



2014's Most Important Primaries

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Without exception, the business community should be more involved in primaries. With a handful of exceptions, the most competitive and consequential primaries are in the Republican Party this cycle. This results from a more significant ideological break within the Republican Party, but is also a testament to the power the President holds over their party's political infrastructure. The same was true during the Bush administration when a phone call from Karl Rove could often stop a primary before it formed. The Democrats have cleared the field for their chosen nominee in their most competitive Senate races without an incumbent. In South Dakota, Michigan, Montana, Georgia, West Virginia, Iowa, and Kentucky, none of the Democrats face a competitive primary. And no Senate Democratic incumbents face significant primary opposition, except in Hawaii where Rep. Colleen Hanabusa is challenging Senator Brian Schatz. That is an impressive feat considering that almost every Republican incumbent faces a Tea Party challenger in the primary (though most have taken the steps necessary to not become the next Dick Lugar or Bob Bennett). Several of the challenger and open seat Republican races have significant primaries as well. Let's take a look at the most consequential primaries of 2014.

Republican Senate:

Iowa: This primary has become a 3 way race between state Senator Joni Ernst, former Reliant Energy CEO Mark Jacobs, and US Attorney and former University of Iowa football star Matt Whitaker. There are several additional candidates with niche followings who could have a big impact here though because if no candidate receives 35% of the vote in the primary, the nomination is determined by convention and delegates can select anyone they choose, not being limited to the top vote getters or even people who ran in the primary. So far the business community has split between the 3 leading candidates, but Jacobs' personal wealth gives him the opportunity to pull away from the crowded field.

Georgia: With 8 names on the ballot and a conceivable path to victory for several of the candidates, this primary is one of the toughest in the country. 3 sitting members of Congress are running. Jack Kingston, Paul Broun and Phil Gingrey each have geographic voter and fundraising foundations. Former Reebok and Dollar General CEO David Perdue (cousin of former Governor Sonny Perdue) has personal resources and the mantle of political outsider to boost his chances. Former Secretary of State Karen Handel is the only woman in the field and only candidate to have run and won statewide. The business community has leaned towards Kingston, but will need to decide soon if it will consolidate behind one or 2 candidates if it hopes to ensure a prosperity-oriented nominee emerges from this boisterous field.

Alaska: Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell faces former DNR Director Dan Sullivan for the right to take on Democrat Senator Mark Begich. Sullivan has jumped to an impressive fundraising lead but Treadwell maintains name ID advantage from serving in statewide office and current polls show the primary to be a dead heat. 2010 Tea Party nominee Joe Miller is also running but has raised little money and has done himself few favors with the voters since upsetting Lisa Murkowski in the primary. To complicate matters further, a wholly separate Dan Sullivan serves as mayor of Fairbanks, the state's second largest city, and is also running for reelection. The business community is largely sitting on the primary sidelines in this race as both Republicans are expected to be strong advocates for a pro-growth, pro-jobs agenda.

House Democrat Primaries:

IA-1: In the open seat to replace Bruce Braley who is running for Senate, the business community faces a seat that is likely to remain in Democratic hands in the general election. In the Democratic primary, the business community in Iowa is leaning towards former state Senator Swati Dandekar who demonstrated herself to be a strongly pro-business Democrat during her time in the legislature. Veteran state Rep. Pat Murphy and Cedar Rapids Councilwoman Monica Vernon are running to Dandekar's left while the winner is likely to take on Republican state Rep. Walt Rogers in the general election.

CA-33: Henry Waxman's announced retirement opens this Los Angeles area seat for the first time in generations. state Senator Ted Lieu and former Los Angeles Controller Wendy Gruel have jumped to the early lead in this heavily Democratic seat. The business community in Los Angeles has a good working relationship

with Lieu, who is expected to receive the state Democratic Party's endorsement at their March 9th Convention. Gruel has been endorsed by Emily's List, former LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and AG Kamala Harris. Local businessman Bill Bloomfield, who won 46% of the vote as an Independent against Waxman in 2012, has announced he will not run again.

House Republican:

MI-3: Congressman Justin Amash, a Tea Party hero, is being challenged by businessman Brian Ellis in this Grand Rapids district. Amash has opposed Boehner for Speaker and been very publically vocal in his criticism of the Republican establishment for not going far enough to support Tea Party ideals. Ellis is being supported by many in the business and political mainstream.

ID-2: Congressman Mike Simpson is being challenged by Tea Party candidate and lawyer Bryan Smith in the Republican primary. Smith has criticized Simpson for not reflecting the conservative values of the district and for his positions, such as voting to end the government shutdown. The Idaho business community has rallied around Simpson, who has been endorsed by the U.S. Chamber.

TN-4: Scandal plagued Rep. Scott DesJarlais is being challenged in the primary by former insurance agent and state Senator Jim Tracy. Tracy is leading DesJarlais in fundraising and has gained the support of the business community and Tennessee GOP leaders.

GA-10: The 10th district is solidly Republican and the competitive election will be the GOP primary. There are several candidates already in the race, including evangelical minister and Tea Party talk show host Jody Hice, businessman Mike Collins, former state Rep. Donna Sheldon, Columbia County GOP Chair Brian Slowinski, attorney Gary Gerrard, and businessman Stephen Simpson. There are no clear frontrunners right now, but watch out for Hice, Sheldon, and Collins who are all running well.

IA-3: The 3rd district is a crossover district that voted for a Republican Congressman in 2012, but went to President Obama by 4 pts. It is the most competitive district in Iowa. Democratic frontrunner appears to be state Senator Staci Appel, who had entered the race before Latham announced his retirement. On the Republican side, there are several candidates including frontrunners former Chief of Staff to Sen. Grassley, David Young, state Senator Brad Zaun and Iowa Secretary of State Matt Schultz. Like in the Senate race, Republicans will hold a nominating convention if no candidate receives more than 35% of the vote in the primary. With the large number of candidates in the GOP primary, it may be hard to avoid the convention, making it more likely that Iowa Republicans could choose a more ideologue, conservative candidate that may struggle in the general election. Right now this race is a tossup.

ME-02: This is an open seat, with Democratic Rep. Michaud running for Governor. The district leans Democratic, but has a credible Republican candidate, former state Senate President and businessman Kevin Raye. Raye has been designated as a "Champion of Maine's Economy" by the Maine Economic Research Institute and currently leads the polls in the primary and general. Raye has been endorsed by BIPAC and NFIB. He has a primary challenger, former treasurer Bruce Poliquin. The frontrunners on the Democratic side are state Sen. Emily Cain and state Senate Majority Leader Troy Jackson.

VA-10: Republican Congressman Frank Wolf is retiring, setting off a competitive race in the 10th district primary and general elections. The frontrunner on the Republican side is state Delegate Barbara Comstock, who has the business community rallying around her. She will face several candidates, including social conservative state Delegate Bob Marshall in the firehouse primary.

IL-13: Freshman Rep. Rodney Davis is being challenged in the primary and general election. He won in 2012 with less than 1% of the vote. This is a swing district that went to President Obama in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012. Currently serving on the Agriculture and Transportation and infrastructure committees, Davis has been a consistent business ally. Davis faces Former Miss America Erika Harold in the GOP primary.