

Know Before You Go: IA-01 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Rod Blum won this district by only 29,500 votes (7.7%).

That's close! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Rod Blum, a Dubuque software executive who is ranked among the wealthiest members of the House of Representatives, is in his second term representing IA-01.

Issues: A member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, Blum cast his first vote in Congress against reelecting then-Rep. John Boehner as House Speaker. He co-founded the Term Limit Caucus; co-sponsored legislation to end lawmakers' travel and other perks; introduced a bill to impose a lifetime ban on lawmakers becoming lobbyists; and favors legal protections for federal whistleblowers.

Committees: Blum chairs the Small Business Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade. He is a member of three other panels: the Budget, Small Business, and Oversight & Government Reform committees.

Recent Elections: Blum was elected to Congress in 2014 by defeating Democrat Pat Murphy with 51% of the vote. He ran unopposed in the 2016 Republican primary, and in the general election beat Democratic challenger Monica Vernon with 54% of the vote.

Strengths: Blum's support for term limits and conservative-oriented government reform appeals to many Iowans, particularly in rural areas.

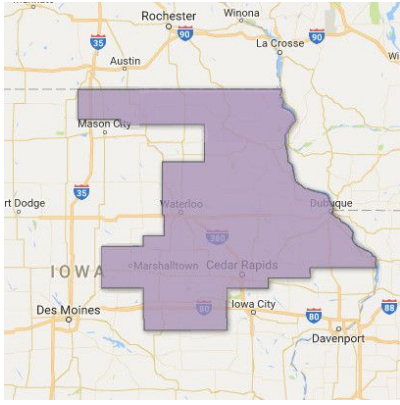
Potential Weaknesses: Blum has been criticized for being inaccessible and for failing to hold town hall meetings during the February 2017 recess. Iowa agriculture is dependent on free trade, so Blum's positions on efforts to kill or weaken NAFTA and other global trade deals will be watched closely. Blum backs President Trump's positions on restricting immigration and building a border wall with Mexico. A wealthy business executive, he has voted for GOP Social Security measures that would raise the retirement age.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Abby Finkenauer, a two-term Democrat in the Iowa House of Representatives, was nominated to face Rod Blum in the 2018 election. She was endorsed by Vice President Joe Biden, the DCCC, EMILY's List, labor unions and several of her colleagues in the Iowa House. Before 2014 she worked for the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, and earned a bachelor's degree from Drake University in Des Moines. If elected she will be, at 28, the youngest woman to be elected to the US House of Representatives.

Issues: Finkenauer ran on a working families platform, including job creation, support for unions and family farms, and a fair living wage. She also addressed education, environment and women's health care issues, particularly reproductive rights and the right to choose abortion.

Strengths: Finkenauer is known as a skilled state rep serving on the Economic Growth, Transportation and Government Oversight Committees. She is a successful campaigner, raising more money and taking more votes than the other three Democratic primary candidates combined. She is from a working class family and has openly discussed the \$15,000 in student loans she is working to pay off. She could be more relatable to voters than Blum, a businessman with a net worth of \$10,000,000.



IA-01: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Cedar Rapids, 126,326 (2nd largest in state)
- Waterloo, 68,406
- Dubuque, 57,637
- Cedar Falls, 39,260
- Marion, 34,768
- Marshalltown, 27,552

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 177K (45%)
- Trump: 190K (49%)

2016 House Results

- Vernon (D): 177K (46%)
- Blum (R): 207K (54%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 153K
- Eligible, not registered: 102K

2014 House Results

- Murphy (D): 141K (49%)
- Blum (R): 148K (51%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 248K

IA-01: Better Know a District

Geography

IA-01 encompasses all of Northeast Iowa and several of the state's larger urban areas. The vast majority of the district's land is rural, agricultural, and dotted with small towns.

Citizenry

But for a few pockets of racial diversity, IA-01 is almost entirely white. The poorer areas of the district include many small towns that have suffered population losses in recent decades. The district's rural areas tend to skew older, with young people concentrated in cities or progressive college towns such as Decorah and Grinnell.

Issues & Elections

Free trade, the Farm Bill, and protection of Social Security and Medicare are key issues in the district. Iowans are proud of holding the first caucus in the presidential election cycle, and voters tend to be engaged on the issues. The district voted Democratic in presidential elections in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012, but went for Trump in 2016. The district's House seat was held by a Republican from 1977 to 2007, and then by a Democrat from 2007 to 2015.

Higher Education

The district is home to the University of Northern Iowa, in Cedar Falls, as well as several small private colleges, universities, and community colleges. College towns such as Decorah, Grinnell, and Waverly are more progressive culturally and politically.

Industries

Agriculture, particularly corn, soybeans, and hogs, is the most important industry in the district and tends to drive local economic cycles. However, fewer farm families are able to survive without relying on at least one "off-farm" job. Other industries in the district include advanced manufacturing, healthcare, education, and meat processing. Tourism is growing in importance across the district, particularly in the far northeast corner and in counties bordering the Mississippi River.

Political Climate

Republicans gained control of state government in 2016 and have pushed an aggressive agenda in the 2017 session, including measures to defund Planned Parenthood, dismantle collective bargaining rights, and impose deep budget cuts. The 2016 privatization of Medicaid management provoked a public backlash.