

18 IN 18 RACES TO WATCH

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH EDITION





As state-level Republicans have reached modern highs in legislative majorities and statewide offices held, the RSLC has brought attention to outstanding Future Majority Project (FMP) and Right Women, Right Now (RWRN) candidates running in critical races by highlighting them through the “Races to Watch” program since 2014. In years past, candidates featured in our campaigns proved to be essential majority makers and this cycle is no different. In Kentucky, 16 in ‘16 featured candidate Melinda Prunty helped Republicans flip the Kentucky House for the first time in 95 years. In Connecticut, 16 in ‘16 candidates Heather Somers and George Logan helped Republicans achieve split control in the state Senate, bringing Republicans to 69 chambers controlled. Meanwhile, candidates in Colorado, Maine, New York and Washington all played integral roles helping Republicans retain crucial Senate majorities in 2016 and expand our map.

In 2018, candidates featured as part of the 18 in ‘18 Races to Watch program are running in some of this year’s biggest legislative and statewide races with an opportunity to make history with their elections. This edition of our Races to Watch list includes only Hispanic down ballot candidates in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month which begins on September 15th. These candidates span eight states and will prove critical to helping protect and grow Republican ranks in the states.



ARIZONA

TJ Shope

Arizona Legislative District 8

Republicans have controlled the Arizona House of Representatives since 1966 and currently hold a 35-25 majority.

tjshope.com



T.J. Shope is a resident of Coolidge, Arizona, and has long been active in the community. Born in Florence, Shope has lived in Coolidge for the overwhelming majority of his life and is a graduate of Coolidge High School and Central Arizona College, where he was recently inducted into the CAC Wall of Success. He also earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science from Arizona State University. Elected to the Coolidge Unified School District Governing Board in 2008 and re-elected in 2012 & 2016, he was voted to be the board's vice-president upon taking office in 2009 and in 2013, was elected the board's president and has held that position since then. In the House of Representatives, Shope has served on the House Committee on Agriculture & Water, the House Committee on Energy, Environment & Natural Resources as well as the House Committee on Commerce. He currently serves as the Speaker Pro Tempore of the House, as well as serving as the Chairman of the House Committee on Rules. Shope co-owns his family's long-time business, Shope's IGA Supermarket, in Coolidge.

The Arizona House is a multi-member chamber where voters select two representatives per district. In 2016, Shope and the other Republican elected in LD 8 received over 70% of the vote.

CALIFORNIA

Dante Acosta

California Assembly District 38

Republicans need to flip two seats in the California Assembly to end the Democrats' supermajority in the chamber which would significantly hinder their abilities to pass legislation increasing taxes.

www.danteacosta.com



Dante Acosta was elected in 2016 to represent California's 38th Assembly District. During his first term, Acosta authored legislation to improve the prospects of foster youth, provide pathways to careers for at risk youth, address the cost of healthcare, keep dangerous criminals behind bars, and address the cost of living in California. Furthermore, Acosta was key in the passage of landmark pieces of legislation to end unnecessary pet testing, eliminate "dark money" from California political campaigns, and address workplace harassment. Before joining the Assembly, Dante served as Mayor Pro Tem on the Santa Clarita City Council. In the private sector, he worked as the General Sales Manager of a car dealership, and in a number of senior leadership positions in the financial services industry, as well as volunteering for several worthwhile charities. He is also a SAG actor with several TV, film and commercial credits. He attended California State University, Northridge, and the University of Phoenix. Dante is very supportive of both veterans and active duty military. His eldest son, Rudy Acosta, an Army Medic, was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2011. Dante and his wife, Carolyn, live in Santa Clarita, where they raised their three children.

Assemblyman Acosta won 52.9% of the vote in his election in 2016 despite Hillary Clinton carrying his district by 5% at the presidential level. He is facing the same opponent he defeated in 2016.



CALIFORNIA

Alexandria Coronado California Assembly District 65

Members of the California Assembly represent approximately 465,000 people making it the largest population-per-representative ratio of any state's lower chamber.

coronadoforassembly.com



Dr. Alexandria Coronado made history in 1998 as the first Hispanic woman elected to the Anaheim Union High School District Board of Trustees. She went on to be elected to the Orange County Board of Education in 2002 and served until 2010. She was elected to the Council of Urban Boards of Education, served as Chair of the Federal Legislation Committee for the California County Boards of Education, and served on the Executive Board for the Orange County School Boards Association. As a Member of the National Hispanic Caucus of School Board Members, she assisted in reaching Hispanic students across the country to promote their scholarship program. Dr. Coronado owns Crown Music Studios, an instructional music studio. Her music students have won local, national, and international competitions, and have been awarded college scholarships.

