

Know Before You Go: NM-02 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Steve Pearce won this district by a comfortable margin. However, he's not be running in 2018. With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican **Yvette Herrell**, currently state senator, is replacing the retiring Steve Pearce (R), who is running for governor of New Mexico, as candidate for NM-02. She won 58% of the votes at the Republican party convention in February 2018, with the support of the party and the Freedom Caucus. Herrell was described by the Santa Fe New Mexican as "one of the more conservative members of state house of Representatives." She lists her occupation as real estate investor. She lives in Alamogordo and graduated from the ITT Business School in the legal secretarial program.

Issues: Herrell opposes amnesty for undocumented individuals and DACA as a path to citizenship, and supports a border wall. She opposes regulating the sale and possession of assault weapons and other firearms as contrary to the 2nd Amendment and supports concealed-carry in schools. She supports giving control of federal public lands to state and local governments and calls environmental and workplace regulatory protections "job-killing regulations." She would repeal the Affordable Care Act and wants to depend on the free market to provide health insurance to Americans. Herrell has sponsored several unsuccessful bills in the New Mexico legislature that would place increased restrictions on abortion rights.

Strengths: Herrell has logged eight years of service in the New Mexico House of Representatives. Her campaign for nomination had support from the GOP and the Freedom Caucus.

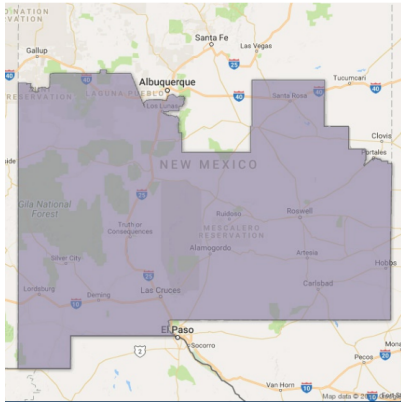
Potential Weaknesses: Herrell has no prior experience working with the federal government. Her right-wing views on abortion, health care, immigration, and environmental and occupational regulations are a possible liability.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat **Xochitl Torres Small** is an attorney and water resource advocate. A second-generation Mexican American, she grew up in Las Cruces and is the daughter of a teacher and social worker. After attending Georgetown University, she returned to Las Cruces, where she earned her law degree from the University of New Mexico. A former staffer for Sen. Tom Udall, she established his constituent services offices in southern New Mexico. She worked to expand cell phone service and broadband access in rural areas and on water-use issues to reach a compromise with farmers, conservationists, and communities. She and her husband live in Las Cruces, where she serves on the board of a local food distribution center. She also volunteers at a homeless shelter, providing pro bono counsel.

Issues: Torres Small wants to expand access to quality healthcare for rural communities, including providing incentives for medical professionals to serve rural areas. She wants to increase public school funding, especially in rural areas, as well as expanding access to ESL programs. Her economic development vision includes infrastructure investments like expanding broadband access and safe roads in rural areas. Torres Small is also dedicated to protecting natural resources and public lands. Her professional career has largely been devoted to water resource management and conservation issues.

Strengths: Torres Small's legal experience, history of activism around environmental issues, and helping under-resourced communities make her a strong progressive voice. She's been endorsed by the Las Cruces Sun News, the Albuquerque Journal, Vice President Joe Biden, End Citizens United, and Emily's List.



NM-02: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Albuquerque (partially in-district) (total pop. 559,277)
- Las Cruces (pop. 101,759)
- Roswell (pop. 48,184)
- Hobbs (pop. 38,143)
- Alamogordo (pop. 31,283)
- Carlsbad (pop. 28,914)
- Los Lunas (pop. 15,454)
- Deming (pop. 14,488)

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 385K (48%)
- Trump: 320K (40%)

2016 House Results

- Pearce (R): 144K (63%)
- Soules (D): 85K (37%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 158K

2014 House Results

- Pearce (R): 95K (64%)
- Soules (D): 52K (36%)

NM-02: Better Know the District

Geography

NM-02 includes southern and western New Mexico. The total population in the 2010 census was 702,936. NM-02 shares a 180-mile border with Mexico. Two counties, Valencia and Hidalgo, were "pivot counties," voting for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 and for Trump in 2016.

Citizenry

The 2nd district is majority-white (72.9%), but also has significant Hispanic and Native American populations. It is also relatively poor, with nearly 17% of families falling below the poverty level. Median income as of 2010 was \$37,252. According to the 2010 census, 52.1% of the population claims Hispanic ethnicity.

Elections

With the exception of a Democrat in the 2009-2011 Congress, the district has been represented by a Republican since 1981. Pearce, the former representative, has won his last four elections by comfortable margins. Though the district has voted consistently for the GOP in presidential elections, Cook PVI gives it a rating of only R+6.

Higher Education

Public institutes of higher learning with campuses in NM-02 include New Mexico State University, Western New Mexico University, Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, and New Mexico Junior College. Private institutions include the College of the Southwest.

Industries

Federal land holdings comprise a large part of NM-02. The federal government employs about a quarter of the state's total workforce. A number of national forests, Native American reservations, wilderness areas, Bureau of Land Management holdings, and military installations lie within NM-02. Oil and gas extraction is an important part of the area's economy. Dairy and beef cattle industries are the largest in the agricultural sector, with hay being the main crop. New Mexico's climate gives it excellent potential for solar energy development. Tourism is an important source of income. Water is scarce in most of the state, so water rights is an important political issue. A perennial concern for NM-02 is the number of young workers who leave the area to seek jobs and higher wages elsewhere.