

# Midwest: Can Recent Democratic Gains Hold?

The Midwest's part in the "reverse realignment" — the Democrats' answer in the North to the Republicans' political takeover of the South — has been essential to building the current House majority. A number of recently elected Democrats in this region have taken root, but others appear vulnerable: Two Ohio freshmen face rematches currently rated as tossups, as is an open seat in Kansas. But the party isn't only on defense, with bids for a GOP-held open seat outside Chicago and to oust Minnesota's conservative firebrand Michele Bachmann atop their wish list.

## TOSSUPS

### KANSAS 3 — Open (Dennis Moore, D, retiring)

2008: Moore 56%, Nick Jordan (R) 40%

Democrats knew they'd have to fight for this suburban Kansas City-area swing seat whenever the centrist Moore retired; they didn't know it would be this year until November, when Moore dropped his bid for a seventh term. (Although Barack Obama carried the district by 3 percentage points, George W. Bush prevailed by 11 points in 2004.) Former state Rep. Patricia Lightner, who sought the GOP nomination in 2004, was already running and has now been joined by ex-state Sen. Jordan, the 2008 nominee, and state Rep. Kevin Yoder, among others. The filing deadline isn't until June. Democrats are looking for a center-right candidate similar to Moore. Possibilities include Kansas City Mayor Joe Reardon and businessman Tom Wiggins.

### OHIO 1 — Steve Driehaus, D

2008: Driehaus 52%, Rep. Steve Chabot (R) 47%

After eight years in the state House, Driehaus denied an eighth term to Chabot, who had become a fierce defender of conservative social positions. Now the two are set for a rematch in western Cincinnati and its suburbs, and few races will better define whom voters hold more responsible for their problems: Obama (who carried the district with 55 percent) or Bush (who carried it narrowly in 2004). Republicans are hammering Driehaus for supporting the economic stimulus and health care overhaul. But he won in large part by tying Chabot closely to the GOP policies of the past decade and is bound to remind voters what they didn't like about that era in Washington.

### OHIO 15 — Mary Jo Kilroy, D

2008: Kilroy 46%, Steve Stivers (R) 45%

No one would call Kilroy "Landslide Mary." She lost her first bid for the Columbus-centered district by 1,100 votes in 2006, but when Republican Deborah Pryce retired in 2008 Kilroy claimed the seat by only 2,300 votes. Stivers, who gave up his state Senate seat for that race, is back for a rematch that GOP strategists are touting as one of their best takeover chances. (Bush won in the territory twice, but Obama carried it by 9 points.) Democrats are reminding voters, as they did last time, that Stivers once was a bank lobbyist. A Constitution Party candidate could siphon some conservative votes.

## LEAN DEMOCRATIC

### ILLINOIS 10 — Open

(Mark Steven Kirk, R, running for Senate)

2008: Kirk 53%, Dan Seals (D) 47%

Republicans face a tough job in holding the open seat in this suburban Chicago district, which Obama carried by 23 points. Kirk's centrist profile has the GOP touting his statewide electability, but he had to battle to hold his

seat by 7 points in 2006 and 5 points in 2008. His challenger both times, marketing executive Dan Seals, is trying again, but faces opposition from state Rep. Julie Hamos and civil rights lawyer Elliot Richardson. The primary is Feb. 2. Wealthy businessman Dick Green and state Rep. Elizabeth Coulson lead the Republican field.

### ILLINOIS 14 — Bill Foster, D

2008: Foster 58%, Jim Oberweis (R) 42%

Foster, a wealthy businessman, ran well-funded campaigns in the March 2008 special election for the seat vacated by J. Dennis Hastert, the former GOP Speaker, and again that fall. But he was lucky to have as his opponent dairy company owner Jim Oberweis, who had failed in previous bids for office. He's likely to draw a stronger foe this year. The GOP primary matches the ex-Speaker's son, lawyer Ethan Hastert, against state Sen. Randy Hultgren, who has more experience but has a legislative constituency that includes only a small sliver of the district, which sprawls across northern Illinois.

### MICHIGAN 7 — Mark Schauer, D

2008: Schauer 49%, Rep. Tim Walberg (R) 46%

Schauer, a well-funded and politically savvy former party leader in the state Senate, is working hard to avoid being the district's third consecutive one-term representative. He edged out Walberg, who had ousted the more moderate Rep. Joe Schwarz in the GOP primary two years before. Walberg is seeking a comeback, and the underlying conservatism of this largely rural district along the southern edge of the state gives him a solid shot. But in the Aug. 3 primary he'll face investor Marvin Carlson and attorney Brian Rooney, brother of Florida Rep. Tom Rooney; Bill Martin, CEO of the Michigan Association of Realtors, is also thinking about getting in.

