

## Padma Kuppa: State Senate, Michigan

Recommendation Level: High Priority



In 2018, Padma Kuppa ran for office for the first time. An Indian-born former Chrysler engineer, she seemed well-suited to represent Michigan House District 41, which included the city of Troy. Kuppa had served on the city planning commission, been president of the Troy Historical Society, and was a founding member of the Troy-area Interfaith Group. These deep roots in the district, which has a substantial immigrant population, helped her eke out a close victory in 2018, and she won reelection by a larger margin in 2020. This cycle she's looking to move up to the state senate, running in the new District 9, which doesn't have an incumbent and could be one of the most important state legislative elections in the country.

### Is this election important?

Though Joe Biden won Michigan in 2020, Republicans control both chambers of the state legislature, albeit by small margins. Democrats are focused on retaking the state house and senate not just because a governing trifecta would allow them to pass policies into law, but because there's a concern that the GOP in Michigan might try to use the state legislature to overturn legitimate election results in 2024. To prevent this, Democrats need to retake at least one of the chambers here, and the new Senate map, observers agree, could give them a shot. According to the [Detroit Free Press](#), there are 19 safely Democratic districts and 16 safely Republican districts, two toss-up districts and one Republican-leaning district, which is the one where Kuppa is running.

But in a year where the overall political environment will surely favor Republicans, it would be a mistake to conclude that Democrats can easily retake the senate. Winning the race in District 9, though, would go a long way to ensuring the Democrats win control of the chamber – if Kuppa won, Democrats could lose both toss-up seats and still get a majority.

Below, we explore three key questions about Padma Kuppa's candidacy that small and medium donors should answer before supporting campaigns. ([See how we evaluate candidates.](#))

**Can Kuppa win?**

She's a known quantity in the district thanks to her two terms in the house, and she has deep roots in the area as well. Kuppa is exactly the kind of candidate you want to run in these sorts of races, and candidate quality can make a big difference at this level of politics. Her opponent, Michael Webber, is also a state house member, and this will be a very competitive race.

**Does she need money?**

In the past, Kuppa has attracted support and money from national organizations like the States Project and EMILY's List, and she'll likely draw resources from those groups again. But with so few competitive races in the Michigan Senate, the race in District 9 will be well-funded. Unlike federal candidates, state legislative candidates frequently struggle to raise money. Webber had \$50,000 in campaign cash as of the end of last year. Equivalent reports for Kuppa were not available on the Michigan Secretary of State's website, but in any case, both candidates will be fundraising heavily until Election Day. Kuppa is a good candidate running in a key race that won't get enough attention, and she needs support.

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Given the likelihood of a close race and the potential for the Michigan state legislature to influence the 2024 election, this is one of the more important down-ballot races for Democrats to win this year. Contests like this also offer small donors a greater chance to have an impact. Supporting Kuppa's campaign should be a **high priority**.

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