

# Know Before You Go: KS-03 District Primer

*September 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!*

**In the last election, Republican Kevin Yoder won this district by only 37,000 votes (11%).**

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

## About the Incumbent

**Introduction:** Republican Kevin Yoder has held the seat since 2010. He's benefited from relatively weak opponents and opposition campaigns; in 2012 he had no Democratic opponent. In 2016 he beat Democrat Jay Sidie by 10%.

**Background:** Yoder has deep roots in Kansas. He was born in a town named for his family near Hutchinson, attended the University of Kansas, and worked in private law in Olathe before being elected to the Kansas House of Representatives in 2003. In 2012, Yoder and Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, a Democrat from Missouri, were jointly awarded the Consensus Civility award for bipartisan work.

**Committees:** Yoder serves on the House Appropriations committee, chairs the Legislative Branch subcommittee, and sits on subcommittees related to issues such as finance, agriculture, and rural development.

**Issues:** Yoder has been deeply involved with two recent bills: the 21st Century Cures Act (now law) and the Email Privacy Act. Both enjoyed strong bipartisan support in the House and focus on the importance of keeping federal policy current with modern technology. In other ways, Yoder is firmly aligned with the current GOP: He supports deregulation, tax cuts, and simplification; opposes Obamacare; wants to cut the pay and pensions of Congress; and wants to end Common Core. He opposes amnesty, gun control, abortion, and LGBTQ protections that are perceived to violate freedom of religion.

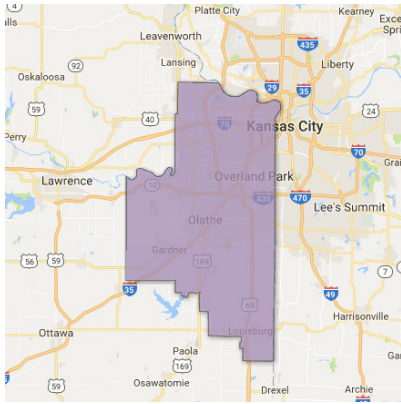
**Strengths & Weaknesses:** Yoder's deep Kansas ties, bipartisan messaging, and conservative values in a generally conservative district all work in his favor. Potential weaknesses: He's heavily funded by the payday loan industry. He has allied himself with Paul Ryan's A Better Way outline. KS-3 voted for Clinton by 1% in 2016, but favored Romney by 9.5% in 2012. This could indicate danger from close alignment with Trump/GOP policies.

## About the Challenger

**Introduction:** Democrat Sharice Davids was raised by a single mother who worked in the Army and later the US Post Office, graduated from Leavenworth High School, then attended Haskell Indian Nations University, the University of Kansas, Johnson County Community College and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She's a first generation college student (her mom received her degree in 2016) who went on to earn a JD from Cornell Law. A member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, Davids has lived and worked on Native American reservations to create economic development opportunities, programs, and initiatives. In 2016, she was one of 16 selected to participate in the prestigious White House Fellowship, and following the completion of the program, she returned to her Kansas roots. Should she win, Davids would be the first openly gay Native American woman in Congress.

**Issues:** Davids is committed to finding common-sense solutions to the problems facing the constituents of the KS-03. Her campaign promises include supporting tax cuts for the middle class, increased broadband access, the prioritization of strong public schools, the expansion of Medicaid, gun reform, investment in renewable energy infrastructure, protection for DACA recipients, and the protection of civil and voting rights.

**Strengths:** Davids is a fighter in all senses of the word. She is engaged in the community and is committed to ensuring that all members of the district are represented in Congress. She has local support from Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Equality Kansas, EMILY's List, former Kansas governor and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, and several state representatives, school board members, and city council members across the district. She also has the DCCC support and is included in its "Red to Blue" program.



## KS-03: Better Know the District

### Geography

This compact district is composed of three counties: from north to south, Wyandotte, Johnson, and part of Miami. It encompasses urban, suburban, exurban, and rural areas. The district is entirely part of the Kansas City metropolitan area, anchored by Kansas City, Missouri, and bounded on the east by the state line.

### Citizenry

By race, the district is just under 75% white, but the three counties differ considerably in their makeup. Urban Wyandotte County is 56.9% non-white; suburban Johnson is 18.4% non-white; and rural Miami is 6.6% non-white. Income is similarly disparate: Median household income is \$74,700 in Johnson County and \$58,900 in Miami County, but just \$39,400 in Wyandotte. The only non-English language spoken at home by more than 1% of the population is Spanish (8.8%), and among those households, 51.6% report speaking English very well.

### Economy & Culture

Kansas City's cost of living is low, and housing costs are the second lowest of any metro area with more than 1 million people. The most important industries are healthcare (four major hospitals), retail, manufacturing, education, and professional and technical (Garmin, Sprint, and Cerner have headquarters here). In 2015, Kansas City was named the No. 1 place to start and grow a business in the Midwest and ranked No. 11 nationally. Local pride is on the rise, driven by downtown revitalization projects, local sports teams (particularly the World Series Champion Royals), a vibrant live art scene, and, of course, barbecue.

### Elections

KS-03 is more a Republican stronghold now than it was in the past. From 1999 to 2011, it was represented in the House by a Democrat, Dennis Moore. In 2002 and 2006, the district voted for Democrat Kathleen Sebelius as governor. In recent presidential elections, Wyandotte County has reliably voted Democratic, while Johnson and Miami counties tend to vote Republican.

### Issues

Governor Brownback's "great experiment" to stimulate growth through deep cuts to taxes and services is experiencing an increasingly broad backlash. The 2016 elections saw a resurgence of moderate Republicans and Democrats being elected to the state legislature. The deepest cuts — and thus most prominent issues — have been to healthcare (including Medicaid and mental health), infrastructure, and education. Road maintenance and development projects are of daily importance, as the district lacks a comprehensive transit system. According to a SurveyUSA poll in October 2016, the most important issues for district voters in federal elections were the economy (43%), terrorism (14%), education (13%), and national security (9%).

## KS-03: Facts & Stats

### Population Centers

- Overland Park, 176,520
- Kansas City, 146,580 (not the anchor city of the same-named metro area)
- Olathe, 128,050
- Shawnee, 62,940
- Lenexa, 48,920

### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 161K (47%)
- Trump: 157K (46%)

### 2016 House Results

- Sidie (D): 139K (41%)
- Yoder (R): 176K (51%)
- Other: 28K (8%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 99K
- Eligible, not registered: 116K

### 2014 House Results

- Kultala (D): 90K (40%)
- Yoder (R): 134K (60%)