### OHIO 18 — Zack Space, D

2008: Space 60%, Fred Dailey (R) 40%

A Democrat needs everything to go right to win in this rural territory, which John McCain carried by 8 points. And Space has won it twice with lots of Republican help. He took the seat in 2006 when a corruption scandal forced GOP incumbent Bob Ney to resign. And last time, GOP recruiting fell short. The party's fortunes appear brighter this year, with a potentially strong challenger, state Sen. Bob Gibbs. But the 2008 nominee, a former state agriculture director, is also in the May 4 primary. Lawyer Jeanette Moll and businessman Beau Bromberg are also running.

### WISCONSIN 8 — Steve Kagen, D

2008: Kagen 54%, John Gard (R) 46%

Kagen, a physician, self-financed his 2006 bid and narrowly beat state Assembly Speaker Gard. Their rematch in 2008 wasn't as close, but Kagen can't sit back in northeast Wisconsin, long a Republican stronghold.

Already running in the Sept. 14 primary are contractor Reid Ribble, county officials Andy Williams and Marc Savard, state Rep. Roger Roth, physician Marc Trager, and ex-state Rep. Terri McCormick.

## LEAN REPUBLICAN

### MINNESOTA 3 — Erik Paulsen, R

2008: Paulsen 48%, Ashwin Madia (D) 41%

Paulsen, a one-time state House majority leader, was elected two years ago upon the retirement of his mentor, Jim Ramstad, defying Democrats who thought the suburban Minneapolis district was trending their way. They weren't off base — Obama won there by 6 points — but they'll have to make a strong case that Paulsen has moved too far right. Jim Meffert, president of the state PTA, and physician Maureen Hackett are running for the Democratic nod, while State Sen. Terri Bonoff is actively taking a look. The filing deadline is in July.

### MINNESOTA 6 — Michele Bachmann, R

2008: Bachmann 46%, Elwyn Tinklenberg (D) 43%

The conservative base in this district — running from Twin Cities suburbs to St. Cloud — has produced two wins for Bachmann, who's gained national renown for her incendiary rhetoric. But she is too much for some voters: In 2008, she won by just 3 points while McCain carried the district by 8 points. She could win more easily this year if her backers are more motivated to turn out than others, but Democrats will make a strong run. State Sen. Tarryl Clark is their preferred candidate but will have to run in the Sept. 14 primary against Maureen Reed, a one-time Independence Party nominee for lieutenant governor. Bob Anderson, who took 10 percent on the 2008 Independence line in the 6th, may try again.

### NEBRASKA 2 — Lee Terry, R

2008: Terry 52%, Jim Esch (D) 48%

Getting state Sen. Tom White to take on six-term Terry in this Omaha district was a score for the Democrats. They have to hope, though, that he's not two years too late. In 2008, businessman/challenger Esch got big help from a turnout drive for Obama (who carried the district) but still fell 4 points short.

