

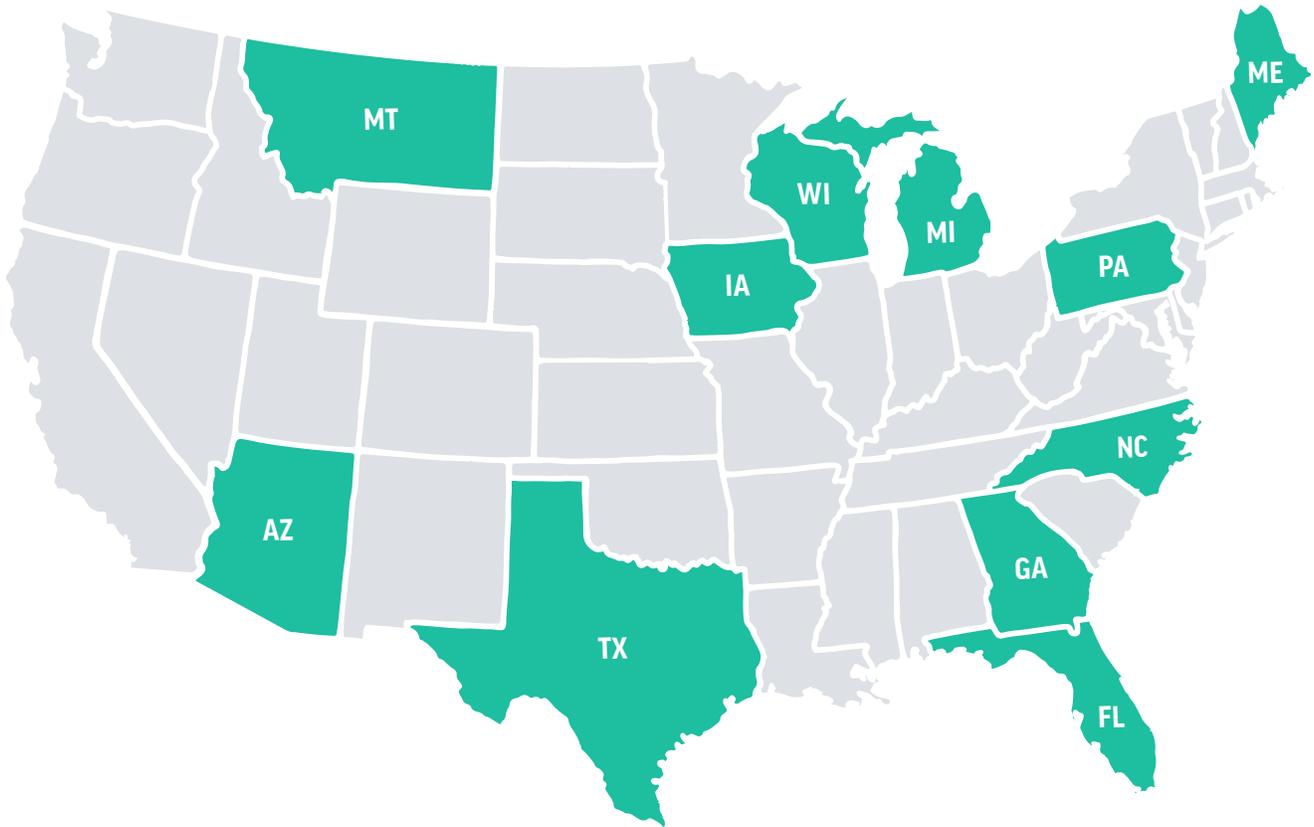
BLUEPRINT

State of the Race

JULY 2020

BLUEPRINT 2020 TARGETS

This map shows the states where Blueprint has recommended investment to date in the 2020 cycle.¹



Arizona

Q1 Voter outreach target
Q2 Senate target
Q2 State legislative target

Georgia

Q2 Voter outreach target
Q3 Senate target
Q3 Voter outreach target

Michigan

Q3 State legislative target

Pennsylvania

Q1 State legislative target
Q2 State legislative target
Q3 State legislative target

Iowa

Q2 Senate target

Maine

Q2 Senate target

North Carolina

Q1 Senate target
Q1 State legislative target
Q2 Voter outreach target
Q3 Senate target
Q3 Voter outreach target

Texas

Q1 State legislative target
Q3 State legislative target
Q3 Voter outreach target

Florida

Q3 Voter outreach target

Montana

Q3 Senate target

Wisconsin

Q1 Voter outreach target
Q2 Voter outreach target

Swing Left created
Blueprint to make
it easier for
you to maximize
the impact of your
political donations.

