

# [***Ex-GOP Gov. Hogan is popular with some Maryland Democrats who still don't want him in the Senate***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C0X-NW81-DYMD-61XH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Some Maryland Democrats have a soft spot for [*Larry Hogan*](https://apnews.com/article/larry-hogan-republican-maryland-senate-majority-democrat-5bb0fee8af570e61d685ec3364c95c13), their former two-term Republican governor in a heavily blue state. But they don’t want to turn an open Senate seat – and possibly control of the chamber – over to the GOP this year.

Party voters in Tuesday’s primary will decide which candidate they think is in the best position to beat Hogan in November in a state that hasn’t elected a Republican senator in more than 40 years. David Trone, who's in his third term as a congressman, and Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks are the leading contenders among the 10 candidates.

After leaving an early voting center at a recreational facility in Annapolis, John Fischer said he voted for Trone. It was a tough choice for the 75-year-old retired federal employee. In the end, he went with the candidate he felt had more experience.

“I also think that he can probably beat Larry Hogan, who I actually like, except I don’t intend to put a Republican majority in the Senate — if I can help it," said Fischer, who voted for Hogan for governor in 2014 and 2018.

Lisa Hartman, 65, voted at the same site for Alsobrooks, noting the candidate's long list of high-profile supporters, including Gov. Wes Moore, Sen. Chris Van Hollen, Rep. Steny Hoyer and former Sen. Barbara Mikulski.

“She had the backing of almost everyone in the Democratic Party, and David Trone — I got so tired of hearing all of his commercials," said Hartman, who also had voted for Hogan for governor.

Trone, who owns a national chain of liquor stores called Total Wine & More, has put more than $61 million of his own money into his primary bid in what could become a record for a self-funded Senate campaign.

Hartman said Trone's ads have been relentless. "I feel somewhat like he’s trying to buy an election,” she said.

Hartman said she would have considered supporting Hogan in November under other circumstances. But given that Democrats are defending a narrow majority in the Senate and have twice the number of seats on the line this year as Republicans, she thinks the stakes are too high.

“I would love to, in the next race, vote for him, but I won’t because of that situation," Hartman said, though she added later that she could change her mind.

In this government town about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from the nation's capital, people tend to understand the political ramifications of the race.

“You just hear it all over town, any time you go to a gathering of any type," Hartman said.

Maryland Democrats have had to endure a barrage of negative campaigning. One Trone ad included a local Prince George's official who said, “The U.S. Senate is not a place for training wheels.”

The attack ads worry prominent Democrats, who say party unity is crucial in an election that normally should go their way, given that Republicans are outnumbered 2-to-1 statewide.

Trone points out that he has won elections in a part of the state with more Republican voters than most of Maryland's other congressional districts.

“Voters across Maryland know that I’m in the best position to beat Larry Hogan in November," Trone said in a statement Friday. "Throughout this campaign, we’ve built a broad coalition led by working people who are excited for change.”

Alsobrooks is being outspent, but she said in an interview that she will have the support she needs to win in November — with an appeal that she thinks will inspire Marylanders.

“If the message is to just vote against Larry Hogan, that is not the most persuasive way forward," she said Friday. "What I offer is a real positive message that will bring people together and I believe that’s going to be what will help us win in the general election.”

She said her campaign was based on growing economic opportunity, investing in education, making communities safer and protecting abortion rights.

Preserving reproductive freedom is an issue that Maryland Democrats hope will help them in November, as it has in other states since the Supreme Court in 2022 overturned the constitutional right to abortion. A constitutional amendment to enshrine the right to abortion is on the Maryland ballot in November.

Trone supports abortion rights, too. In fact, broad similarities between the candidates on policy matters may push identity ***politics*** to the forefront. Alsobrooks would be Maryland’s first Black U.S. senator in a state that is 29% Black, the nation’s largest percentage of any state outside the Deep South.

That matters to Donna Gathright, 69, who cited the historic significance and Alsobrooks' extensive experience as a local official as top reasons for voting early for her in Annapolis.

“She was someone who I knew of more than the other people, and being a Black female, I also feel more seen and heard by people who are like me,” Gathright said. “I felt that she might have the interests of women and minority women more in the forefront.”

Maryland long has had women in its congressional delegation. Today, it has none.

Alsobrooks is the chief executive of Maryland's second-largest jurisdiction, and Prince George's is home to the state's highest number of registered Democrats in the Washington suburbs. She has highlighted the donations Trone has made to Republican candidates in the past, including to some who supported abortion bans.

“He has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to defeat good Democratic candidates," Alsobrooks said in a televised debate last month.

The money Trone has spent in this campaign has forged connections with some voters.

“I’ve been listening to his ads for a couple of years now, and I’ve just supported a lot of the issues that he has been strong on,” said Anne Hamilton, 47, an early voter in Annapolis.

Trone has criticized Alsobrooks for taking big donations from special interests, something he hasn’t felt the need to do because of his wealth.

“I’m the only candidate on this stage that doesn’t take money from Exxon,” Trone said in the debate. “They’re not helping us in the environment, I don’t think. I’m the only candidate here that doesn’t take money from Pfizer. Pfizer is not helping us bring health costs down.”

Trone, who describes himself as a progressive Democrat willing to work with Republicans, has highlighted his endorsement by the state teacher’s union, which has about 75,000 members and considerable political clout. He is supported by some prominent Prince George’s officials as well as Attorney General Anthony Brown, a former congressman from Alsobrooks' home county.

Some Democratic leaders worry that the fierceness of the campaign could make the race against Hogan harder. Six former Maryland Democratic Party chairs voiced support for Alsobrooks in a joint announcement Wednesday and said Trone’s negative ads could jeopardize unity among Democrats.

“It is simply wrong to accept that a self-funder is the answer to keeping the Maryland Senate seat blue,” said a statement signed by Kathleen Matthews, Terry Lierman, Susie Turnbull, Peter Krauser, Ike Leggett and Yvette Lewis. “In fact, we need a nominee who can inspire women and voters of all ages and backgrounds.”

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