## LIKELY DEMOCRATIC

### ILLINOIS 8 — Melissa Bean, D

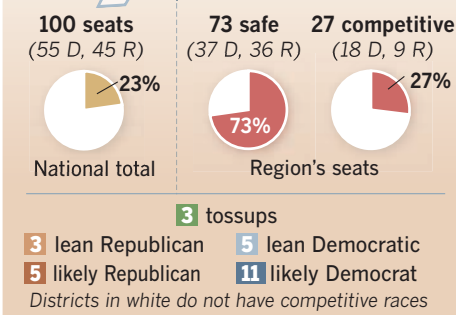
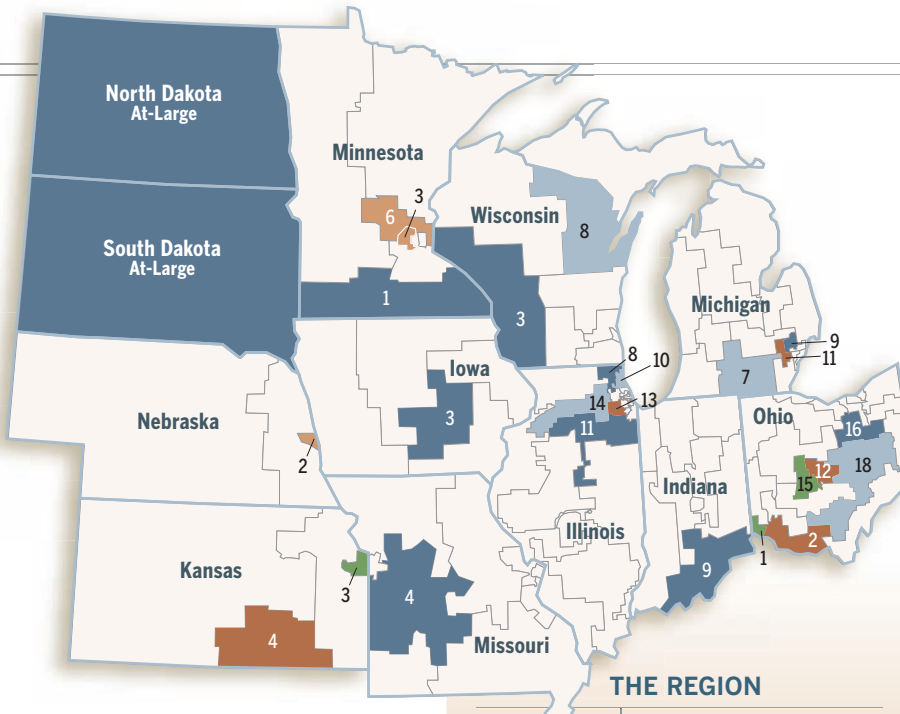
2008: Bean 61%, Steve Greenberg (R) 39%

Bean won a 2004 upset over GOP veteran Philip M. Crane in this conservative-leaning suburban Chicago district and has won by increasing margins. She'll have to run hard, though, if this turns out to be a tough Democratic year. Local official Maria Rodriguez appears to be leading the six-way Feb. 2 Republican primary.

### ILLINOIS 11 — Debbie Halvorson, D

2008: Halvorson 58%, Marty Ozinga (R) 34%

Halvorson was state Senate majority leader, and so when Republican Jerry Weller retired she became the favorite in 2008 to pick up this swing district (Obama won it, but Bush won it twice) that meanders south and west from Chicago's exurbs. But her eventual blowout was assured when the initial GOP nominee quit. Now Republican



officials are pushing for a Feb. 2 primary win by Adam Kinzinger, an Air Force veteran who did tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and won a county board seat at age 20.

**INDIANA 9 — Baron P. Hill, D**  
2008: Hill 58%, Mike Sodrel (R) 38%

If you moved to the state's southeast corner since 2000, races between Hill and Sodrel are all you know of congressional politics. Hill beat Sodrel to win the seat in 2002, lost to him in 2004, won it back in 2006 and cruised to a 20-point win in their last matchup. Sodrel, a transportation company owner, is now campaigning to be the GOP nominee for the fifth time. But GOP officials are eyeing fresher faces, including investor Travis Hankins, lawyer Todd Young (an ex-aide to Sen. Richard G. Lugar) and prosecutor Keith Henderson. The primary is May 4.

**IOWA 3 — Leonard L. Boswell, D**  
2008: Boswell 56%, Kim Schmelt (R) 42%

Boswell has held on for seven terms in a district that includes Des Moines and is evenly split politically. He just turned 76 but has rebuffed retirement talk. Republican recruiters got their preferred candidate, state Sen. Brad Zaun, but he has a June 8 primary with former Iowa State wrestling coach Jim Gibbons and others.

**MICHIGAN 9 — Gary Peters, D**  
2008: Peters 52%, Rep. Joe Knollenberg (R) 43%

Peters ousted Knollenberg, a House veteran whose GOP base in suburban Detroit had eroded. A former state senator and lottery chief, Peters has had no trouble piling up cash for his second-term bid. Republicans running to challenge him are Paul Welday, Knollenberg's ex-top aide; businessman Gene Goodman; and former state Rep. Andrew Raczkowski, who lost to Democratic Sen. Carl Levin in 2002.

**MINNESOTA 1 — Tim Walz, D**  
2008: Walz 63%, Brian J. Davis (R) 33%

Walz, a teacher and National Guardsman, used everyman appeal to upset six-term Republican Gil Gutknecht in 2006, then easily defeated Davis' 2008 bid. Still, this rural district has a big enough conservative base that several Republicans are already running: state Rep. Randy

Demmer; former state Rep. Allen Quist, who lost for governor in 1994; Jim Hagedorn, son of former Minnesota Rep. Tom Hagedorn; and veteran Frank McKinzie. Some in the GOP would like state Sen. Julie Rosen to join the race, but she says she's happy with her current office.

