

To: Interested Parties
From: Navin Nayak, Executive Director, Center for American Progress Action Fund
Date: August 6, 2018
Re: Putting OH-12 in Perspective

Irrespective of the final result in tomorrow’s special election in OH-12, it will only serve as a reminder of how difficult the political climate is for Republicans heading into November. If Democratic candidate Danny O’Connor prevails, it will be yet another seat that President Donald Trump won by double digits that Republicans in Congress will have lost. But even if O’Connor comes up short, it simply reinforces how expansive the playing field has become heading into November.

According to the Cook Political Report, OH-12 is an R+7 district. **There are 60 districts held by Republicans that are more favorable to Democrats than OH-12** (R+6 or lower). But a closer look at those districts reveals that, with three months to go, Democrats have already succeeded in making all but 4 of those 60 seats competitive. Here’s a breakdown of those 60 seats according to the Cook Political Report:

- 15 of those 60 seats are open (bold in chart below). All of them are rated as competitive.
- 19 more seats are rated Toss-Up or Lean D.
- 12 more seats are rated Lean R.
- 10 more seats are rated Likely R.
- Four more are not rated as competitive.

Likely D (3)	Lean D (6)	Toss-up (21)	Lean R (16)	Likely R (10)	Not rated competitive (4)
NJ-2	AZ-2	CA-10	CA-45	CA-21	MI-3
PA-5	CA-49	CA-25	FL-15	CO-3	NY-2
PA-6	FL-27	CA-39	FL-18	FL-25	NY-21
	NJ-11	CA-48	IL-13	MI-6	NY-23
	PA-7	CO-6	IL-14	NY-1	
	VA-10	FL-26	KS-3	NY-11	
		IA-1	NC-13	NY-24	
		IA-3	NE-2	OH-10	
		IL-6	NJ-3	OH-14	
		IL-12	NM-2	WA-3	
		ME-2	OH-1		
		MI-8	PA-1		
		MI-11	TX-23		
		MN-2	VA-2		
		MN-3	VA-5		
		NJ-7	WI-1		
		NY-19			
		NY-22			
		TX-32			
		VA-7			
		WA-8			

These 56 races provide Democrats with ample opportunity to pick up the 23 seats they need to flip control of the House. Of course, there are roughly another two-dozen seats that are rated as competitive or potentially competitive that are equally or more Republican than OH-12 (R+7 or higher). In fact, while the early conventional wisdom assumed that the Democratic path to reclaiming the House would primarily run through districts where former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton overperformed compared with 2012, Democrats this year have proven that they can be competitive everywhere. As now-Rep. Conor Lamb (D-PA) proved, Democrats can be competitive in R+11 districts and have made races in similarly Republican districts competitive already, including one that is rated R+23.

It is also worth remembering that the OH-12 race was rated Likely R back in March and has consistently trended toward Democrats. As Amy Walter noted [this week](#), in the past two wave elections in the House (2006 and 2010), between July and November the number of vulnerable races for the party in power increased between twofold and threefold, which is precisely what happened to OH-12 over the past few months. Given the enthusiasm of the Democratic base, the strong crop of Democratic candidates—and the deep toxicity of President Trump—it is likely that Republican seats will become even more vulnerable as the election approaches.

The race in OH-12 is also revealing of another key factor as we look to November: **Despite having complete control of Washington for nearly two years, Republicans have literally nothing to run on.** Candidates are not discussing their signature legislation—the tax bill—because polling shows that barely 35 percent of Americans support it and the more voters hear about it the less popular it becomes. With no accomplishments and no vision, Republican State Sen. Troy Balderson (OH) and the outside groups supporting his campaign have had to resort to predictable distractions such as using House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) as a bogeyman. In fact, this past week, the Congressional Leadership Fund (CLF), which is aligned with House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), revealed its desperation when it accused O'Connor of supporting a so-called plan that cuts Medicare by \$800 billion. Glenn Kessler, *The Washington Post* fact checker, [detailed the absurdity](#) of this attack on many levels and deemed it a Four Pinocchio “Whopper.” With nothing else to run on, the CLF won't be deterred from using it again.

For his part, O'Connor has run the kind of campaign that has served Democrats well and will likely do so in November. He is focused aggressively on health care, defending the Affordable Care Act against Republican efforts to take away protections from people with pre-existing conditions—such as his mother, who is a breast cancer survivor. He has also put the issue of corruption in Washington [front and center](#), refusing to take any money from corporate PACs and hitting his opponent for contributions from drug, insurance, and oil companies. Research last month by CAP Action Fund reinforced how effective this contrast can be for Democratic challengers. All across the country, Democrats are running similar campaigns. There are now more than 170 Democratic challengers who have refused corporate PAC money, and all of them are contrasting that position with the Republican agenda that favors the wealthy and the well-connected. Like Rep. Lamb's race, OH-12 is already a reminder that this is an effective formula for Democrats.

The bottom line is that we don't need to see the final result tomorrow to have gleaned what the OH-12 race tells us about November. We already know the answer, and it is one that is one Republicans won't want to hear.