

Know Before You Go: NC-09 District Primer

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In 2016, Republicans won this district, but they have nominated a hard-right former pastor to run in his place. A Marine Corps vet is running against him and could flip this critical seat in!

About the Republican Candidate

Introduction: Republican Mark Harris, 52, the former pastor of Charlotte's First Baptist Church, beat the incumbent, Robert Pittenger, in the Republican primary in May 2018. Both candidates portrayed themselves as Trump loyalists, and although Pittenger had the backing of House Speaker Paul Ryan and Vice President Mike Pence, Harris's stance as a self-proclaimed Washington outsider helped carry him to a narrow victory. A leader in North Carolina's campaigns to restrict marriage to one man and one woman, and to restrict and regulate bathroom use by transgender people, he has said that if elected, he would join the right-wing Congressional Freedom Caucus.

Issues: Harris campaigns on what he calls his core values of "faith, family, and community." He opposes abortion and marriage equality and supports building a wall on the Mexican border. He rejects gun control measures. "History has proven that strict gun laws do not reduce illegal use of firearms and opens the door for tyranny," his campaign website declares. Harris favors a free-market insurance system for healthcare, a simplified tax code, and major reductions in government spending; he has said he would consider closing the Departments of Education, Energy and Commerce.

Strengths: In a religiously Christian and heavily Republican district, Harris resonates thunderously with core constituents. He has the endorsement of the North Carolina Values Coalition, the state's largest lobby pressing for a conservative social agenda.

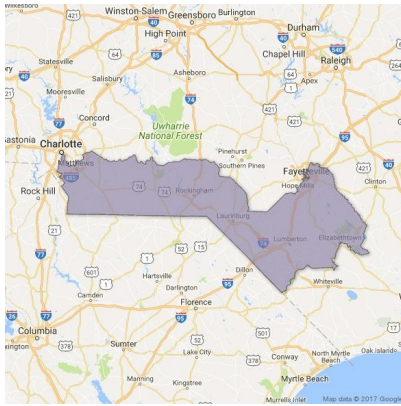
Potential Weaknesses: Proudly positioning himself at the far-right of his party, Harris could lose support from moderate Republicans, especially suburban women. As of May 2018, Harris had about \$70,000 in his war chest for the general election while his Democratic opponent, Dan McCready, had \$1.2 million.

About the Democratic Candidate

Introduction: Democrat Dan McCready, 34, served as a captain in the Marine Corps, leading a platoon in Iraq, before attending Harvard Business School. He is a solar energy entrepreneur, small-business owner, Eagle Scout, and father of four.

Issues: In the primary, McCready campaigned on healing partisan divisiveness, stressing country over party, a mentality he says he cultivated in the Marines. As issues of concern, he highlights public schools, the environment, seniors, veterans, jobs and the economy, and federal recognition of the Lumbee Tribe. Noting that guns are part of North Carolina's culture, he rejects bans and prefers, rather, to expand background checks to gun shows and internet sales. McCready opposes a single-payer health plan, but supports "standing up to big drug companies to lower prescription costs, strengthening Medicare, and fighting to stop insurance companies from raising premiums year after year and going back to the days of trying to kick people off their coverage." He supports a path to citizenship based on certain thresholds for children here under DACA; he is pro-choice.

Strengths: Along with his service in the Marines and his successful business career, McCready's emphasis on decency, common sense, and bipartisanship appeals to the district's Democratic voters as well as to many moderate Republicans. In addition to a huge fundraising edge over Harris, McCready has been racking up endorsements across a wide spectrum, ranging from the founder of the Charlotte Women's March and the Black Political Caucus of Charlotte Mecklenburg, to local elected officials, clergy, and community leaders.



NC-09: Better Know the District

Geography

NC-09 was redrawn in 2016 after the Supreme Court deemed that older maps were based on racial gerrymandering that unconstitutionally disadvantaged black voters. The new maps emphatically show the Republicans' intent: partisan gerrymandering to advantage their own party. The result for NC-09 is an 856-square mile swath that extends from south suburban Charlotte, runs east along the South Carolina border through more rural counties, and curves up to grab a piece of Fayetteville.

Citizenry

The district has about 778,500 residents. Whites make up nearly a two-thirds majority (65.6%), while blacks make up 19.45%, Native Americans 7.64%, and Hispanics 7.64%. Sixty-five percent of the district is urban. The median household income is \$55,913; the per capita income is \$32,597. Most of the 60,000 members of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina live in Robeson County. Though recognized by Congress as a Native American Tribe, they don't receive benefits available to other federally-recognized tribes.

Elections

NC-09 has sent a Republican to Congress since 1963, and in 2016, favored the Republican candidate by a 16.4-point margin. The district's voters have also favored Republican Presidential candidates, backing Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton by 11.6 points in 2016 (Trump: 54.4%, Clinton: 42.8%). In 2012 the district voted 55.4% for Mitt Romney to 43.8% for Barack Obama, and in 2008, 54.3 % for John McCain to 45.5% for Obama. However, of the eight counties making up the district, in 2016 four of them -- Anson, Cumberland, Mecklenburg, and Scotland -- favored Clinton.

In the May 2018 Congressional primary, the Democratic winner, Dan McCready, took 82.7% of his party vote, thereby garnering more votes than the three Republican candidates combined. These recent primary results suggest that high Democratic turnout in November could swing the seat blue. In addition, Democratic primary voters (46,020) far exceeded Republican primary voters (35,643).

Higher Education

The district lines sweep around sections of Charlotte and Fayetteville, leaving out their major colleges and universities. That leaves small, mostly non-residential schools in the district: University of North Carolina at Pembroke (6,900 students), Queens University of Charlotte (2,500 students), Robeson Community College in Lumberton (2,500 students), Wingate University in Wingate (2,400 students), South Piedmont Community College in Polkton (2,200 students), Richmond Community College in Hamlet (2,100 students).

Industries

Manufacturing, finance and insurance, health care and social assistance, and retail are the sectors that employ the highest numbers of residents of NC-09. Information technology companies are concentrated around Charlotte (including in the area encompassed by NC-09); SPX, the infrastructure and HVAC manufacturer, has its US base there. McCready created jobs by building solar farms.

NC-09: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Charlotte 842,051
- Fayetteville, 204,759
- Monroe, 32,797
- Lumberton, 21,542

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 42%
- Trump: 54%

2016 House Results

- Cano (D): 139K (42%)
- Pittenger (R): 193K (58%)

2014 House Results

- Pittenger (R): 122K (94%)