<p>The chaotic scene at the Secretary of State&rsquo;s office during this past June's filing deadline drew a lot of attention as candidates entered races, left races and jumped into new races.</p>

<p>This helped generate an unusually high number of candidates entering Minnesota’s midterm election with 394 candidates filing to run in partisan state and federal races.</p>

<p>When comparing this midterm’s 147 partisan election contests to previous years – which can be done by discounting the less-common Minnesota Senate races – we can see a surge of candidates not seen since 2002 when third parties were more active.</p>

<p>This spike is primarily driven DFL candidates running in primaries for both open and occupied seats across the state. More Minnesota Democrats have filed to run for state and federal office than almost the past two decades.</p>

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<p>A somewhat smaller spike of GOP candidates have filed to run as well in the open governor’s race, special Senate election and hotly-contested vacancies in the U.S. House.</p>

<p>Even when accounting for Minnesota Senate races, the rate of overall candidate filings per race is still noticeably greater than past years, particularly among Democrats, while Republican numbers are flatter. This is partially because the DFL has more open turf to defend than Republicans, usually in bluer areas of the state.</p>

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<p>A confluence of open races is the primary factor explaining why so many people are running for office this year. This in part was created by a cascading effect of candidates switching races, like Lori Swanson leaving the Attorney General’s office to run for governor, Rep. Keith Ellison leaving the Fifth District to run for Attorney General, Rep. Ilhan Omar leaving the Minnesota Legislature to run in the Fifth District, and so on.</p>

<p>Additionally, Minnesota’s governorship is open for the first time in eight years since Mark Dayton can’t run for another consecutive term, attracting nearly a dozen candidates trying to replace him across parties. About 30 retirements and vacancies among state and federal offices means fewer incumbents seeking reelection overall. </p>

<p>Unusually, there are also two U.S. Senate races simultaneously on the ballot, including a special election for Al Franken’s former seat that’s currently occupied by Democrat Sen. Tina Smith.</p>

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<p>Minnesota is also a national battleground for the U.S. House, with four districts considered highly competitive, including two open seats in the DFL-held First and Eighth Districts. Both parties are battling for control for Minnesota's legislative chambers and the U.S. House and Senate nationally -- Republicans to maintain their control and Democrats to challenge President Donald Trump.</</p>

<p>This herd will be drastically thinned after <a href="http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-election-calendar-2018/483224691/">Minnesota&rsquo;s primary election on Aug. 14</a>, when 32 primaries for state and federal offices will decide GOP and DFL nominees from among 145 candidates.</p>

<p>Check out <a href="http://www.startribune.com/who-is-running-for-minnesota-governor-us-house-senate-major-political-office-election-2018/483224571/">who's running</a> for Minnesota's major political offices in 2018.</p>

Question to Ben at SOS:

Hi Ben,

So after reverse-engineering candidate filings from previous primary and general election results on the SOS website, this is what I’ve come up with. Note that the data is confined to state and federal races with the Minnesota Senate excluded:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **year** | **races** | **candidates** | **rate** |
| 2000 | 143 | 354 | 2.475524476 |
| 2002 | 146 | 390 | 2.671232877 |
| 2004 | 142 | 324 | 2.281690141 |
| 2006 | 147 | 344 | 2.340136054 |
| 2008 | 143 | 358 | 2.503496503 |
| 2010 | 146 | 351 | 2.404109589 |
| 2012 | 144 | 356 | 2.472222222 |
| 2014 | 147 | 350 | 2.380952381 |
| 2016 | 142 | 325 | 2.288732394 |
| 2018 | 148 | 397 | 2.682432432 |

Am I at least generally correct in interpreting this as a particularly crowded pre-primary candidate field for this year? Because it looks like the last comparable year to this one would be 2002 midterm.

And it would make sense with an open governors race, two U.S. Senate races, the U.S. House that includes two open seats, the whole Minnesota House up for re-election, several other state-level races up for grabs and the cascading effect of candidates switching races, particularly on the DFL side.

Are there any additional caveats, insights or counterarguments I might not be considering?

I don’t want to hyperbolize or misrepresent anything, nor am I looking to publish much in the way of hard specific numbers.

But if this is a big election year that has drawn somewhat more candidates into the fray than usual, I do think it’s worth noting that within the context of past elections.

Any info is greatly appreciated. Thanks!

-Jeff

With all petitions reviewed, we do have the final number of candidates that filed for office.

(This total does not include those that filed, and then withdrew.)

Number of state/federal (excluding judicial) candidates: 394

- DFL: 208

- Republican: 172

- Minor Party/Independent: 17

o Break down of minor party or principle candidates

 The following principle/party has 4 candidates: Legal Marijuana Now

 The following principle/party has 3 candidates: Libertarian Party

 The following principles/parties each have 2 candidates: Independence, Grassroots – Legalize Cannabis

 The following principles/parties each have 1 candidate: Unaffiliated, Minnesota Green Party, Libertarian, Independent-unaffiliated, Independent-Judicial Reform, independent