

Minnesota's third congressional district covers the second-ring suburbs west, north, and south of Minneapolis, as well as further third-ring suburbs further north and west. More than half the population has a bachelor's degree, and the median household income is just over \$100,000/year. Historically, fiscally conservative, culturally moderate Republicans have been favored here: between 1969 and 2019, MN-03 did not once elect a member of the DFL. (The district's borders didn't move much over that period.) Even though President Obama won the district twice, its voters repeatedly and overwhelmingly chose to send GOP Representative Erik Paulsen back to Washington. It is therefore almost unbelievable how quickly Donald Trump incinerated the Republican brand here. Ice cream baron Dean Phillips, who ousted Rep. Paulsen in 2018, now receives landslides equal in magnitude to those of his predecessor. The only question now is how long it will take for MN-03 to become inhospitable to Republican life at the state and local level, too.

Representative Phillips is in the terminal stage of his quixotic presidential bid. Having burned through significant goodwill from the Democratic base and with no major allies in Minnesota to help him dispatch a primary challenger, he has decided to not run for re-election in the House. As of last week, there were two DFL candidates running for the open seat (both filed before Rep. Phillips dropped out). The filing deadline is June 4, and the primary is August 13.

Ron Harris is an urban planning advisor to the Resilient Cities Network and former candidate for MN-03. I suspect that Mr. Harris would have run a mainstream center-left campaign: there is little anti-capitalist or aggressively anti-establishment language on his website or Twitter, and he tweeted that he was running "to defend [Joe Biden]." Of the eight policy proposals on his website, four relate to "kitchen-table" economic issues (e.g. Medicare and cost of living), three are liberal priorities (climate, abortion, and voting rights), and the last covers veterans' issues. This platform is boring and uncontroversial, which is a good fit for an ancestrally Republican, upper-middle-class district. ("Eat the rich" will not work here, even in a DFL primary.) However, a dearth of local endorsements and mediocre fundraising (< \$100,000 raised since he announced in October) caused his run to fizzle out early. He endorsed Kelly Morrison on February 27th.

Kelly Morrison represents the Minnetonka/Lake Minnetonka area west of Minneapolis in Senate District 45. She is also an OB-GYN, and her "Protecting Reproductive Rights" plank is prominently featured on her website, in addition to cost of living reduction, gun control, campaign finance reform, and other center-left interests. In other words, she's running neither as a future Squad member nor as a centrist compromiser. In the 2020 presidential primaries, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren performed significantly worse in CD-03 than statewide, so sticking to the generic liberal tack is a smart move. She has effectively cleared the field after racking up endorsements from (former) Governor Dayton, Ron Harris, Rep. Phillips, almost two dozen state legislators, and the mayors of Edina, Wayzata, Medina, and Eden Prairie, which together make up more than 20% of the population of MN-03. Additionally, she has accumulated more than \$400,000 of contributions and spent less than a third. When she ran for re-election in the state house in 2020, she took in over \$183,000, by far the most of any state house candidate that cycle. The fact that she barely won re-election that year and ran far behind Biden is not an indictment of her political strength, because there was almost universally down-ballot lag (Republicans who held their nose for Biden but voted GOP for other races) across the Twin Cities suburbs that year. Of course, the noncompetitive nature of MN-03 means that her performance against the Republican nominee will have near-zero impact on her going to Washington.

Sources

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