By providing you with a new portfolio each quarter, Blueprint enables you to give strategically to Democratic candidates in competitive races up and down the ballot, as well as nonpartisan civic organizations working to strengthen our democracy, throughout the year.²

We have arrived at a pivotal moment in the cycle.

Democratic candidates, especially Joe Biden, are polling well in key races up and down the ballot, outpacing their GOP opponents in fundraising,³ and competing in many winnable races that were previously considered long shots. For Democrats, a challenging electoral landscape has, over the course of several months, transformed into a traversable battleground.

This high point for Democrats shouldn't be viewed as a definitive preview of what's to come in November, but it does warrant a closer look. In this State of the Race report, we examine how Democrats' prospects for the presidency, Senate, and select state legislative chambers have evolved since January. Analyzing the map's transformation helps us pinpoint why certain races are close, which candidates are most vulnerable to a late-stage resurgence from President Trump, and where we should invest funds now to provide candidates with an advantage going into the final stretch of the cycle.

WINNING THE WHITE HOUSE

An expansive electoral battleground, rife with opportunity

Since becoming the presumptive nominee, Biden has maintained a consistent lead over Trump compared to much more erratic polling throughout the course of the 2016 cycle. Biden's strong support has plateaued at a nearly 10-point lead as we head into August whereas Trump appears to be at his nadir. By comparison, Hillary Clinton had just a three-point national lead in July of 2016.

Though positive polling does not assure victory, these numbers are helpful for understanding how public sentiment is changing, especially in the most competitive battlegrounds. The state of play in this year's presidential contest is markedly different from 2016. States that weren't competitive four years ago, like Iowa, are now on the map. Moreover, Biden is outperforming Trump in a number of must-win states that the president carried in 2016, such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Florida.

Expected Path to 270 Electoral College Votes⁴

Solid Democrat		Likely Democrat		Lean Democrat		Toss Up		Lean Republican		Likely Republican		Solid Republican	
CA	55	CO	9	FL	29	AZ	11	IA	6	AK	3	AL	9
CT	7	ME ⁵	2	MI	16	GA	16	OH	18	IN	11	AR	6
DC	3	NV	6	MN	10	ME-02 ⁶	1	TX	38	KS	6	ID	4
DE	3	VA	13	NE-02 ⁷	1	NC	15			MO	10	KY	8
HI	4			NH	4					MT	3	LA	8
IL	20			PA	20					SC	9	MS	6
MA	11			WI	10					UT	6	ND	3
MD	10											NE ⁸	2
ME-01 ⁹	1											NE-01	1
NJ	14											NE-03	1
NM	5											OK	7
NY	29											SD	3
OR	7											TN	11
RI	4											WV	5
VT	3											WY	3
WA	12												
188		30		90				62		48		77	
308						43		187					

Recently, the Biden campaign has turned to cautiously expanding its offensive approach in emerging battleground states, including Texas and Georgia. While polling shows Biden and Trump neck-and-neck in these states, increased voter registration among young voters and voters of color presents a dramatically different electoral landscape compared to 2016, or even the 2018 midterms.¹⁰ All the while, the abysmal response to the coronavirus pandemic—the failure of Republican governors closely aligned with the president—continues to fuel flagging approval numbers and an urgent need for new leadership.

Presidential battlegrounds are a key component of Swing Left’s Super State Strategy, a targeted plan that prioritizes 12 states crucial for two or more of the following objectives: winning the presidential, flipping a Senate seat, and/or flipping a state legislative chamber to prevent another round of Republican gerrymandering. These states are Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Within this set of targets, Blueprint has, to date, zeroed in on Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin by funding nonpartisan civic organizations working on voter registration, protection, and turnout.¹¹

States We’re Watching

Arizona	July 2020 Polling ¹²	Florida	July 2020 Polling ¹³
Biden +3.9	49.0%	Biden +6.5	50.1%
Trump	45.1%	Trump	43.6%
Georgia	July 2020 Polling ¹⁴	North Carolina	July 2020 Polling ¹⁵
Biden	45.9%	Biden +2.2	48.5%
Trump +0.9	46.8%	Trump	46.3%
Texas	July 2020 Polling ¹⁶	Wisconsin	July 2020 Polling ¹⁷
Biden +0.7	46.5%	Biden +6.8	49.0%
Trump	45.8%	Trump	42.2%

Of course, favorable polling in July does not guarantee a landslide victory for Biden in November. While the national party conventions will be scaled down this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, we typically see shifts in public opinion that coincide with the national media’s coverage on each party’s election messaging. Similarly, we expect to see small changes in polling around the final weeks before Election Day that reflect undecided voters getting off the fence as the campaign culminates in the three scheduled debates.

