

John Fetterman: U.S. Senate, Pennsylvania

Recommendation Level: Low Priority



John Fetterman is the Democrats' breakout star of the 2022 cycle. The Senate nominee in Pennsylvania, he is the type of candidate progressives imagine can appeal to the infamous Obama-Trump voter – he's in favor of Medicare for All and weed legalization, he wears long basketball shorts rather than suits, doesn't act like a politician (though he was a mayor for a decade and is currently Pennsylvania's lieutenant governor), and seems authentic, to trot out an overused descriptor. He easily beat Conor Lamb, the central-casting moderate who racked up endorsements from the party establishment, and he has promised to campaign in all parts of the state,

including red counties. But he's not a dyed-in-the-wool progressive, and has broken from the left on issues like fracking (which he sees as a way to create jobs) and Israel (of which he is a staunch supporter, a stance that may have kept the Israel lobby from attacking him). The question is whether he'll be able to overcome headwinds in a bad political cycle for Democrats.

Should small and medium donors give to Fetterman's campaign? Below, we explore three key questions that donors should answer before supporting candidates. (See [how we evaluate candidates](#).)

Is this race important?

The Pennsylvania Senate race is one of the key battles of this cycle, and could decide control of the Senate. It's on the shortlist, along with Florida, Arizona, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin, of most contested Senate races.

Can Fetterman win?

The good news is that the candidates on the GOP side are [not particularly inspiring](#). Mehmet Oz is a TV personality with limited ties to the state, and David McCormick is a hedge fund manager who has been flamed by Donald Trump. (The primary is still too close to call as of this writing and seems headed for a recount.) If Fetterman is an above-average candidate for the state and these two Republicans are below average, it could provide Fetterman with a good shot of winning.

Does he need money?

Both Republican candidates have poured millions of their own money into their campaigns and will likely continue to spend as we head into general election season. This is also going to be a very expensive race—the last time this seat was contested, in 2016, it was the second most expensive race in the cycle, with candidates spending \$52 million here, and the eventual winner, Republican incumbent Pat Toomey, spending \$30 million. Every year campaigns get more expensive, so those numbers are going to be beaten in 2022 – McCormick has already raised \$16 million, including an \$11 million loan he gave himself.

But one of Fetterman’s strengths is fundraising. His policy stances aside, the fact that he’s a socially awkward dude who goes around in basketball shorts even while [meeting the president in winter](#) has made him a walking viral phenomenon, and he’s raised a lot of money from progressives all over the country. He’s matched McCormick’s fundraising totals as of the last FEC report, only Fetterman has brought in \$10 million of his \$16 million total from small donors. Now that he’s the nominee and headlining Democratic National Committee fundraising emails, he’ll be bringing in even more.

Like several other Democrats running for Senate this cycle, Fetterman is a great candidate fighting in a key election—but doesn’t need money. For this reason, we rate him a **low priority** at this time.

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