

# [***Senate primaries set up a marquee race in Maryland and a likely Republican flip in West Virginia***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1J-KDS1-JC5B-G02Y-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Republican voters advanced strong Senate contenders in Maryland and West Virginia on Tuesday, giving the GOP a big boost in its push to claim control of Congress' upper chamber.

Former Gov. Larry Hogan claimed the Republican nomination in what will be a marquee race in Maryland against Angela Alsobrooks, a top local official who could become the fourth Black woman in U.S. history to serve in the Senate.

Meanwhile, another popular Republican, Gov. Jim Justice, won the Senate nomination in deep-red West Virginia, becoming the overwhelming favorite in the race that represents the GOP's best pickup opportunity in the nation.

In both states, which share a border but feature antithetical ***politics***, the Republican nominees represent a serious challenge for Democrats in the general election as they cling to a 51-49 Senate majority and defend seats in other states that former President Donald Trump won four years ago.

At the same time, Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden sought to project strength in low-stakes presidential primaries. And further down the ballot, two people who were on opposite sides of the Jan. 6 insurrection lost their U.S. House bids — a former Capitol Police officer running in Maryland and a former West Virginia state lawmaker who participated in the riot.

In all, three states hosted statewide primary elections Tuesday — Maryland, [*Nebraska*](https://apnews.com/article/nebraska-primary-e16d865ebe7b43a9211ed188f08ee71c) and West Virginia — as Republicans and Democrats picked their nominees for a slate of November elections that will decide the presidency and control of Congress.

**A TRUMP CRITIC GRABS MARYLAND’S GOP NOMINATION**

In Maryland, Hogan gives Republicans a legitimate chance at picking up a Senate seat in the deep-blue state for the first time in more than four decades.

Hogan overcame his years-long criticism of Trump, a position that put him at odds with many Republican primary voters but will undoubtedly help him in the general election this fall. Maryland voters gave Biden a 33-point victory over Trump four years ago.

On the other side in the Senate contest, Democratic voters nominated Alsobrooks, the top official in Prince George's County outside of Washington. The 53-year-old African American county executive had been endorsed by many of the state’s top officials, including Gov. Wes Moore, Sen. Chris Van Hollen and U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer.

Alsobrooks prevailed after a contentious and expensive primary against U.S. Rep. David Trone, a liquor store magnate who had invested more than $61 million into his unsuccessful bid.

Race was an issue in the Democratic primary and may be in the general election in the months ahead. Alsobrooks is trying to become the first Black senator from a state in which roughly one in three residents identifies as African American.

On the social media site X, Hogan congratulated Alsobrooks and said, “Voters have a clear and stark choice: more of the dysfunctional partisan status quo or real independent and bipartisan leadership.”

Alsobrooks, also posting on X, promised to “defeat Larry Hogan, keep Maryland blue, and keep our Senate under Democratic control.”

**THE WEST VIRGINIA BATTLE TO REPLACE MANCHIN**

Justice won his primary against U.S. Rep. Alex Mooney. With Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin gone, the seat is almost guaranteed to turn red come November.

The Trump-endorsed Justice, a former billionaire with a folksy personality, is wildly popular in the state. A former Democrat, Justice switched to the Republican Party in 2017, announcing the change at a Trump rally.

Despite his connection to the former Republican president, Justice doesn't pander to Trump as much as most statewide Republican officials in the state. And he largely avoids focusing on some of the GOP’s favorite culture war issues, such as transgender rights.

Mooney had tried to win over conservatives by labeling Justice a “RINO” — which stands for “Republican in name only” — who would support Democratic policies. Justice did support Biden’s bipartisan infrastructure law, saying West Virginia couldn’t afford to turn away the money offered in the bill.

At a polling place in West Virginia’s capital city, voter Steve Ervin said his votes Tuesday were directly related to Trump.

“I really did an exhaustive study of the sample ballot of who I believe supported Trump and Trump supported them,” said Ervin, who works in the state’s unemployment office. “That’s what I made my whole decision on.”

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, the Republican nominee in the 2018 Senate race against Manchin, won the nomination for West Virginia governor.

**TESTS OF STRENGTH IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY**

Biden and Trump have [*already amassed enough delegates*](https://apnews.com/hub/ap-election-2024-delegate-tracker) to claim the presidential nominations at their respective national conventions this summer. And they added to their total Tuesday with wins in Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia.

Yet voters on both sides hoped to register a significant protest vote Tuesday that would demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Biden-Trump rematch.

Maryland progressives especially unhappy with the Biden administration’s support for Israel in its war against Hamas had encouraged voters to select “uncommitted to any presidential candidate” instead. Results coming in Tuesday night suggested the “uncommitted” vote was running behind the margins of similar movements in Michigan and Minnesota.

There was no uncommitted option in West Virginia or Nebraska.

Everett Bellamy, a Democrat who voted early in Annapolis, said he voted “uncommitted” instead of Biden as a protest against the killing of women and children and noncombatants in Gaza.

“I wanted to send a message,” Bellamy, 74, said after leaving an early voting center.

Meanwhile, Trump's Republican critics could not choose “uncommitted,” but they could choose his former GOP rival Nikki Haley, who appeared on the ballot in Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia despite formally suspending her campaign more than two months ago.

Derek Faux, an independent voter from Charleston, West Virginia, said he supported Haley, and in other Republican races, he said he voted for the candidates he believed were least like Trump.

“I would rather see moderate, reasonable Republicans than some of the other folks,” said Faux, a librarian.

**TWO SIDES OF THE INSURRECTION**

Tuesday's elections also included two candidates who were intimately involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

In Maryland, former Capitol Police officer Harry Dunn [*was among nearly two dozen Democrats*](https://apnews.com/article/capitol-police-officer-jan-6-congress-harry-dunn-730a44a881057b2054242d415e57172d) running in the state’s 3rd Congressional District. The 40-year-old Democrat lost to State Sen. Sarah Elfreth.

In West Virginia, a former member of the House of Delegates, Derrick Evans, lost his bid to oust incumbent Republican Rep. Carol Miller in the 1st Congressional District. The 39-year-old Evans served a three-month jail sentence after livestreaming himself participating in the storming of the U.S. Capitol.

**OTHER KEY RACES**

In Nebraska, Republican Sens. Deb Fischer and Pete Ricketts both won their primaries, one of the rare occasions when both senators in a state were on the ballot at the same time. And in Nebraska’s 2nd Congressional District, Republican U.S. Rep. Don Bacon fended off a challenge from his right flank.

In North Carolina, voters finalized their pick of the Trump-endorsed Brad Knott in what had become a one-person Republican primary in the state's 13th Congressional District.

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This story has deleted an incorrect reference to a California election being Tuesday. The California election is next week.

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Willingham reported from Charleston, West Virginia. Peoples reported from Washington.

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