

Know Before You Go: NE-02 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Don Bacon won this district by only 3,500 votes (1.2%).

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

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Don Bacon represents NE-02, a freshman Republican and retired USAF Brigadier General. In 2016, Bacon narrowly defeated incumbent Brad Ashford (D) by about 3,500 votes (of 288,000); Libertarian Steven Laird garnered nearly 10,000 votes.

Background: Bacon served in the Air Force for 29 years. He retired as a Brigadier General. During his service, Bacon was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, two Legion of Merits and two Bronze Stars. In 2009, he was selected as Europe's top Air Force Wing Commander. Bacon also worked for Congressman Jeff Fortenberry as his Military Advisor.

Issues: Bacon wants to preserve Social Security. He opposes deployment of ground forces to fight ISIS, but supports investment in airpower and special forces. He believes in "peace through strength," that is, decreasing American military commitments while lavishing resources on hardware. He has called for a "flattening" of the tax code—lower tax rates, fewer deductions. He is committed to reducing corporate taxation by 10%. He believes states should have control over health care markets. Bacon is pro-gun and anti-choice.

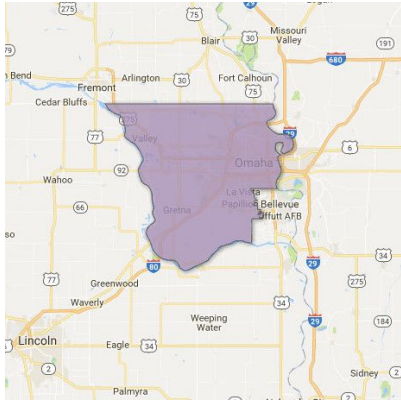
Potential Weaknesses: Bacon stood with the majority of House Republicans in resisting an independent probe of former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and of reports that Trump campaign aides communicated with Russian officials. Although he claims to be committed to listening to his constituents, including those who disagree with him, Bacon rejected an in-person town hall during the February recess, citing fears that partisans would hijack the session. Bacon supports anti-regulatory legislation such as the REINs Act, which supports corporate interests, particularly in energy and lending, and undermines protections for consumers, workers, and the environment.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Kara Eastman was nominated as NE-02's Democratic primary opponent to Don Bacon for the 2018 midterm election. Eastman is the founder, president and CEO of Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance (OHKA) a nationally recognized nonprofit to support green, safe, and healthy housing in Omaha.

Issues: Eastman supports a Clean Dream Act, comprehensive women's rights and reproductive justice, common-sense gun regulation such as universal background checks, mandatory waiting periods, and banning the sale of weapons of war, fighting threats to free and fair elections such as gerrymandering and dark money, raising the minimum wage, instituting Medicare for All, eliminating tuition for families making under \$125k per year at all 4-year state colleges and universities, and making community colleges free. She favors rejoining the Paris Climate Accords, rejects measures that deepen dependency on fossil fuels such as proposed energy pipelines through western Nebraska, and supports investments in alternative energy sources.

Strengths: As a fresh face, Eastman appeals to voters who are fed up with the status quo and especially to younger voters in a district with substantial student population. As the founder and director of a successful nonprofit, she has proven fundraising and organizing ability. Her deep roots in local community organizations give her a solid foundation in the district. She is admired for her boldly principled stances—e.g., despite campaigning in a pro-gun state, she has pledged to refuse donations from the NRA.



NE-02: Better Know the District

Geography & Citizenry

NE-02 is spread over two counties: Douglas, which includes Omaha, and Sarpy, which comprises several wealthy but less diverse suburbs located west of Omaha. Sarpy County, the third most populous in Nebraska, has increased from 122,595 in 2000 to nearly 160,000 in 2010. Omaha is 78% white, 13% Black or African-American, 7.5% Latino, and 1.74% Asian. Sarpy County is 89.18% White, 4.36% Black or African American, 4.37% Latino, and less than 1% Asian.

Redistricting

In 2011, Nebraska lawmakers moved Offutt Air Force Base and Bellevue (pop. 50,000, with a large minority population) out of NE-02 while shifting the Republican-heavy suburbs in Sarpy County into the district.

NE-02: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Omaha, 434,353
- Papillion, 21,921
- La Vista, 17,562
- Chalco, 10,994
- Gretna, 5,584
- Ralston, 5,943

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 131K (46%)
- Trump: 138K (48%)

2016 House Results

- Ashford (D): 138K (48%)
- Bacon (R): 141K (49%)
- Other: 10K (3%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 134K
- Eligible, not registered: 86K

2014 House Results

- Ashford (D): 84K (49%)
- Terry (R): 78K (46%)
- Other: 9K (6%)

Refugees

Critics claim the federal refugee resettlement program has disproportionately burdened the state with refugees. During 2016, Nebraska resettled 1,782 refugees, three times the national per-capita average. Since 2000, Nebraska has taken in 11,000 refugees (from a national total of approximately 900,000).

Industry

Although Omaha's economic activity has historically been concentrated in railroads and meatpacking, business activity has recently shifted to financial services and health care. The largest employers in these sectors include Berkshire Hathaway, TD Ameritrade, Mutual of Omaha, Paypal, and several hospital systems. In 2016, ConAgra moved its HQ from Omaha to Chicago, costing 1,300 jobs. Union Pacific operates from headquarters in Omaha.

Labor

The Omaha Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, maintains offices in Omaha, as does the Teamsters Local 554 and Laborers' Local #1440, an affiliate of the LIU-NA. Other unions include the Ironworkers Local 21, IBEW Local 22, and Steamfitters & Plumbers LU 464. UNO adjunct staff may unionize in the near future.

Race, Poverty & Civil Rights

In Omaha, one in three black residents, and sixty percent of black children, live in poverty. Only Minneapolis has a greater economic disparity between white and black residents. Prominent African-Americans with Omaha connections include Malcolm X, Silas Robbins, Matthew Ricketts, and Preston Love; important institutions include Omaha's Black Music Hall, the Great Plains Black Museum, the Mayhew Cain Museum, Omaha Jazz and Blues Festival, and The Omaha Star.

Environmental Concerns

Two of Nebraska's 18 EPA Superfund sites are located in the district: the Omaha Lead Superfund Site and the Old Highway 275 and N 288th St. proposed site, where a VOC-contaminated groundwater plume was located in Valley near the Platte River. Omaha's tap water comes from the Missouri and Platte Rivers, both of which may be vulnerable to upstream problems in the DAPL and the Keystone XL, as well as the Dakota Sandstone Aquifer, which may also be vulnerable.