This district has flipped party control in the past three elections and is currently represented by a Democrat.

FLORIDA

Marili Cancio Florida Senate District 40

Republicans have controlled the Florida Senate since 1994 and the current 24-16 Republican majority is the closest margin since 1996.

www.marilicancio.com



Marili Cancio has dedicated her life to the law, community, and family. With over 20 years of experience, she has distinguished herself as one of the most admired community activists and respected jurists in South Florida. Marili has served in some of the most prestigious legal firms in Florida leading her to establish her own law practice, a 100% woman owned business. Marili has given her time, generosity, and legal expertise to countless local community organizations and institutions. During the Obama Administration, Marili was invited twice to discuss economic policy and a new Cuba policy, demonstrating her ability to cross the aisle and work together in a bipartisan fashion for the good of all. From 2011 until her recent resignation to run for the Florida Senate, Marili served as a Trustee of Miami Dade College, the largest institution of higher learning in the nation.

Florida Senate District 40 voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton in 2016 but has a recent track record of electing Republicans for down ballot elections.



FLORIDA

Bob Cortes

Florida House District 30

Following the 2016 election, Republicans were only one seat away from having supermajority status in the House as they had a 79-41 majority.

www.bobcortes.com



Bob was born in Brooklyn, New York to parents who had relocated from Puerto Rico. When Bob was 10 years old, they moved back to Puerto Rico. Bob grew up in the city of Bayamon, graduated from high school, and attended college, majoring in Computer Programming with a minor in Business Administration. In 1989, Bob's family moved to the Central Florida area and fell in love with the community. They knew that they were "home." Bob founded and is still the co-owner of Cortes Towing Service, and in 2011, Bob co-founded Cortrans Shuttle Service, a transportation provider that services Orlando International Airport and the Port Canaveral Cruise Terminal. Bob was elected to the Longwood City Commission in November 2009 and was elected Deputy Mayor in 2010. He became the Mayor for the City of Longwood in May 2014. In 2013, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando named Bob one of Central Florida's 25 most Influential Hispanics.

Rep. Cortes won re-election in 2016 after flipping the seat from Democrat control in 2014 despite Hillary Clinton carrying the district by over 8% at the presidential level.

FLORIDA

Juan Fernandez-Barquin

Florida House District 119

The Republican incumbent Representative for this district, Jeanette Nuñez, was recently named as Florida gubernatorial nominee Ron DeSantis' running mate.

www.votebarquin.com



Juan Fernandez-Barquin was born and raised in Miami, Florida by Cuban parents. Juan attended Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. After Belen Jesuit, he attended Florida International University, earned a B.A. in Economics, and graduated cum laude from the Honors College. Juan then attended and graduated from American University Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C. Juan began his legal career as a court appointed attorney at the Palm Beach County Public Defender's Office. In 2013, Juan moved back to Miami to practice law at a prominent Miami civil law firm, then opened up his own law firm. Juan is a practicing attorney who concentrates on real estate, wills, and estates, and is currently licensed to practice law in Florida, New York, and Washington, D.C.

The 119th House district is one of numerous districts that Hillary Clinton and President Obama won but has consistently elected Republicans to down ballot offices.



FLORIDA

Rene Plasencia Florida House District 50

State representatives in Florida are term limited to four consecutive two-year terms.

www.votecoachp.com



Rene “Coach P” Plasencia was born and raised in Orlando by a Cuban born father and Puerto Rican mother. Growing up, he was always reminded by his father the gift of living in a free and democratic country. His mother taught him the value of perseverance, never allowing him to quit anything he started. His parents also instilled in him the importance of integrity, hard work, and dedication. Rene graduated from Dr. Phillips High School where his strong work ethic and dedication earned him a track and field and cross-country scholarship to the University of Central Florida. After graduating, he began teaching and coaching at Colonial High School. He taught at Colonial for over 15 years. As a coach for the track and cross-country programs, he inspired “his kids” and cultivated a culture of winning and success where there once was none. Frustrated with the direction of the education system, coupled with a deteriorating trust in our government, “Coach P” decided to run for the Florida Legislature. During his two terms in the House, “Coach P” has been regarded as a highly effective leader in both policy and fiscal issues; primarily in healthcare and education.

