

Know Before You Go: MN-03 District Primer

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

Since the last election, Republican Erik Paulsen has voted in-line with Trump 100%. But Trump lost the district by 10%! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Erik Paulsen has represented MN-03 since 2009. He began his career in public service as an Independent Republican and has since had a reliably conservative voting record.

Issues: Paulsen stands behind strong ideals of restoring fiscal discipline, job creation, and open trade. He has promised to reform health care by protecting Medicare, support veterans, educate "tomorrow's leaders," and combat human trafficking.

Committees: Paulsen serves on the House Ways & Means and Joint Economic Committees. In 2015, he introduced the fifth most bills with bipartisan sponsorship.

Recent Elections: Paulsen has won MN-03 handily five times, with margins of victory well over 20% in 2010 and 2014. His 2016 win was the smallest margin since his first election in 2008, though he still carried the district by 14%.

Strengths: Paulsen's strengths include his five terms in the House and considerable financial backing from large industries and employers, giving him a fundraising edge on his challenger. His role in the Ways & Means Committee puts him in a position to influence tax laws for these industries. Paulsen's bipartisan work to kill the medical device tax is a clear strength in a district this industry calls home.

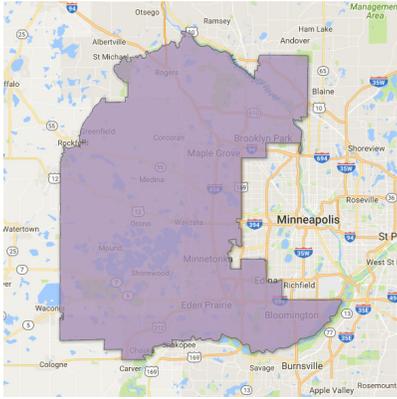
Potential Weaknesses: In spite of his attempts to distance himself from the President, Paulsen's voting record corresponds 98% with Trump's agenda, who lost this district by nearly 10%. Paulsen was one of the chief architects of the Tax Cuts and Job Act of 2017, an unpopular bill that harms middle class families and will increase the federal budget deficit to over \$1 trillion by 2020. He also voted to end the Affordable Care Act and has proposed few ideas as an alternative. He remains inaccessible to MN-03 residents, only holding one in-person town-hall meeting since 2010.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Dean Phillips boasts a long family history of philanthropy and business ownership, not to mention wise advice -- his step-grandmother was *Dear Abby*. Having trained in every department in the family business, Phillips Distilling, he eventually went on to serve as chairman of the company. Phillips later owned another family investment, Talenti Gelato, which has become a staple of grocery stores nationwide. Phillips now owns several successful upscale coffee shops in the Greater Minneapolis region. He has never held public office.

Issues: Phillips supports the Affordable Care Act, proposing to fix and improve the current bill, while also supporting the expansion of Medicare as a public option for all. He supports legislation that expands access to mental health care and education for students, veterans, and their families. Phillips embraces progressive climate changes, including a reduction in carbon emissions and investment in energy efficiency. Common sense gun legislation, campaign finance reform, and protecting women's reproductive health rights are also important components of Phillips' campaign.

Strengths: Phillips is a successful entrepreneur, a valuable asset in a district that houses several large industries. The Phillips family has local name recognition and a reputation for philanthropy and entrepreneurship in the community. Phillips has refused to accept financial contributions from PACs, while still raising millions of dollars -- 99% of it from individual donors. In a throwback to beloved Senator Wellstone's "big green bus", Phillips outreaches voters via revamped milk truck and "Government Repair Pontoon", increasing his visibility in a district that rarely encounters their elected representative. Phillips' blend of progressive policies and the business-minded approach to governing he represents may resonate in a district that resoundly rejected President Trump.



MN-03: Better Know the District

Geography

MN-03 includes the suburbs to the north, west, and south of Minneapolis, including a large portion of Hennepin County and small portions of Anoka and Carver counties. The district is home to eight of the state's largest cities. The eastern part of the district is largely suburban, bordering Minneapolis' 5th District; the western part is more rural and less densely populated, with less racial and economic diversity. Predictably, there is a stronger liberal base in the eastern half of the district, with strong conservative leanings to the west.

Citizenry

Overall, the district tops several lists in the state: It is both the wealthiest (median income \$80,000) and most highly educated (48% have at least a bachelor's degree). It has a high percentage of white residents (82%), though the district does include the more racially diverse population of Brooklyn Park. There is some socioeconomic diversity, ranging from the blue-collar communities of Brooklyn Park and Coon Rapids to middle-income families in Bloomington to the wealthy suburbs of Eden Prairie, Plymouth, Maple Grove, and Wayzata. This district seems to value moderate, bipartisan politics and fiscal conservatism, but is not afraid to split the ticket among candidates that fit its interests.

Elections

MN-03 has leaned Democratic in presidential elections since 2008, voting for Hillary Clinton in 2016 with 51% of the vote, compared with Trump's 41%. President Obama won this district twice, albeit by a slim 1% margin in 2012. The district voted for Republican George W. Bush in the 2000 and 2004 elections, with margins of 4% and 3%, respectively. The GOP has dominated congressional elections since 1961.

Higher Education

There are seven small community and technical colleges in the district, most notably North Hennepin Community College and Minnesota's largest technical college, Hennepin Technical College. Both schools have more than 10,000 students.

Industries

The largest industries in the district include health care, education, manufacturing, management, and science. Nicknamed Medical Alley, the district is home to the medical device industry, with Medtronic, Boston Scientific, and several startups operating there. Also headquartered in the district are Ceridian, UnitedHealth Group, HealthPartners, Supervalu, and Toro. Company headquarters in nearby districts also employ a large number of MN-03 residents, such as Target Corporation and Best Buy. Retail is also a substantial employer throughout the district, which is home to the famous Mall of America and other shopping outlets and malls.

MN-03: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Bloomington, 86,000 (4th largest city in the state)
- Brooklyn Park, 79,000
- Plymouth, 76,000
- Maple Grove, 68,000
- Eden Prairie, 63,000

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 202K (51%)
- Trump: 164K (41%)

2016 House Results

- Bonoff (D): 169K (43%)
- Paulsen (R): 223K (57%)
- Other: 1K (0%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 35K
- Eligible, not registered: 90K

2014 House Results

- Sund (D): 102K (38%)
- Paulsen (R): 168K (62%)