**MISSOURI 4 — Ike Skelton, D**  
2008: Skelton 66%, Jeff Parnell (R) 34%

Skelton turned 78 in December but seems unlikely to retire, at least as long as he retains the Armed Services Committee chairmanship. The largely rural territory east and south of Kansas City has an overall GOP lean, and Republicans appear weary of waiting for Skelton to retire. State Sen. Bill Stouffer and ex-state Rep. Vicky Hartzler are among those seeking the GOP nomination.

**NORTH DAKOTA At-Large — Earl Pomeroy, D**  
2008: Pomeroy 62%, Duane Sand (R) 38%

As a centrist with a farm-state focus, Pomeroy's been able to hold the only House seat in his GOP-leaning state since 1992. But this looks like a tougher-than-usual year, with Kevin Cramer, the state Public Service Commission chairman, as the Republicans' recruit.

**OHIO 16 — John Boccieri, D**  
2008: Boccieri 55%, Kirk Schuring (R) 45%

Boccieri, a former state senator, impressed in 2008 and had a surprisingly easy time picking up the seat, centered in Canton, from which Republican Ralph Regula retired after 36 years. Businessman Jim Renacci has joined the race; he has May 4 primary opposition from former Ashland County Commissioner Matt Miller, who ran vigorously in the last two primaries.

**SOUTH DAKOTA At-Large — Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, D**  
2008: Herseth Sandlin 68%, Chris Lien (R) 32%

Herseth Sandlin let down Democrats back home — but delighted party leaders in the House — by deciding not to run for the Senate or governor this year. But South Dakota leans Republican, and she will face a tougher time than in recent races. GOP hopefuls include South Dakota Secretary of State Chris Nelson and state Rep. Blake Curd.

**WISCONSIN 3 — Ron Kind, D**  
2008: Kind 63%, Paul Stark (R) 34%

It's been a while since the GOP made a serious run at the seven-term incumbent, but that could change this year, with state Sen. Dan Kapanke as their recruit. Still, Democrats are on pretty solid political ground in rural southwest Wisconsin, and their odds of holding the seat soared when Kind decided not to run for governor.

**LIKELY REPUBLICAN**

**ILLINOIS 13 — Judy Biggert, R**  
2008: Biggert 54%, Scott Harper (D) 44%

Native son Obama took 54 percent in this usually Republican district in Chicago's southwest suburbs. Biggert still won a sixth term, also with 54 percent, but that was a career low. Businessman Harper is back for a rematch, but his slow early fundraising raised qualms among fellow Democrats.

**KANSAS 4 — Open (Todd Tiahrt, R, running for Senate)**  
2008: Tiahrt 63%, Donald Betts (D) 32%

This south-central district, which includes Wichita, is conservative, and the Republicans who are after this open seat include state Sen. Dick Kelsey, GOP National Committeeman Mike Pompeo, oil company executive Willis "Wink" Hartman and printing company owner Jim Anderson. But Democrats, while their odds are long, tapped state Rep. Raj Goyle, who has fundraising skills.

**MICHIGAN 11 — Thaddeus McCotter, R**  
2008: McCotter 51%, Joseph W. Larkin (D) 45%

On paper, McCotter looks vulnerable: He barely cracked a majority against an unheralded Democrat last time. But the Democrats haven't secured a top-flight recruit yet. State Sen. Glenn Anderson appears their best hope, but he has been resisting.

**OHIO 2 — Jean Schmidt, R**  
2008: Schmidt 45%, Victoria Wulsin (D) 37%

Since arriving in 2005, Schmidt has had a tough time holding this conservative district, mainly suburbs and exurbs of Cincinnati, in either the primary or the fall. Democrats out for her this time are businessman David Krikorian, health care administrator Jim Parker and marketing executive Surya Yalamanchili. Schmidt's primary this time is against Warren County Commissioner Mike Kilburn and attorney Bryan Hawkins.

**OHIO 12 — Pat Tiberi, R**  
2008: Tiberi 55%, David Robinson (D) 42%

Five-term Tiberi hasn't had a tough re-election yet, but that could change. Franklin County Commissioner Paula Brooks, who pondered a 2008 bid in the 15th District, is challenging Tiberi. Obama won 54 percent in this district, which spreads east from part of Columbus.