At this moment, what is most clear is that the Biden campaign has an incredible opportunity in expanding the map and winning states thought to be GOP strongholds.

RETAKE THE SENATE

Once a long shot, now within reach

In late January 2020, as we were preparing to launch the Blueprint beta, leading indicators pointed to Democrats having a narrow and challenging path to victory in the United States Senate. Democrats need to pick up four seats in November, or three if they win the White House and control the tie-breaking vice presidency.

However, according to the nonpartisan Cook Political Report's January 31 ratings, only three Republican-held seats were considered Toss ups at the time: Arizona (Martha McSally), Colorado (Cory Gardner), and Maine (Susan Collins).¹⁸ North Carolina (Thom Tillis) was widely viewed as a must-win seat for Democrats, but that race—along with the remaining 22 races for Republican-held seats—was ranked favorably toward the GOP. Democratic Senator Doug Jones's race for re-election in Alabama further complicated the electoral calculus, with the race for his seat also being classified as a Toss up.¹⁹

By early March, the electoral map started to shift. Following Cal Cunningham's emergence as the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in North Carolina, Cook Political Report updated the race for Tillis's seat to a Toss up. This is a prime example of an important factor in races: the ability of the party's nominee to affect how competitive, or uncompetitive, a race is likely to be.

The Kansas Senate race exemplifies this. If Kris Kobach becomes the GOP nominee in Kansas, the race will become more competitive since Kobach is an unpopular candidate who lost a statewide election in 2018.

Nationally, Biden's ability to clinch the Democratic presidential nomination in early April and improve his polling since mid-April has also had an expansive and uplifting effect on the broader Democratic Senate map. In large part, this is the **coattail effect** in action, wherein the popularity of a political candidate at the top of the ticket translates to greater support for fellow party candidates further down ballot. By July 20th, Biden had spent over a month with an average lead of nine to 10 points in polls,²⁰ and on July 23rd, Cook Political Report released new Senate ratings showing Democrats as slightly favored to win the Senate majority.²¹

2020 Blueprint Target U.S. Senate Races

State	January Rating	July Rating
Arizona Mark Kelly (D) v. Martha McSally (R)	Toss Up	Lean Democrat
Georgia Jon Ossoff (D) v. David Perdue (R)	Likely Republican	Toss Up
Iowa Theresa Greenfield (D) v. Joni Ernst (R)	Likely Republican	Toss Up
Maine Sara Gideon (D) v. Susan Collins (R)	Toss Up	Toss Up
Montana Steve Bullock (D) v. Steven Daines (R)	Solid Republican	Toss Up
North Carolina Cal Cunningham (D) v. Thom Tillis (R)	Lean Republican	Toss Up

A number of factors help determine the evaluated competitiveness of a race. Incumbent net approval, fundraising figures, and polling all help to pinpoint races where extra dollars have the potential to increase a candidate's vote share. The increased competitiveness of the Senate map is reflected in the latest fundraising figures for cash on hand at the end of Q2:

- In Arizona and Montana, both Democratic nominees had more cash on hand than their Republican opponents: Mark Kelly reported \$23.9 million compared to McSally's nearly \$11 million, and Steve Bullock had close to \$7.6 million while Steven Daines had \$7.1 million.
- The Democratic nominees in North Carolina and Maine were close behind the Republican incumbents, with Cunningham reporting \$6.6 million to Tillis's nearly \$6.9 million and Sara Gideon reporting \$5.4 million to Collins's \$5.8 million.
- However, in Georgia and Iowa, Jon Ossoff and Theresa Greenfield are still trailing their opponents, reporting \$2.5 million and \$5.8 million, respectively, compared to Perdue's \$10.7 million and Ernst's \$9.1 million.

