

Know Before You Go: NY-11 District Primer

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

In the last election in 2016, Republican Dan Donovan won 62% of the vote. With your help, we're going to win this seat for Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Dan Donovan won this seat in a 2015 special election and was reelected in 2016 with 62% of the vote. He's a former prosecutor and district attorney in Staten Island who oversaw the investigation into the death of Eric Garner that resulted in a grand jury failing to indict the officers. In the June 2018 GOP primary Donovan faced off against Michael Grimm, the former Congressman who did prison time for hiring kitchen help off the books. Their primary debate was an ugly affair full of personal attacks. As reported by *NY PIX 11*: "The insults and putdowns flew so hard that it sounded and felt like a street brawl and not the primary debate to represent Staten Island and a portion of Brooklyn that it was."

Issues: In March 2017, Donovan reiterated his support for continuing investigations into Trump's ties to Russia, stating: "The FBI should continue its work unimpeded, and the House and Senate Intelligence Committees will continue their investigations. I fully support them." After constituents put Donovan under intense pressure, through calls, protests, and requests for meetings, he reluctantly voted against the ACA repeal. He opposes same sex marriage and abortion.

Committees: Donovan currently serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the House Homeland Security Committee, and the following caucuses: Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse, Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, Congressional Hellenic Israel Caucus.

Strengths: According to FiveThirtyEight, Donovan votes in line with the Trump's position 88% of the time, though he voted against the repeal of the ACA. Donovan is the only Republican representing New York City.

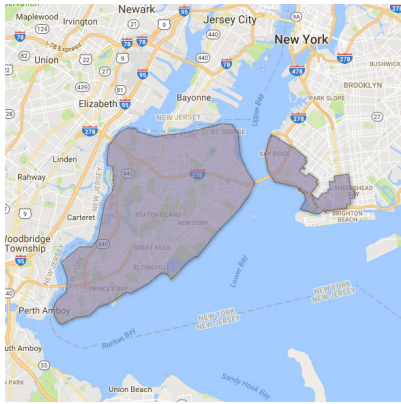
Potential Weaknesses: Since 2015, Donovan has refused to hold a town hall in the district despite increasing pressure to do so.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Max Rose won the Democratic primary, besting five other candidates. An Army veteran who served in Afghanistan from 2012-2013, Rose earned a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge; he continues to serve in the National Guard. Rose was formerly Chief of Staff at Brightpoint Health, a non-profit serving Staten Island. Before that, Rose served as the Director of Public Engagement and Special Assistant to District Attorney Ken Thompson in Brooklyn. Rose holds a BA from Wesleyan and an MA from the London School of Economics. Rose lives in Staten Island with his wife.

Issues: Rose's platform includes supporting gun control, affordable healthcare, improving job creation and infrastructure, combating the opioid epidemic, restoring America as a respected and trusted global leader, stronger labor laws and better support for labor unions, supporting teachers and ensuring students have access to affordable education, repealing the burdensome Trump tax bill that is raising the deficit, supporting women's rights, and protecting a woman's right to make her own reproductive healthcare choices.

Strengths: Rose's stellar military service appeals to conservative voters and his platform to fight special interests in Washington appeals to NY-11 voters frustrated with the incumbent. Rose has a strong and visible campaign with effective ground and fundraising operations. He has the support of the DCCC, being featured in their "Red to Blue" initiative. Rose has earned endorsements from labor unions, Planned Parenthood, NARAL, the Congressional Black Caucus, The Women's Equality Party, City Councilor Justin Brannan, Rep. Steny Hoyer, Rep. Seth Moulton, Rep. Ted Lieu, Rep. Eric Swalwell, NYS Assemblyman Peter Abbate, End Citizens United, VoteVets, With Honor, Blue Dogs PAC, The Stars and Stripes Democratic Club, The Muslim Democratic Club of NY and The Lambda Independent Democratic Club.



NY-11: Better Know a District

The district went for Trump in 2016 by 54% compared to Clinton's 44%. Though it is the most conservative district in New York City, in 2014, registered voters were 47% Democratic, 26% Republican, and 21% not enrolled in a party. The district spans all of Staten Island and South Brooklyn (Bay Ridge and Sheepshead Bay, touching a small piece of Brighton Beach).

Bay Ridge has a reputation for being conservative but it's actually mostly blue. Staten Island is conservative but changing. Dyker Heights and Bensonhurst are a bit of a mixed bag but lean blue.

The heroin crisis has hit Staten Island hard, rivaling the Bronx for most deaths caused by the drug. Any Democratic challenger to Donovan would do well to address this crisis on the island.

NY-11: Facts & Stats

Largest Cities

- Staten Island
- Bay Ridge
- Dyker Heights
- Gravesend
- Bensonhurst

2016 Presidential Results

- Trump (R) - 54%
- Clinton (D) - 44%

2016 House Results

- Donovan (R) - 61.6%
- Reichard (D) - 37.6%

2015 Special Election Results

- Donovan (R) - 58.9%
- Gentile (D) - 39.8%

Activism

In the wake of the 2016 election, several progressive activist groups have taken root in Bay Ridge and Staten Island. The groups are very actively putting pressure on Donovan and advocating for progressive causes. Fight Back Bay Ridge organized a town hall meeting during the last Congressional recess which Donovan declined to attend, resulting in an empty chair for him. He did, however, attend an event held at a swanky golf club in Staten Island. Linda Sarsour — the co-chair of the Women's March — lives in Bay Ridge.

Following death of Eric Garner, Reverend Dr. Victor Brown emerged as an important voice for the island's black community. He became an advocate for the Garner family and criminal justice reform, especially following the grand jury's decision not to indict the officer who administered the chokehold.

Healthcare

Constituents are very activated around healthcare. This is a family-friendly district, so education is another hot-button issue. With a large immigrant population and many small businesses in Bay Ridge, these small business owners could be allies. Staten Island has been particularly hard-hit by the heroin epidemic. Efforts to curtail support for drug programs addressing that problem are likely to be unpopular. Healthcare is also a huge employment industry in the district, so we can expect the district to be following the impact of any healthcare legislation very closely.

Climate Change

Staten Island was hard-hit by Hurricane Sandy. This could be a leverage point for a Democratic challenger to make inroads regarding the need for climate change research and improved infrastructure.

Higher Education

There are three colleges/universities on Staten Island. They are CUNY College of Staten Island (undergraduates: 12,723; graduates: 976), Wagner College (undergraduates: 1,750; graduates: 450) and St. John's University (943). Approximately 34% of NY-11 holds a Bachelor's degree or higher.