

Know Before You Go: AL-02 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Martha Roby won this district by only 22,797 votes (8.2%). That's close! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent*

Introduction: Republican Martha Roby has served as AL-02's rep since 2011 and is one of the first women to represent Alabama in Congress. Until recently, she had minimal competition in the district. Now in her fourth term, she has begun to face challenges from more conservative Tea Party rivals and Democratic challengers alike.

Issues: In her 2016 campaign, Roby promised to serve veterans, strengthen the military, support farmers, cut wasteful spending, and defend the Second Amendment. She also advocates defunding Planned Parenthood, and repealing the Affordable Care Act.

Committees: Roby sits on the House Appropriations and Judiciary Committees.

Recent Elections: Roby was a City council member when she ran for Congress in 2010 and ousted Democratic incumbent Bobby Bright, who challenged her in the 2018 Republican primary. She won reelection in 2012 with 62% of the vote. In 2016, she condemned Donald Trump's lewd remarks about women, and faced a Tea Party challenger who assailed her for not being a true conservative. Roby was re-elected, but with less than 50% of the vote

Strengths: From January 2011 to June 2018, Roby missed 67 of 5,102 roll call votes, a percentage point better than the median lifetime averages of other current reps. In this election, Roby also benefits from the strong support of farmers and pro-business groups, as well as the NRA.

Potential Weaknesses: Roby has been the primary sponsor of just one enacted bill, H.R. 349, the Preserving Marginal Lands & Protecting Farming Act of 2013. Though she supports farmers, she also favors curtailing illegal immigration, stances that may prove incompatible given local farmers' reliance on immigrant labor.

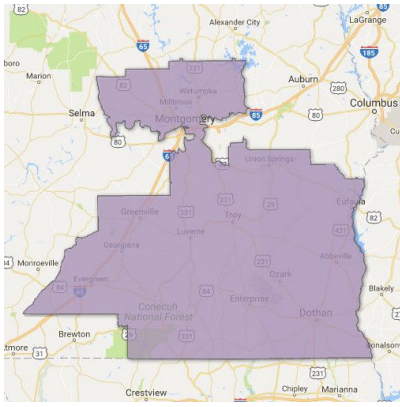
About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Tabitha Isner is an ordained minister with a background in public policy. This is her first run for public office, but she has previously worked on policy issues for faith-based organizations, political firms, and state governments focusing on services for low-income individuals and early childhood education.

Issues: Isner's campaign has focused on her desire to advance legislation informed by values rather than a rigid ideology. She advocates *preventative spending* in areas such as early childhood education, infrastructure improvements, and healthcare coverage through the Affordable Care Act. She also emphasizes the importance of fair treatment of all people, calling for reform in the criminal justice and education systems, as well as more welcoming policies towards immigrants.

Strengths: Isner's campaign focuses on reaching out to voters on both sides of the aisle without the use of traditional partisan labels. Her platform is heavily informed by her faith, and both she and her husband are ordained ministers. This may increase her appeal among Christian voters who traditionally support Republican candidates.

*A runoff election on **July 17** between **Martha Roby** and **Bobby Bright**, a former Democratic state rep who changed party affiliations to challenge Roby, will decide the Republican candidate. Isner, will face the winner in the general election.



AL-02: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Montgomery, 201,332 (partial, 2nd largest in state)
- Dothan, 68,001
- Prattville, 35,229
- Troy, 18,919

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 94K (33%)
- Trump: 186K (65%)

2016 House Results

- Mathis (D): 112K (41%)
- Roby (R): 135K (49%)
- Other: 30K (11%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 248K
- Eligible, not registered: 110K

2014 House Results

- Wright (D): 55K (33%)
- Roby (R): 113K (67%)

AL-02: Better Know a District

Geography

AL-02 lies in the southeastern section of Alabama and includes part of Montgomery County, home of the state capital, and a few suburban counties north and south of the city of Montgomery. What defines the geography of the district is the large section of rural counties in the “Wiregrass region” of southeastern Alabama.

Citizenry

Most counties in AL-02 are majority white. The district as a whole is 62% white, 32% black, and 4% Hispanic, Asian, or other. The district's concentration of veterans is greater than state and national averages, as is its 19.7% poverty rate. The city of Montgomery and its suburbs are divided by race and party, while the Wiregrass region is strongly Republican and has been becoming more so every year.

Elections

AL-02 came close to becoming a bastion of centrist Blue Dog Democrats. In 2008, before the most recent redistricting, it was represented by Bobby Bright, a “practically red” Democrat who eked out an open-seat election. But since 2010, the district has been represented by Republican Martha Roby, whose challenges are from the even-further right Tea Party.

Higher Education

There are nine colleges and universities in the district, most of them small. Troy University is the largest, with 18,400 students. The main campus is in Troy and satellite campuses are in Montgomery and Dothan. The district is also home to Alabama State University, a historically black university in Montgomery with an enrollment of approximately 6,000 students.

Industries

AL-02's top industries include higher education, healthcare, military, manufacturing, and retail trade. Major employers include L-3 Army Fleet Support, Southeast Alabama Medical Center, Rheem Water Heating, Wind Creek Casino and Hotel, and GKN Aerospace. The Wiregrass region, encompassing Dothan, Enterprise, and Geneva, is known for agriculture; Dothan is the peanut-farming capital of the world. Alabama is a right-to-work state, and there is a minimal labor union presence in the district.

Tourism

The ten-day National Peanut Festival, held in Dothan each fall, draws more than 160,000 attendees. The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, in Montgomery, is among the ten largest Shakespeare festivals in the world and attracts more than 300,000 visitors throughout the year. Highway 231, which runs through the district, is touted as the fastest route to Florida beaches, a boon to local businesses. Greenville boasts a golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones.