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If a Democratic wave takes shape on election night, some of the first warning signs could arrive in Harrisburg or Erie County. Democrats are targeting two solidly Republican districts in those areas, hoping that a surge could give them a chance in races well outside the typical swing districts. The party's best chance for a House majority still runs through suburbs like those around Philadelphia and other big cities. But a shot at a true wave could hinge on difficult exurban and rural races like these.

The district around Harrisburg has given Republicans the most anxiety. Recent [polls](#) from the New York Times/Siena College and Susquehanna Polling and Research [both found virtual ties](#) between Republican U.S. Rep. Scott Perry and his Democratic challenger, George Scott. "If Scott Perry loses, people better be battenning down the hatches elsewhere. It's going to be a long, wet night," said Charlie Gerow, a Republican strategist who lives in the district.

One poll this week even [suggested a close contest](#) between Republican U.S. Rep. Lloyd Smucker and Democratic challenger Jess King in a Lancaster County-based district that President Trump won by nearly 26 percentage points. By contrast, another dark horse race in the Scranton area could send up a warning sign for Democrats, as Republicans hope to unseat U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright in a district that swung strongly toward Trump. The incumbents are still favored in each race, but national analysts give Democrats the better chances of pulling off the upsets.

National groups in both parties have been dropping campaign money into the Harrisburg-based 10th District, and national Democrats are spending in the 16th in Northwestern Pennsylvania, where U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly faces a challenge from Ron DiNicola, a lawyer and former Erie County solicitor. "I'd keep an eye on both of them, but especially keep an eye on the 10th," U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, chairman of the Democrats' national congressional campaign arm, said in September. Democratic aides said last week that the analysis still stands.

Republicans have taken note. [Trump held an Oct. 10](#) rally on Kelly's home turf and Vice President Pence [flew in last week](#) for events with Perry and John Chrin, Cartwright's challenger in Northeast Pennsylvania. Perry has an Army background, but in Scott he faces a square-jawed pastor who also has military credentials. Scott was an Army lieutenant colonel who served in the Persian Gulf during the first Iraq war and in Kuwait after 9/11. The Democrat drew national attention during the party primary with an ad showing him [disassembling a rifle by hand](#) and dumping it into a fire.

At a campaign stop at York College of Pennsylvania on Tuesday, Scott said his background and roots in the area have opened doors in a conservative district. "I'm a pastor, but I'm running as a citizen," said Scott. "And what I've been surprised by is the number of people who have encouraged me to speak out politically about my faith. I think oftentimes, the Democratic Party has shied away from that, and what I've heard from a large number of people, including Democrats, is that is part of the reason we support you. They see me as a different kind of Democrat."

Voters, he said, "see in me someone who has their best interests at heart ... someone who puts their needs and the needs of our nation above the needs of the party." Like many Democrats running in conservative territory, Scott said he would strive for bipartisan solutions, but also said he's "shocked" by the inability of Republicans in Congress to check Trump, and that it's a concern he has heard from voters in both parties. His run has been boosted by new district boundaries drawn by the Supreme Court after it ruled Pennsylvania's old congressional map was unconstitutional. It's now a district that supported Trump by 9 percentage points, instead of 22 under the old borders.

Despite that shift to a more moderate composition, Perry, who served in Iraq as an Army helicopter pilot and then in the state legislature, remains a devout conservative who aligns with the far-right House Freedom Caucus. The group's leader, U.S. Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.) is sending in campaign money to try to save him. Perry's campaign did not respond to multiple requests to attend his events.

Several Pennsylvania Republicans, including Gerow, predicted that Perry would win. But several groused that the incumbent, who has never had a close call, didn't take the threat seriously, even when political professionals warned him. "Until recently, I don't think the congressman thought he had a race," said Josh Novotney, a Philadelphia Republican who has previously worked with the party's House campaign arm. He said national Republicans and Perry "seem to be considering it a real race now, but it will probably be tighter than it should be."

At first glance, Kelly's district appears to be the bigger stretch for Democrats. Trump won it by 20 percentage points. But the district also narrowly voted for Barack Obama in 2008, giving Democrats some hope. The Democratic challenger there, DiNicola, is more measured in his stance toward Trump than many in his party. He praised the president for "cracking down on the Chinese" and said his main goal — reforming campaign spending — would further Trump's pledge to "drain the swamp."

A boxer when he was in the Marines, DiNicola said he would support Trump on issues that are helpful to Western Pennsylvania and criticized Kelly for voting in favor of a trade deal with South Korea. (The pact was also backed by 59

House Democrats and signed by Obama in 2011.) "I'm not in a race to critique the president. He came to my district to campaign for my opponent, and he graciously did not saddle me with a nickname that I will have for the rest of my life, so I'm pretty good with him so far," DiNicola said in an interview.

Kelly, however, scoffed at that notion. "He can say what he wants. ... Nancy Pelosi will tell him what shirt to wear, what tie to wear," Kelly said. Kelly, who ran his family's car dealership in Butler before joining Congress as part of the tea party wave, said Trump and the GOP have breathed life into a struggling region. People's "lives the last 21 months have changed dramatically under this administration," he said in an interview.

Echoing Trump, he also warned about the caravan of migrants moving through Central America toward the U.S. border, though it is 1,000 miles away, saying Americans should be concerned about people who might "live in their houses and eat their food and use their doctors." A Times/Siena poll in early October found Kelly with an 8 percentage point advantage.

If Democrats see hope in those races, though, Northeast Pennsylvania presents a potential stumbling block. Cartwright's district swung roughly 22 percentage points from Obama toward Trump, one of the largest rightward shifts in the country. Republicans see a chance to offset expected losses elsewhere. Independent political analysts, however, rate the race as a "likely" victory for Cartwright, and a mid-October Times/Siena poll found the Democrat with a 12-point lead. If an upset emerges in any of the races, it could signal which party will end election night smiling. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

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If local Democrats were hoping for a break from politics after Tuesday's midterm election, Clout can assure you a respite is coming. For exactly one week. Former Vice President Joe Biden comes to Philly on Nov. 13 to raise money for U.S. Rep. Bob Brady, chairman of the city's Democratic Party.

After 20 years in Congress, Brady is not seeking reelection this fall, and, as we reported last month, he hasn't donated this year to fellow Democrats in the country's closest races. But Brady has debts to pay. And ... higher office to seek? The Biden event will raise cash for Brady's new federal political action committee, Friends of Bob Brady, launched in March, which has already brought in \$61,550.

The PAC Brady previously used to seek reelection, Bob Brady for Congress, reported \$256,885 in debt to two law firms as of Sept. 30. Brady spent much of last year under federal investigation, but was never charged. Brady also still carries \$663,390 in debt, mostly to three law firms, for the PAC he used in 2007 to run unsuccessfully for mayor, according to a January campaign finance report. Brady said

he didn't want to collect money under false pretenses, as he's no longer a House candidate. And, he added, he might someday run for the Senate. "Don't laugh," Brady said. "People don't like [Sen.] Pat Toomey. People are bugging me to run."

Toomey, a Lehigh County Republican, is up for reelection in 2022. Brady also said he hopes Biden, a friend of 30 years, runs for president. So far, Biden is mum on that. "I'll be with him every step of the way," Brady said.

Patty-Pat Kozlowski, a Republican running for state representative in Philadelphia, told her Facebook followers about [a potential Halloween "prank" this week](#). She said a zoning notice had been discovered in the river wards alerting residents of a plan to open a supervised injection site in their neighborhood. But it didn't look right, she said: No lawyer's or owner's name was listed on the document. "This seems to be a sick prank to scare the people of Port Richmond," said Kozlowski. "EITHER WAY, we're going to get to the bottom of this."

A day later, she posted on Facebook that it was phony: "THIS WAS FAKE AND FRAUDULENT." Supervised injection sites, where addicts can inject drugs under medical supervision, are [a highly controversial issue](#) in the competitive race to replace State Rep. John Taylor in the 177th District ([see BCAP's prognosis for the 177<sup>th</sup>](#)). Karen Guss, a spokeswoman for the Department of Licenses and Inspections, confirmed the falsity of the notice. "It's fake," Guss said of the notice. "It's vegan-cheesesteak fake. It's fake."

As a candidate running for public office, Clout wondered, why didn't Kozlowski wait until she, well, got to the bottom of the zoning notice's veracity before posting? "What news did I spread that was not true?" she replied, adding that she told community members that public records showed it was not legit. Also this week, Kozlowski touted union endorsements that the labor groups said she did not receive. At least one blames itself for the confusion, though.

Kozlowski's campaign ran an ad in the Northeast Times promoting nods from the KML Regional Council of Carpenters and Laborers' District Council of the Metropolitan Area of Philadelphia and Vicinity. But Laborers' District Council business manager Ryan Boyer and Mungu Sanchez, deputy political director of the Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters, both said their organizations did not formally endorse anyone in the 177th District race.

Asked about the discrepancy, Kozlowski said, "Beats the s— out of me why they said there is no endorsement or support." She said the two unions cut checks to her, and told her they were backing her. "Patty-Pat wasn't lying or being deceptive when she touted our endorsement," said Boyer. "Miscommunication on my part is to blame. We gave

her a check because of our belief that both candidates are good on issues that affect working families."

The Laborers and Carpenters also donated to her Democratic opponent, Joe Hohenstein, according to Boyer and documents provided by the campaign. Nearly seven months ago, Paul Mango's campaign commercial detonated on Pennsylvania televisions in the Republican primary for governor, calling former State Sen. Scott Wagner a "deadbeat dad" and teasing a sequel that would expose him as violent. Wagner branded it a "false attack." The state GOP demanded that Mango stop.

Mango didn't back down, but he didn't use the follow-up commercial, which might have seemed prescient, given the backlash Wagner, now the Republican nominee, faced after threatening to "stomp all over" Democratic Gov. Wolf's face with golf cleats. So whatever happened to the second installment? As luck has it, someone sent it to Clout this week along with a third ad Mango's campaign prepared but did not air.

One ad calls Wagner "insulting, violent, unhinged." It shows video of Wagner in a physical altercation with a campaign tracker in May. And it notes that Wagner was the subject of a protection-from-abuse order in 2006. It was filed by Wagner's daughter, though the ad doesn't say that. The other shows two women texting concerns about Wagner to each other, with one suggesting he is "Violent! Anti-women!" Again, the tracker video. And again, the restraining order.

It was no secret Mango's strategy was to show differences in temperament between the two men. Mango, who now works for President Trump's administration, did not respond to requests for comment. Wagner won the Republican primary with 44 percent of the vote, while Mango took 37 percent. He has won elections before despite similar attacks. An opponent used the PFA in 2014 when Wagner was running for state Senate in York County. "The strategy of using false, negative attack ads to paint Scott as violent backfired in 2014, backfired in the primary and will backfire on Election Day," Wagner spokesman Andrew Romeo said Thursday. – *Philadelphia Daily News*

