

Aaron Ford: Attorney General, Nevada

Recommendation Level: High Priority



When Aaron Ford was elected attorney general of Nevada in 2018, he was one of several statewide Democrats to flip his office, but none did so on tighter margins. That November, Ford defeated Republican Wesley Duncan by fewer than 5,000 votes, giving Nevada Democrats control of all but one major statewide office. Those 2018 victories, however, have not exactly proven to be reasons for progressive optimism in Nevada, a state that Biden won in 2020 by just 2.4 points. Going into this year's midterms, Republicans are eyeing Nevada as a top priority, with a chance to flip major state-level offices like governor and attorney general, as well as a crucial

senate seat. Like other swing states, Nevada has also seen a barrage of [unfounded voter fraud accusations](#) and demands for stronger scrutiny of Biden's victory. If Republicans take control of the state attorney general's office, they could wreak havoc on Nevada's elections, including the 2024 presidential race.

With Republicans targeting Nevada and the state Democratic party [fighting an internal battle](#), it's crucial that progressive donors get in the game to keep Nevada blue. The attorney general's race is of particular importance. Blue Tent is recommending donors support the reelection of Ford as Nevada Attorney General and view supporting his candidacy as a high priority.

Below, we explore three key questions that small and medium donors should answer before supporting candidates. ([See how we evaluate candidates.](#))

Is This Election Important?

Yes. Like in other key states, Nevada's attorney general could play a major role in future elections that have national implications. Nevada has been one of a handful of states targeted by Republicans throughout the country with dubious claims of voter fraud and electoral malfeasance. Keeping a Democrat in office could help to check many of the attacks on the state's democratic process, while also keeping the state out of future lawsuits filed by Republican attorneys general challenging election results.

For Democrats focused on the national level, Nevada in fact may be slipping as a top priority, and not for wholly irrational reasons. In 2018, Democrats convincingly defeated an incumbent Republican senator and won the governorship for the first time in two decades. But fewer than half of Nevada voters cast their ballot for Hillary Clinton in 2016, and 2020 Democratic margins in the Battle Born State were far below their peaks in 2008 and 2012. Nevada's population is also highly transient, making public opinion especially difficult to measure, while Republicans have been working to [make inroads](#) with Latino voters, who are a core part of the Democratic base in the state. The [most recent polling](#) in Nevada has also indicated trouble for Democrats, with former President Donald Trump polling 10 points above Biden, 44% to 34%. In short, Nevada could easily be up for grabs in 2024, and having a Republican in the AG's office could swing the election.

Can Ford Win?

Yes. Democratic presidential candidates have won Nevada going back to 2008, and all but one of Nevada's major statewide offices are currently held by Democrats. That being said, Ford won his race by a very slim margin in 2018, and Republicans are [targeting](#) the state's senate and gubernatorial races in 2022. Both Gov. Steve Sisolak and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto are facing serious challenges, with polls from the last six months often showing hypothetical Republican rivals in the lead.

(It should be noted that Ford is facing a primary challenger, Stuart Mackie, who also ran against him in 2018. However, Ford won easily in 2018, with 78% of the primary vote, while online searches for Mackie's campaign yielded little to no information. According to the [Nevada Independent](#), Mackie has "no political presence to speak of" in 2022.)

Ford's potential GOP opponents are both private attorneys who freelance as conservative crusaders. Sigal Chattah made a name for herself suing the state over COVID restrictions, and has campaigned on forming a coalition of state AGs to "[sue Biden into submission](#)" over taxes, inflation, and critical race theory. She was favored to walk away with the nomination until lawyer Tisha Black announced her candidacy in February. Shortly after Black announced, a [Las Vegas political blogger](#) leaked controversial texts from Chattah, wherein the candidate compared Ford to the leaders of Hamas and said he "should be hanging from a (expletive) crane." Chattah has also [attacked](#) Black as a "progressive plant" who has donated money to "Nevada's most radical Democrats." These leaks and attacks could obviously benefit Ford, but also show the potential for disaster were Republicans to win in the fall.

Does He Need Money?

As of January, Ford had [raised](#) \$1.4 million in 2021, reporting \$1.5 million cash on hand. Ford touted these numbers as an off-year fundraising record for a Nevada attorney general. Sigal Chattah reported raising \$502,000 in the final quarter of 2021, with \$312,000 cash on hand going into 2022. Black has not reported any fundraising numbers yet, but she's shown the ability to build a formidable war chest in the past. Running for Clark County commissioner in 2018, Black [raised](#) some \$800,000 by the campaign's October filing deadline.

Ford has a commanding financial lead and will likely spend very little during the primary race compared to his opponents. However, Nevada has become a prime target for Republicans nationally, and the state party recognizes it has a major opportunity to take power in 2022. Nevada's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic, and despite signs of recovery [the state's economy is still struggling](#). The public and private sectors are yet to reach pre-pandemic staffing levels, while residents face rising gas prices that are some of the highest in the country. With both the governorship and a Senate seat on the line, Nevada will undoubtedly see a huge influx of cash from Democrats and Republicans, but a large portion of those funds will likely be spent at the top of the ticket. To maximize his chances of victory, Ford will need to have a strong, well-funded campaign independent of his Democratic colleagues.

Elections for state attorney general have rarely had such high stakes, and the stakes in Nevada are about as big as it gets. As in other key states, Aaron Ford's bid for reelection is about protecting democracy as much as it is about building progressive power or defending Democratic territory. Nevada is still a swing state, but it also holds the potential to be one of the [more progressive places](#) in the country thanks to its diverse population and strong labor unions. But losing the state to GOP control in 2022 could make winning that long-term battle much, much harder.

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