In 2011, Rene did what no other coach had ever done by leading his team to the school’s first state championship in any sport in the school’s 53-year history. In 2012, he led them to a second state title.

FLORIDA

Ana Maria Rodriguez Florida House District 105

This district is currently vacant as the previous incumbent Republican Rep. Carlos Trujillo stepped down after he was confirmed as U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States.



www.electanamaria.com

Ana Maria Rodriguez is an example of the American Dream. Born from Cuban immigrants, she is happily married to Dr. Clemente Canabal and together they have four children. Candid in her demeanor but steadfast in her fight to improve quality of life, she is committed to serving others with unwavering transparency and ethics. Currently, she is serving as the Vice Mayor of the City of Doral, the third fastest growing city in the United States, where she was elected in 2010 for a four-year term and re-elected for a second term in 2014. Born, raised, and educated in Miami, she attended St. Theresa Catholic School, then went on to high school at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy. She later graduated from Florida International University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communications in 1999 and graduated from The H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business at Nova Southeastern University with a Master of Science in Leadership in 2009. Ana Maria currently serves as Vice President of Government Affairs with the MIAMI Association of REALTORS®, the largest local REALTOR association in the United States. Ana Maria has volunteered and supported numerous causes and initiatives throughout the years. This year, as Honorary Chair of the 2018 Autism Speaks Miami Walk she leads the effort of the largest fundraising event in South Florida. She also currently serves on the board of Florida International University President’s Council.

Rodriguez was the first Cuban-American female elected in the city of Doral’s history.



FLORIDA

Anthony Rodriguez Florida House District 118

Florida became a Republican trifecta state following the 1998 elections and has remained that way since then making it one of the longest running Republican trifecta states east of the Mississippi.

anthonyforflorida.com

Born and raised in Miami, Anthony Rodriguez is a product of public schools and graduated from Sunset Senior High. Anthony has served on several county boards as well as volunteered his time and donated to several local charities within the community. Currently, alongside his high school sweetheart, he owns and operates a business in Kendall. Both Anthony and his wife, Licette, work and are raising their three children in the very community in which he is now running for the Florida House of Representatives, which makes him well aware of all the issues affecting everyone in the district. “It is my desire to build a better future for my children and the community I’ve lived my whole life in. This inspires me to go to Tallahassee and tackle the issues that are affecting all of us such as jobs, tolls, and education in a way that will improve our lives and those of our children and grandchildren,” Rodriguez said when asked why he is running for office.

The Republican candidate for this district in 2016 lost by only 53 votes making it a prime pick up opportunity for Republicans in 2018.



IOWA

James Perez Iowa House District 71

Republicans regained their majority in the state House after the 2010 midterms in which they flipped 14 districts.

perezforiahouse.win.gop

James Perez was raised in Midland, Texas, the son of a Cuban refugee. At a young age he was taught the importance of freedom and developed a love for his country. He graduated from Lee High School and joined the United States Marine Corps to serve as infantry. After his service to the Marines, he worked for the Department of Defense and the Department of State as an anti-terrorism, high threat protection contractor in Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and Iraq. Perez moved to Marshalltown in 2010 and joined the Army Reserves as an Engineer. He obtained his bachelor’s degree in Business and Marketing from Buena Vista University. He currently works as an Operations Manager for a recycling center in Marshalltown. Perez is married to his wife, Sonya, who works as a social worker, and the couple has four children.

This district intersects with one of the 206 pivot counties in the country which supported Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 but voted for President Trump in 2016.



NEW MEXICO

Michelle Garcia Holmes New Mexico Lieutenant Governor

New Mexico Republican Lt. Governor John Sanchez is not running for re-election due to term limits.

ltgov2018.com



Michelle Garcia Holmes is a retired chief of staff for the New Mexico Attorney General's office where she worked on the creation of the first Government Corruption Division and helped pass legislation against child predators and human traffickers. In this role she additionally oversaw agency grants and managed statewide education programs to rural and tribal communities on prescription drug issues and the dangers of methamphetamine. Before her role in the Attorney General's office, Garcia Holmes was a commissioned police officer for 30 years and retired at the rank of detective from the Albuquerque Police Department.

Garcia Holmes, running on a ticket with gubernatorial nominee Steve Pearce, would become the first female Hispanic Republican Lt. Governor in the state's history.

