

Tony Vargas: U.S. House of Representatives: Nebraska

Recommendation Level: High Priority



Tony Vargas has worked his way up. The first in his family to graduate college, Vargas became an award-winning public school teacher, and was elected to the Omaha School Board in 2013, then to the Nebraska Legislature in 2016. He's now taking the next step in his political career by running for Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District, the only competitive House race in the state. Democrats don't talk much about Nebraska, but he's a candidate worth supporting.

Blue Tent views giving to Vargas' campaign 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 race important?

Democrats will likely lose the House, so winning seats in these congressional elections is really about making it possible to retake the lower chamber of Congress in 2024. And while winning one House seat is just as good as winning any other, getting a win in deep-red Nebraska would be a pretty major deal in this election cycle.

Can Vargas win?

This district is slightly more Republican-leaning than the old 2nd District, and the incumbent here, Don Bacon, didn't have much trouble winning here before, beating much-hyped progressive Kara Eastman in 2020. But voters in the new district went +6.4 for Biden in 2020, and maybe Vargas can do better with a slightly more moderate platform (he's not in favor of Medicare for All) and in a cycle when reproductive rights could drive a lot of turnout. Cook Political Report rates this seat as a toss-up, which seems right.

Does he need money?

This is shaping up to be an expensive contest, with super PACs on either side putting in \$2.5 million in outside spending as of July. (The spending is skewed Bacon's way by a 2-to-1 margin.) Vargas has

raised \$1.6 million, which is pretty good, but Bacon has surpassed that, raising \$2.7 million. Those numbers are only current as of the end of June, so we'll get some more clarity on this race soon. But for now, at least, Vargas is falling behind in the money in a close race, making him a **high priority** for donors.

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