Similarly, the latest polling averages for Blueprint's six 2020 Senate target races support the analysis that these races are within reach for Democrats. Kelly is leading by 8.4% in Arizona, Ossoff is down by 1% in Georgia, Greenfield is ahead by 2.7% in Iowa, Gideon is leading by 4.0% in Maine, Bullock is up by 1.7% in Montana, and Cunningham is ahead by 5.4% in North Carolina.²²

While it may be tempting to assume that Democrats' odds of retaking the Senate will only grow in the weeks ahead, this isn't necessarily the case. We are currently observing what is almost certainly the peak for Democrats in the 2020 cycle; although Biden is enjoying a comfortable lead in numerous polls, the presidential race is likely to grow more competitive as the election nears. Just as Biden's strong polling has buoyed candidates in races that weren't initially considered to be part of Democrats' core Senate electoral battleground, improved Trump polling could have a depressive effect on their chances in the weeks to come.

FLIPPING STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS

A decade of voting maps and rights on the line

In addition to boosting Democrats' chances of retaking the Senate, Biden's coattails can help down-ballot Democrats in competitive state legislative races. The prevalence of straight-ticket voting means that Democratic voters who are motivated by the prospect of winning the White House also drive more support in lower-profile state and local races, which are often decided by close margins.

Blueprint's 2020 strategy pinpoints the most competitive offensive and defensive targets in five state legislatures where investing in Democratic candidates can change the balance of power: **Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas.**

Our target districts are largely concentrated in the suburbs, where the coattail effect is particularly relevant. A decades-long disintegration of Republican strongholds in suburban areas, now accelerated by Trump's collapse among white college-educated and older voters,²³ means that the voters who will decide these majority-making seats are more favorable to Democrats than in years prior.

This is akin to "The Beto Effect" during the 2018 midterms, when enthusiasm for Beto O'Rourke's Senate campaign—built on successful grassroots organizing and fundraising—helped Democrats flip 12 GOP-held seats in the Texas State House, a chamber that could turn blue.

2020 Presidential General Election Polls²⁴

<u>Arizona:</u>	<u>Michigan:</u>	<u>North Carolina:</u>	<u>Pennsylvania:</u>	<u>Texas:</u>
Biden +3.9%	Biden +7.9%	Biden +2.4%	Biden +7.0%	Biden +0.7%

Democrats made important inroads in all five target states in 2018, laying the groundwork to flip Republican-held chambers this November. In Arizona, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, Democrats are close to majorities in both the State House and State Senate, which, in North Carolina and Pennsylvania, would secure unified control of the state with Democratic governors in office. In Texas and Michigan, Democrats have a chance to flip each state's lower chamber, making progress toward a Democratic-led legislature in 2022.

Going into 2021, these new pro-democracy majorities will help ensure fair voting maps during the upcoming round of Congressional and legislative redistricting. Additionally, Democrats can help dismantle GOP-backed voter suppression policies, from a strict voter ID law in North Carolina to prohibitive restrictions on vote-by-mail in Texas.

State of Play in Our Target Chambers

Blueprint 2020 Target Chambers	Number of Blueprint 2020 Target Seats	Seats to Flip for Democratic Majority in 2020	Net Democratic Seats Gained In 2018
Arizona State House	3 / 60	2	4
Arizona State Senate	4 / 30	3	0
Michigan State House	7 / 110	4	5
North Carolina State House	12 / 120	6	10
North Carolina State Senate	8 / 50	5	6
Pennsylvania State House	16 / 203	9	11
Pennsylvania State Senate	5 / 25 ²⁵	4	5
Texas State House	15 / 150	9	12

While Democrats stand on the brink of gaining power in these chambers, this only intensifies the Republican spending they face in the most competitive districts. Plus, the arrival of the pandemic coincided with many campaigns' transition from the primary to the general election. As a result, what was expected to be a ramping-up period for fundraising became a pause: some candidates adapted their campaign infrastructure to support food drives and wellness checks while others stepped off the campaign trail entirely to support frontline workers.

As the pandemic rages on, candidates who are in need of funding may be reluctant to ask for small-dollar donations in communities grappling with unemployment, health care costs, food insecurity, and more. Meanwhile, candidates with wealthy personal networks can continue to pour money into their races.

With fewer than 100 days until Election Day, Democrats can't afford to fall behind. Unrestricting funding vehicles in states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Texas—three of Blueprint's Q3 targets—allow us to pool contributions to support over 40 candidates running in legislative districts with the potential to secure Democratic majorities. The sooner we're able to provide candidates with funding, the better; early funding helps campaigns pay staff, get their message out to voters, and build effective and nimble programs. As we get closer to the election, contributions will become less likely to impact the outcomes of these high-stakes races.

