

# [***Democrats hold cash and advertising edge in special election to succeed George Santos***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7P-X101-DY7V-G03V-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

February 2, 2024 Friday 8:26 PM GMT

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**Length:** 846 words

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**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Democrats hold a significant cash advantage as well as the edge on the airwaves in the race to succeed disgraced former Rep. [*George Santos*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/23/politics/george-santos-court-hearing/index.html), according to new campaign filings and advertising data.

The [*high-stakes special election*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/05/politics/santos-special-election-suburbs-2024/index.html) for New York's 3rd Congressional District on the north shore of Long Island is set for February 13, and Democrats are eager to flip the seat and cut into [*House Republicans' thin majority*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/29/politics/speaker-mike-johnson-narrow-majority/index.html). In 2022, Santos won what had been a longtime Democratic-held seat by about 8 points, and the race to succeed the Republican [*could offer important clues*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/05/politics/santos-special-election-suburbs-2024/index.html) about the political climate early in this election year.

The Democratic nominee for the special election is former Rep. [*Tom Suozzi*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/07/politics/tom-suozzi-democrats-santos-special-election/index.html), a long-term fixture in local ***politics*** who held the seat for three terms before vacating it for an unsuccessful 2022 run for governor. His Republican opponent, [*Mazi Pilip*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/14/politics/mazi-melesa-pilip-new-york-santos/index.html), is a Nassau County legislator and an Israeli immigrant who was born in Ethiopia and served in the Israel Defense Forces. Under New York's special election rules, both nominees were selected by the county party leaders in the district.

Suozzi raised more than three times as much as Pilip, [*$4.5 million*](https://docquery.fec.gov/cgi-bin/forms/C00607200/1754048/) to [*$1.3 million*](https://docquery.fec.gov/cgi-bin/forms/C00860429/1754042/), according to new filings with the Federal Election Commission that covered the beginning of October through January 24. Suozzi also outspent Pilip, $2.4 million to $714,000, over that time span. And crucially, Suozzi held a large cash-on-hand advantage entering the race's final weeks, with about $2.2 million banked to $629,000 for Pilip.

Prior to being tapped for the special election, Suozzi had launched a challenge to Santos in October, about a month before the congressman announced [*he would not seek reelection*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/16/politics/ethics-committee-releases-santos-report/index.html). In December, Santos became only the sixth lawmaker to be [*expelled from Congress*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/01/politics/george-santos-expel-resolution-vote/index.html), bringing to an end a scandal-plagued and tumultuous tenure on Capitol Hill. A House Ethics Committee report [*concluded*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/16/politics/ethics-committee-releases-santos-report/index.html) he had "sought to fraudulently exploit every aspect of his House candidacy for his own personal financial profit."

Santos has also [*pleaded not guilty to*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/10/politics/george-santos-indicted-arrested/index.html)[*23 federal charges*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/27/politics/george-santos-plea/index.html), including allegations that he stole donors' identities and ran up thousands of dollars in fraudulent charges on their credit cards, misused campaign funds and lied about his personal finances on House disclosure reports. He faces a possible trial later this year.

On the airwaves

In addition to Suozzi's cash advantage, Democrats have held the edge on air in the special election, according to AdImpact data. Including national party committees and outside groups, Democrats have outspent Republicans on advertising by about $9.9 million to $6.4 million.

The flood of advertising has been led by a pair of super PACs from each side, House Majority PAC for the Democrats, and Congressional Leadership Fund for Republicans, each of which has spent around $4 million on ads since January. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the campaign arm of House Democrats, has also made a significant investment, spending about $3.9 million on the race, while its GOP counterpart, the National Republican Congressional Committee, has spent about $964,000, plus about $885,000 on a joint effort with Pilip.

In their ads, Democrats have leveled a variety of criticisms against Pilip, [*saying*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/e205fa36-2904-4a21-b31b-f46f377f1659/) she "would join MAGA Republicans" in Congress to support spending cuts, [*threaten*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/70adc965-dc81-491e-a3c8-4aedb69076d9/) Social Security and [*restrict*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/c5900753-175e-4fe7-a860-c99f60d7f4dd/) abortion. Suozzi's campaign, meanwhile, has rolled out ads [*touting*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/3bc3976c-170e-44a6-b453-135e5988372d/) his character and constituent services, and also [*responding*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/bd990b79-3e2f-42b6-99d3-3d02a42fbcf5/) to attacks from Republicans, particularly on the issue of immigration.

Illegal immigration and border security are the focus of Republican ads in the 3rd District special election. The Congressional Leadership Fund has spent more than a million airing [*an ad*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/341dd018-b0a4-4fec-af28-fcd8139e155a/) accusing Suozzi of "rolling out the red carpet for illegal immigrants," and nearly a million more on [*another spot*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/d48872d7-bda8-4a04-b2fb-7e1f43caae51/) saying he "helped create our immigration crisis in Congress." And Pilip's campaign, in a joint effort with the NRCC, produced [*an ad*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/314aedf9-df18-4630-a8d9-a07c99fcbd93/) echoing that messaging, asserting that [*President Joe Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden)'s policies "are opening the border" and that "Biden and the Democrats let in 10 million migrants."

The winner of the special election to succeed Santos will serve out the remainder of his term.

The primary for the regular full term will be held in June. But the district's boundaries beyond the special election remain uncertain, as New York's highest court has ordered the state [*to redraw its congressional map this year*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/12/politics/new-york-redistricting/index.html). The state's Democratic-controlled Legislature would have ultimate say [*over the new lines*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/redistricting-states-congressional-maps-house/index.html).

Biden would have carried the 3rd District under its current lines by 8 points in 2020. But the GOP has made gains in elections on Long Island since then, largely around concerns about crime, immigration and inflation, including the high cost of housing.

CNN's Clare Foran, Haley Talbot, Fredreka Schouten and Renee Rigdon contributed to this report.

By David Wright, CNN

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**Load-Date:** February 16, 2024

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