests in Scranton and Honesdale.

Despite running on an anti-corruption platform, Rep. Bresnahan is embroiled in a stock trading scandal, having allegedly used his knowledge of pending legislation to dump shares of PA companies. He is among the most active stock traders in Congress.

Sign up for another event: mobilize.us/swingleft

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Key Issues

- **Threats to benefits:** 27% of district residents rely on Medicaid, including more than half of all children. 15% rely on SNAP. Cuts to these programs will hurt vulnerable residents, especially seniors and kids.
 - **Economic disruption:** Erratic tariff policy threatens manufacturing and logistics in the district.
 - **Energy costs:** The average household has two cars and each worker commutes about an hour daily. Tariffs and Trump's quagmire in Iran are sending energy costs through the roof, squeezing family budgets while damaging local manufacturing and logistics businesses.
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About the Candidates

Rob Bresnahan | Republican Incumbent

Rob Bresnahan is a first-term incumbent who narrowly defeated Democrat Matt Cartwright in 2024. He was born in 1990 in Wyoming, PA and graduated from the University of Scranton in 2012. He took over as CEO of a third-generation family business at a young age, having joined the company as CFO while still in college. He has deep, multigenerational roots in Luzerne County.

He serves on the House Committees on Agriculture as well as Transportation and Infrastructure.

Although he presents as a pro-business moderate rather than a MAGA zealot, he voted for the One Big Beautiful Bill Act which cut federal benefits in the district. His constituents are feeling the pain.

When he was elected, his personal wealth was estimated at approximately \$50M. Although Bresnahan campaigned to prohibit stock trading by members of Congress, he has become the second-most active stock trader in the 119th Congress, making 626 stock trades worth \$7.24 million by August 2025. As of April 2026, his campaign had about \$2 million on hand..

Paige Cognito | Democratic Challenger

Paige Cognito is the mayor of Scranton. She was born in 1980 in Beaverton, OR, and graduated from the University of Oregon and Harvard Business School. She was elected as mayor in 2019 as an Independent running on an anti-corruption platform that was so popular it even garnered a nickname, "Paige Against the Machine." Prior to serving as mayor, she worked for the Pennsylvania Auditor General. .

She is a centrist Democrat focused on anti-corruption, pro-union, pro-consumer policies, while also supporting small business and business investment in the district.

She's been endorsed by prominent local Democrats including Gov. Josh Shapiro and former Rep. Matt Cartwright, and she has secured endorsements from national organizations like Emily's List, Giffords PAC, Everytown for Gun Safety, the League of Conservation Voters, and others. She is among the first cohort of 2026 House candidates named to the DCCC's influential Red-to-Blue program. In March, she was profiled in the *New York Times*, cementing her reputation as a rising star in the Democratic Party. As of April 2026, she had \$2.2 million on hand and was out-raising her GOP opponent.

The contrast: Despite his bipartisan rhetoric, Bresnahan has voted with the Republican majority most of the time, including for the OBBA, cutting key benefits for constituents, and the SAVE Act to disenfranchise voters. He also is under scrutiny for misusing his position to trade stocks for his own benefit. Cognito has a record of anti-corruption and supporting government funding for important priorities. Once again running on an anti-corruption platform, Cognito is focused on delivering for her constituents rather than using her House seat to line her pockets.