

Know Before You Go: NJ-02 District Primer

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

In the last election, Republican Frank LoBiondo won this district by 22%. However, he will not be running again in 2018. With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Republican Candidate

Introduction: Republican **Seth Grossman**, 68, an attorney and self-described "right-wing media" personality, won the June 2018 four-way GOP primary after the incumbent, moderate Frank LoBiondo, announced his retirement after 24 years in office. Grossman campaigned on the Trump agenda and this is the core of his Congressional campaign; he frequently refers to a bygone time "when America was great." In a much-covered remark, he asserted at a GOP primary candidates forum that "diversity is a bunch of crap and un-American" and he has frequently used derogatory language to describe African Americans and Muslims.

Issues: Grossman wants to scale back legal immigration to pre-1965 levels and halt all illegal immigration. He calls for repealing the Affordable Care Act and for allowing trained school personnel to carry weapons. He opposes abortion. Asserting that "African Americans had won their civil rights battle in the 1920s," he has said that today, the worst discrimination is against "white heterosexual males."

Strengths: President Donald Trump won this district in 2016 (50%-46%). Grossman won the primary despite raising less money than his party-endorsed opponent, thanks to hard-core supporters who embrace the Trump agenda. His years as an office holder in the Atlantic City area, his role as founder of the conservative advocacy organization LibertyandProsperity.com, and his media presence from his talk-radio show and political column in South Jersey newspapers accord him significant name recognition.

Potential Weaknesses: In a district with high unemployment and low income, Grossman has not offered any specific ideas for job creation or raising wages, making higher education affordable, or assuring affordable health insurance. He has not presented any plans for protecting the district's extensive Atlantic shoreline and wetlands from environmental degradation, though they are essential to the local economy. Grossman carried only 39% of the vote

in the four-way Republican primary and Republican turnout was lower than Democratic turnout.

About the Democratic Candidate

Introduction: Democrat **Jeff Van Drew**, 65, has served in the New Jersey State Senate since 2008, and previously served in the New Jersey General Assembly from 2002 to 2007. A family dentist, he also served as mayor of New Jersey's Dennis Township from 1994 to 1995 and 1997 to 2003.

Issues: In the NJ State Senate, Van Drew focused on South Jersey's jobs and economy, affordable healthcare, capping state spending, and lowering taxes for the middle-class. He authored a bill blocking federal attempts to drill off the coast of New Jersey and is now a vocal opponent of a Congressional proposal to financially punish states with such restrictions. He supports funding the Children's Health Insurance Program, preventing insurance companies from dropping consumers with pre-existing conditions, and protecting net neutrality. He opposes both Republican versions of immigration bills and has called the policy of separating families at the border "unacceptable."

Strengths: Van Drew has been popular in his local district, winning reelection to his seat in the NJ State Senate in 2017 with 64.8% of the vote. His State Senate district comprises about one-third of Congressional District 02 -- the most Republican portion. After the primary, Van Drew had about \$400,000 on hand, while Grossman had about \$10,000.



NJ-02: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Vineland, 60,857
- Atlantic City, 39,591
- Lakewood Township, 92,843
- Egg Harbor-Township, 43,323

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 46%
- Trump: 50.6%

2016 House Results

- Cole (D): 37%
- LoBiondo (R): 59%

2014 House Results

- Hughes (D): 37.3%
- LoBiondo (R): 61.5%

NJ-02: Better Know the District

Geography

NJ-02 is the state's largest Congressional district, geographically speaking -- it encompasses the southern third of the state from Delaware Bay to the Atlantic Ocean and has no land border with another state. It includes New Jersey's three largest counties: Ocean, Burlington, and Atlantic. The district also includes tourist destinations Atlantic City and Cape May, which see their populations swell during the summer tourist season.

Citizenry

NJ-02's population is 75.4% white, 14.7% black, 10.3% Hispanic, 2.4% Asian, and 0.4% Native American. This constitutes a larger minority population than any of the state's four other GOP-held districts. Only 5.6% of the population are non-citizens. The median household income of \$58,166 is 20% lower than the statewide median. The district's unemployment rate is 13.2%, more than three times the national rate, and more than double the NJ rate. It has the lowest percentage of college-educated residents in the state.

Elections

In the 2016 election Trump carried the district with 50.6% to Clinton's 46.0%, but Obama won in the District in 2008 and 2012 with 53% and 53.5% respectively. In 2004, Bush narrowly won with 50% of the vote. Democrats running for office in the district typically garner only 30-40% of the vote.

Higher Education

NJ-02 is home to Rutgers satellite campuses and Stockton University. It is also home to Atlantic Cape Community College (3 locations), Cumberland County College, Salem Community College, Wilmington University at Cumberland County, and Clay College.

Arts & Culture

There are various small museums and some Revolutionary War sites. New Jersey Motorsports Park is south of Vineland. The Atlantic City Ballet is a professional dance company featuring dancers from all over the world.

Historic Sites

The NPS administers the Great Egg Harbor River lands south of Atlantic City. Salem County has a historical society that preserves and exhibits the history of Salem County dating back to the early 1800s. The district includes places like Finns Point Lighthouse, Fort Mott, and the Hancock House. Historic Cold Spring Village is an open-air living history museum where costumed actors discuss and share early American trades, crafts, lifestyles and issues.

Industry

Tourism and other shoreline industries play a major role in the area's economy. Nearly one-quarter of the labor force -- 24% -- works in the service industry. Government employs 17.4 percent of the population (more than in any other congressional district in New Jersey).