Candidate Fundraising Snapshot

Blueprint 2020 Target Chambers	Average Cash on Hand per Democratic Candidate In Target Races	Average Cash on Hand per Republican Candidate In Target Races
Arizona State House	\$131,751.49	\$118,649.29
Arizona State Senate	\$129,673.92	\$105,187.19
Michigan State House	\$84,577.29	\$53,725.80
North Carolina State House	\$145,108.06	\$67,834.80
North Carolina State Senate	\$156,267.59	\$149,975.41
Pennsylvania State House	\$58,174.95	\$33,547.50
Pennsylvania State Senate	\$108,209.49	\$209,346.44
Texas State House	\$97,681.17	\$248,228.55

Dysfunctional primaries alongside efforts to improve voting

Perhaps the biggest variable in this election is the ability of state officials to administer elections amid the coronavirus pandemic. Thus far, we've seen several concerning instances of states' shortcomings. Wisconsin's primary showed how Black and brown voters may be forced to choose between their health and their right to vote. Georgia's primary highlighted how voters of color disproportionately bear the brunt, in hours-long lines, of failures in election administration. New York and Pennsylvania's inability to meet the surge in demand for absentee ballots revealed that voters may not know how they'll cast their ballot until Election Day.

Some states are updating their laws to allow people to vote safely this November. To Wisconsin's credit—and to the credit of several grassroots organizations that advocated on voters' behalf—state election officials have agreed to send absentee ballot applications to most registered voters.²⁶ But not all states are enacting changes; in Texas, Republicans are fighting Democrats and voting rights advocates' efforts to expand mail-in voting to people under 65 years of age.

This table, using information sourced from Voting Rights Lab's COVID-19 State Response Summaries, shows how each of the 12 Super States targeted by Swing Left this cycle, as well as Montana since it's a Blueprint Senate target, are managing this crisis.²⁷

States' Response to Voting During COVID-19

State	No-Excuse Absentee Voting	Details
Arizona	✓	One lawsuit wants Arizona to give voters more time to resolve issues with ballot signatures. A separate GOP suit aims to overturn a federal court's ruling that the state's third-party ballot collection law—which criminalizes the collection of another person's ballot—is unconstitutional and racially discriminatory.
Colorado	✓	Colorado, which has held vote-by-mail elections for years, will continue to mail absentee ballots to every voter.
Florida	✓	Counties, rather than the state election officials, are deciding individually whether or not to send absentee ballot applications to voters.
Georgia	✓	Lawsuits are currently attempting to get the state to provide return postage to absentee ballots and extend the return deadline to Election Day.
Iowa	✓	Iowa will mail absentee ballot applications to registered voters.

State	No-Excuse Absentee Voting	Details
Maine	✓	Voters traditionally have needed to provide an excuse when requesting an absentee ballot within three days of an election. As of writing, this three-day limitation has not been waived in response to the pandemic.
Michigan	✓	Michigan will mail absentee ballot applications to registered voters.
Montana	✓	A Montana court blocked a law prohibiting third-party ballot collection, which Native American groups had criticized for disproportionately disenfranchising Native voters.
North Carolina	✓	Lawsuits are aiming to get the state to provide return postage on absentee ballots, eliminate its witness requirement, and allow voters to address any issues with their ballots before they're rejected.
Ohio	✓	Ohio will mail absentee ballot applications to registered voters.
Pennsylvania	✓	Lawsuits are seeking to get the state to provide return postage on absentee ballots, send absentee ballot applications to all registered voters, and give voters the opportunities to rectify any signature mismatches on their ballots.
Texas		Voters must provide an excuse to request an absentee ballot unless they are 65 years of age or older. Health concerns due to the pandemic do not qualify.
Wisconsin	✓	Wisconsin will mail absentee ballot applications to registered voters.

Democrats have a chance to dramatically shift the balance of power in our country this November.

Still, the favorable conditions we're observing presently may not last through Election Day. We're likely to see a tightening of the gap in the presidential race in September and/or October. The uncertainty around what's to come is why it's crucial to invest to strengthen these campaigns now so that they will be well-positioned to withstand any changes in the fall. This is particularly true for the Democratic nominees in the Georgia, Montana, and North Carolina Senate races as Biden's strong showing at the top of the ticket continues to drive the races' increased competitiveness.

