

# Know Before You Go: KS-02 District Primer

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**With the resignation of Republican Lynn Jenkins, KS-02 is an open race!** With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

## About the Republican Candidate

**Introduction:** Republican **Steve Watkins**, a political newcomer, is running for this House seat, which opened after Rep. Lynn Jenkins (GOP) announced in January 2017 that she would not seek re-election. A sixth-generation Kansan and former Army ranger from Topeka, Watkins served in Afghanistan and Iraq, where he also worked as an independent contractor for the US Department of Defense.

**Issues:** Watkins is a pro-life, pro-gun, fiscal conservative running on a largely pro-Trump platform. He wants to build a border wall and outlaw sanctuary cities; he rejects Obamacare. He's promised to seek bipartisan support for laws to protect Social Security and Medicare and favors market-based, private-sector solutions to climate change. His positions on civil and LGBTQ rights are unknown. On the First Amendment, he is unreliable, recently denouncing the Univ. of Kansas for displaying artwork he felt was insufficiently patriotic.

**Strengths:** He has an impressive résumé including undergraduate degree from West Point and Masters degrees in international real estate development from MIT and in policy analysis from Harvard's Kennedy School. As a newcomer, he has no prior voting record to defend.

**Potential Weaknesses:** Watkins has been criticized for letting his father, a wealthy Topeka physician, establish a PAC to support him. FEC filings show that the PAC spent nearly \$472,000 on campaign ads to support Watkins. He has no voting history as a Republican in Kansas, an anomaly that's raised eyebrows among GOP colleagues. He was criticized for opportunism after it emerged that, in 2017, he met with officials of the Shawnee Democratic Party and allegedly declared himself to be a liberal Democrat. His pro-life *bona fides* are also in doubt. A tape has surfaced where he declared himself a "pro-choice Christian," which he later said was a slip; his wife is an OB-GYN who has won an award from Planned Parenthood. One of his GOP primary opponents even complained that Watkins had ripped off his advertising; both candidates ran Dos-Equis-style parody ads where each candidate claimed to be "the most interesting man in Kansas."

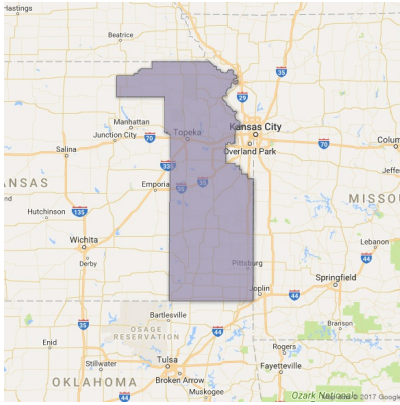
## About the Democratic Candidate

**Introduction:** Democrat **Paul Davis** was born in Lawrence, attended public schools, and graduated from the University of Kansas and Washburn University. An attorney by training, Davis served for 12 years in the Kansas House, where he was the House minority leader. He also served as the Legislative and Ethics Counsel of the Kansas Bar Association, and as Asst. Director of Government Affairs in the Kansas Insurance Dept. He lives in Lawrence with his wife and daughter.

**Issues:** Davis supports policies that create jobs and small businesses, make college and workforce training more affordable, enact commonsense regulatory reform, and invest in infrastructure. He fought Gov. Brownback's attacks on Medicare that jeopardized 440,000 Kansas seniors. In the State House, Davis voted to expand Medicaid, to provide coverage for Kansas children, and for programs enabling small businesses to provide coverage. In Washington, Davis will stabilize the health insurance markets, lower premiums, and limit prescription drug costs. His parents were both teachers and he believes elected leaders have a moral obligation to provide children with world-class public schools. Davis condemns the "obscene, unprecedented, unlimited dollars flowing into our elections and our government from special interests and millionaire political donors" and believes that the voice of ordinary Kansans must prevail. Having witnessed the devastation wrought by Kansas' disastrous tax "experiment," Davis supports a tax code that won't penalize low- and middle-income families and gives hard workers the chance to succeed.

**Strengths:** A familiar face in Kansas politics with a well-funded campaign, Davis is a problem-solver willing to work across the aisle. He's been an outspoken critic of the Trump administration, most recently joining a bipartisan group condemning Trump's undermining of US intelligence services in order to curry favor with Russian president Vladimir Putin. An experienced legislator, Davis sponsored successful worker protection and infrastructure bills as well as an equal rights amendment to the Kansas constitution. Davis has the support of the DCCC and is in its "Red to Blue" program.

Learn more at [swingleft.org/resources/KS-02](https://swingleft.org/resources/KS-02)



## KS-02: Better Know the District

### Geography

Encompassing less than a quarter of the state, KS-02 covers most of eastern Kansas, excluding Kansas City. The district includes Topeka, the state capitol, and Lawrence, home of the state's flagship university, the University of Kansas.

### Citizensry:

Nearly 672,000 people live in KS-02. Of these, approximately 89% are white, 5% black, 1.25% Native American, and approximately 4% identify as Latino or Hispanic. The median household income is \$37,855. Approximately 7% of families and 11% of residents in the district live below the poverty line, including 12% of those under age 18 and 9% of those age 65 or over.

### Elections:

In the 2016 general election, Hillary Clinton was defeated by a 20-point margin by Donald Trump in KS-02. Incumbent Lynn Jenkins (R) defeated Britani Potter (D) by a margin of nearly 30 points, 181,228 votes to Potter's 96,840. Libertarian James Houston Bales (L) captured 19,333 votes or 6.5% of the total.

### Higher Education:

The district is home to two public four-year universities: Washburn University of Topeka, with a total enrollment of 6900 students, and the University of Kansas at Lawrence, the state's flagship university with a total enrollment of 17,000 students.

### Industries:

The district's largest industrial sector is education, health and social services which employs approximately 25% of the workforce. Manufacturing accounts for 12% of jobs in the district; retail accounts for another 11%.

## KS-02: Facts & Stats

### Population Centers

- Topeka, 127,000
- Lawrence, 87,600

### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 90K (28%)
- Trump: 219K (68%)

### 2016 House Results

- Potter (D): 97K (33%)
- Jenkins (R): 181K (61%)
- Other: 19K (6%)

### 2014 House Results

- Wakefield (D): 87K (39%)
- Jenkins (R): 129K (57%)