NEW MEXICO

Alonzo Baldonado New Mexico House District 8

In 2014, Republicans flipped control of the New Mexico House of Representatives for the first time in decades and are in a prime position to regain their majority this cycle.

www.votealonzo.com



Alonzo has served in the New Mexico House of Representatives since 2011 representing House District 8 in Valencia County which is a hard-working middle class, predominately Hispanic and Democratic area. Serving previously in leadership roles as Republican Caucus Chair and as the Majority Whip, Baldonado has built on personal relationships to enact solid, smart, and effective policies. New Mexico has made gains in the arenas of economic development and tax policy while Baldonado has served. Serving on the House Education Committee from the beginning of his tenure has allowed him the insight to bring common sense to a struggling education system that has dealt with a legacy of bad policy which leads to many opportunities for improving New Mexico's educational system. His personal experience in running a small real estate firm lends practical experience to his other standing committee assignment on Business and Industry. New Mexico saw its first Republican majority in the House of Representatives in 60 years while Baldonado has served.

Rep. Baldonado was the first Republican to represent the 8th House District since the 1970s when he first was elected in 2010.



NEW MEXICO

Martin Zamora New Mexico House District 63

Republicans only need to flip four House districts to regain the majority in the lower chamber.

zamora4strep63.com



A Clovis native, Zamora has lived his entire life in the district. He has been involved in agricultural businesses for over twenty years. He spent over 22 years working at a dairy farm, and he has owned several small businesses related to the agricultural industry in New Mexico. Zamora owns a farm in Clovis and a ranch located in Torrance and Socorro Counties and has served on Wells Fargo's Community Advisory Board. Zamora's legislative priorities center on supporting New Mexico's families. His plan includes creating more jobs so New Mexicans can provide a good standard of living for themselves and their children. A strong believer in the power of education, Zamora will work to make sure every child in New Mexico receives a quality education and is safe while attending school. Zamora, and his wife, Debbie, have been married for 38 years and have two daughters and six grandchildren.

The 63rd House District is currently represented by a Democrat state Representative despite Hillary Clinton only receiving 36% of the vote in this district in 2016.

OREGON

Alexander Flores Oregon Senate District 15

A total of 17 seats in the Oregon Senate are up this November and Republicans need to flip three districts from Democrats to flip the chamber to a Republican majority.

alexanderforeregon.com



Alexander Flores is a father, grandfather, and senior supply chain analyst running for the Oregon state Senate in Washington County. Flores, a strong advocate for children and education, leads the Centro Cultural de Washington County—a nonprofit serving the county's Latino families with cultural, career, and civic programs—as board president. Flores is leading a community-centric campaign and, as state Senator, hopes to prevent tax hikes on low and middle-income families and ensure that more resources actually reach Oregon's classrooms.

This seat flipped to Democrat control in 2014 after the incumbent Republican Senator lost in a close election decided by less than 400 votes. The district had been represented by a Republican for over a decade before the 2014 midterms.



OREGON

David Molina Oregon House District 29

Republicans are just five seats away from split control in the Oregon House of Representatives.

www.molinafororegon.com



Born in Hood River, Oregon, and raised in a migrant farmworker family, David Molina grew up in a Catholic family and one that valued service to community. In 2004, Molina graduated from Oregon State University with a BA in Political Science and an Army Officer Commission where he served as an aide-de-camp to a general officer, a Summary Court Martial Officer at Aberdeen Proving Ground, and an Operations Officer at Dover Air Force Base. In 2014, after a decade of service to country, Capt. Molina founded operationcode.org, a national veterans nonprofit helping veterans and military spouses get trained in software development and enter the tech industry.

If elected, Molina would be the first Mexican-American and the first Hispanic Republican to represent Oregon's 29th district.

TEXAS

Cynthia Flores Texas House District 52

Texas has been a Republican trifecta since the House of Representatives flipped to Republican control following the 2002 election.

www.cynthiaflores52.com



Cynthia Flores is a Case Manager at the Round Rock Area Serving Center, where she leads the effort to provide food, shelter, clothing, and financial assistance to 1,100 Central Texas families a month. Cynthia was also appointed by Governor Greg Abbott to the board of the Brazos River Authority. She has been involved in the local chamber for a decade, is an active member of her parish, St. William Catholic Church, and a dedicated volunteer for numerous charities and non-profit boards. Cynthia, and her husband Rene, have two children -- Cecelia, 22, and John Richard, 20. They live in Round Rock, where Rene is a member of the city council. She is committed to advocating for and supporting pro-life initiatives, improving local schools, voting for fiscally conservative budgets, and supporting law and order at the border and across Texas.

The Texas legislature does not currently have any Republican Hispanic women in the House chamber.



TEXAS

John Lujan Texas House District 118

Republicans reached a high of 99 seats following the 2010 midterms and their majority currently stands at 93 members.

www.votelujan.com



John Lujan is a husband, father, retired firefighter, small businesses man, coach, Sunday school teacher, and community volunteer. Since retiring from the San Antonio Fire Department in 2012, John has continued to serve as a leader at Yash & Lujan (Y&L) Consulting and has helped to grow the small IT business to over 400 employees. As a successful businessman, John is often asked to speak to students at local schools about the opportunities in the technology field. John and Freda, his wife of 33 years, have five boys – two biological and three adopted.

Named as the RSLC's first "Races to Watch" in 2016, Lujan won a special election in January of 2016 which made him the first Republican to ever represent House District 118.

WISCONSIN

Jessie Rodriguez Wisconsin Assembly District 21

Republicans have a 64-35 majority in the state Assembly, the largest Republican majority in state history.

www.jessieforassembly.com



Representative Jessie Rodriguez was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly during a Special Election in November 2013. She currently resides in Oak Creek, Wisconsin with her husband, Aaron and son, Noah. She serves on three Assembly Committees including Education, Energy and Utilities, and is the Chairperson of the Committee on Family Law. She also served as a member of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care, a bipartisan study committee tasked with developing ideas to improve the child welfare system. Jessie was born in El Salvador and eventually moved to Massachusetts shortly after a civil war broke out in El Salvador. In the early 1990s, they moved to Milwaukee for work opportunities and to be near family. Jessie graduated from Hamilton High School and is a Marquette University alumna, graduating with a B.A. in communication studies. The education opportunities she was afforded during her childhood sparked her interest in the Parental Choice Program and led to her joining the Hispanics for School Choice organization as their Outreach Coordinator. Jessie's background with the school choice program has given her unique insight into education reform, ensuring that students become the greatest beneficiaries.

Rep. Rodriguez is the first Hispanic immigrant elected to the Wisconsin state legislature.





ABOUT FMP

The Republican State Leadership Committee's (RSLC) Future Majority Project (FMP) seeks to identify, recruit and support candidates who better reflect the full diversity of our nation. Launched in 2011, FMP supports men and women from diverse communities as they run to grow the economy, support job creators and focus on ways to keep more money in the pockets of working families. The efforts are helping to build a strong bench of current and future Republican leaders. In the 2013-2014 cycle, FMP recruited 244 new candidates of all diverse backgrounds and successfully helped elect 43 to office in states nationwide, with an investment totaling more than \$6 million – in partnership with Right Women, Right Now. In 2015-2016, FMP invested \$7 million – in partnership with the RSLC's Right Women, Right Now (RWRN) – to identify and recruit 174 new, diverse candidates in 36 states. Through these efforts, FMP and RWRN saw 22 new candidates of diverse ethnicity elected, as well as 165 new women. FMP also saw 18 diverse elected officials enter leadership. Since its founding in 2011, the RSLC has with an over \$20 million investment helped elect over 500 women and over 100 diverse candidates.



ABOUT RWRN

The Republican State Leadership Committee's (RSLC) Right Women, Right Now (RWRN) initiative serves to identify, recruit and support women candidates nationwide in order to help elect more Republican leaders who better embody the electorate of our country, where women are 53 percent of the voters. RWRN offers candidate trainings, mentorship matchings and digital organizing tools for our candidates' campaigns for state-level office. Since its founding in 2012, RWRN has recruited hundreds of women candidates, elected over 500 new women to office and continues working to grow the largest caucus of Republican elected women in the country. RWRN is co-chaired by Tennessee Speaker of the House Beth Harwell and Arizona Secretary of State Michele Reagan. In the 2015-2016 election cycle, RWRN shattered its recruitment goal of 500 candidates by identifying and recruiting 690 new, women candidates to run for state-level office. RWRN saw 165 of those candidates appointed or elected in 37 states. In partnership with the RSLC's Future Majority Project (FMP), which aims to elect candidates from all diverse communities, RWRN invested \$7 million between 2015-2016 to identify, recruit and support these candidates.