The GOP, well aware of what's at stake this November, has been fundraising and spending considerably in an attempt to save their state and federal legislative majorities from collapsing with Trump. Additionally, the party is investing in anti-voting measures aimed at continuing the Republican practice of restricting access to the ballot. Trump and the RNC have doubled their litigation budget to \$20 million in order to combat vote-by-mail efforts, and the Trump campaign recently filed a lawsuit in Pennsylvania over election officials' vote-by-mail procedures.

Furthermore, the pandemic is exacerbating obstacles to voting that were created by the GOP's yearslong systematic weaponization of voter suppression laws—which overwhelmingly leaves voters of color, young people, and low-income individuals at a disadvantage. This is why the work of nonpartisan civic organizations, such as those recommended through Blueprint, is so important: these community-based groups will be able to use their established networks to turn out unlikely voters, educate voters on their options, and advocate for safe and fair elections.

Although the election isn't far away, it is far from over. Investing with [Blueprint](#) is a high-impact way to help Democratic candidates leverage the momentum of this moment into strong finishes this fall.

NOTES

1. This map does not include additional geographies featured in custom Blueprints.
2. Civic organizations listed by Blueprint are non-partisan 501(c)(3)s and/or 501(c)(4)s. Organizations and strategies across various tax statuses are provided for donor information purposes only and do not imply coordination.
3. This is predominantly for federal candidates as Democratic fundraising still skews toward the top of the ticket despite the less costly and highly important nature of down-ballot races. Historic underinvestment in down-ballot races is one of the reasons why Blueprint includes state legislative races in our recommended portfolios.
4. "2020 Electoral College Ratings," The Cook Political Report, July 23, 2020.
5. Maine splits its four electoral college votes, with two reflecting the statewide winner and two reflecting the results within each Congressional district.
6. Maine splits its four electoral college votes, with two reflecting the statewide winner and two reflecting the results within each Congressional district.
7. Nebraska splits its five electoral college votes, with two reflecting the statewide winner and three reflecting the results within each Congressional district.
8. Nebraska splits its five electoral college votes, with two reflecting the statewide winner and three reflecting the results within each Congressional district.
9. Maine splits its four electoral college votes, with two reflecting the statewide winner and two reflecting the results within each Congressional district.
10. While in-person voter registration across the country has been hamstrung by the need for social distancing, civic organizations were able to make significant inroads in the first few months of 2020 and in years prior. For example, the voter rolls in Texas increased by 800,000 between 2002 and 2012; since November 2018, Texas has added nearly 600,000 newly registered voters, including 149,000 since March of this year. Texas now has 16.4 million registered voters, or 2.1 million more than it had in 2016. Jeremy Wallace, "Texas voter registration surges to 16.4 million, despite the pandemic," Houston Chronicle, July 9, 2020.
11. Civic organizations listed by Blueprint are non-partisan 501(c)(3)s and/or 501(c)(4)s. Organizations and strategies across various tax statuses are provided for donor information purposes only and do not imply coordination.
12. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in Arizona?" FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
13. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in Florida?" FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
14. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in Georgia?" FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
15. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in North Carolina?" FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
16. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in Texas?" FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
17. "Latest Polls: Who's ahead in Wisconsin?" FiveThirtyEight, July 29, 2020.
18. Cook Political Report, "2020 Senate Ratings," January 31, 2020.
19. This race is now rated as lean Republican.
20. Nate Cohn, "Big Polling Leads Tend to Erode. Is Biden's Edge Different?" The New York Times, July 20, 2020.
21. Jessica Taylor, "Almost 100 Days Out, Democrats Are Favored to Take Back the Senate," Cook Political Report, July 23, 2020.
22. These averages were calculated using an aggregation of public polling, with a sample size of at 300+ voters, published by July 15th.
23. David Wasserman, "Who's Behind Trump's Big Polling Deficit? Two Key Groups Defecting to Biden," NBC News, July 22, 2020.
24. An average of 2020 presidential general election polls, accounting for each poll's quality, sample size and recency. "Latest Polls," FiveThirtyEight, July 28, 2020.
25. Half of the Pennsylvania State Senate's 50 seats are up for election in 2020. In our other target chambers, all seats are up for election.
26. A Republican state representative attempted to halt the plan, claiming it was too costly and that municipalities should individually determine how to proceed with absentee ballots.
27. "COVID-19 State Response Summaries," Voting Rights Lab, <https://tracker.votingrightslab.org/covid-19/states>.

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