KRIEG DEVAULT

Insights

Take Five: Pre-Election

October 28, 2020

Early voting for the 2020 Election began in Indiana on Tuesday, October 29, and the early vote turnout is already three times higher than in 2016. According to data from the Indiana Secretary of State, just over 1.1 million Hoosiers have voted so far, with about 730,000 voting early in person.

1. Fifth Congressional District
One of the most competitive Congressional races in the country can be found in Indiana's Fifth Congressional District, which covers all or parts of Marion, Hamilton, Boone, Madison, Tipton, Howard, Grant and Blackford Counties. Four-term Congresswoman Susan Brooks announced last year that she would not seek a fifth term, creating an open seat in the once-reliable Republican district that has trended more "purple" over the last several election cycles. State Senator Victoria Spartz emerged victorious from a 15-candidate Republican primary field and faces former State Representative and former Democratic Lieutenant Governor candidate Christina Hale. The contest, which has been rated as a toss-up by most local and national election prognosticators, has attracted significant contributions from national interest groups.

2. Governor
Republican Governor Eric Holcomb is expected to prevail against Democrat Dr. Woody Myers, a physician and former Indiana State Health Commissioner, and Libertarian Donald Rainwater, a veteran and small business owner. While Governor Holcomb has enjoyed a sizeable fundraising advantage over his challengers throughout the campaign and has generally received high marks for his handling of the coronavirus epidemic, he has received criticism from Dr. Myers and others who have called for the return of certain restrictions to control the recent surge of positive cases. Rainwater, on the other hand, has been able to tap into frustrations from Hoosiers that view the mask mandate and business restrictions as government overreach. Despite these attacks on both sides, polling shows Governor Holcomb with a sizable lead heading into election day.

3. Attorney General
The Indiana Attorney General race is another open seat race after former Republican Congressman Todd Rokita defeated current Attorney General Curtis Hill and two other candidates at the Republican state convention this summer. Democrats nominated former State Representative and former Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel over State Senator Karen Tallian at their convention. Both candidates have made health care a central point of their campaigns, even though the Attorney General's role is fairly limited is this area. The prevailing candidate could use this position as a stepping stone for a potential run for Governor in 2024.

4. Indiana Senate
Senate Republicans will most certainly retain their supermajority but there are a few close races to watch in the Indianapolis area. In Senate District 30, which encompasses the north side of Indianapolis into Hamilton County, incumbent Republican John Ruckelshaus faces a tough challenge from former City of Indianapolis Controller Fady Qaddoura (D). On the south side of Indianapolis in Senate District 36, Democrat Ashley

Eason is trying to unseat incumbent Republican Jack Sandlin. And in Senate District 35 on the west side of Indianapolis, Republican Senator Mike Young is being challenged by Democrat Pete Cowden.

5. Indiana House

House Democrats need a net gain of just one seat to break the current Republican supermajority and hope to capitalize on voter enthusiasm for Democrats in Marion and Hamilton Counties, particularly among suburban women. The competitive races include Representative and House Public Health Chair Cindy Kirchhofer (R) against Mitch Gore (D), Representative and Judiciary Chair Jerry Torr (R) against Ashley Klein (D), and Representative Chris Jeter (R), who was recently caucused into the seat formerly held by Representative Brian Bosma, against Pam Dechert (D). Two rematches in Hamilton County are also worth noting, as Aimee Rivera Cole (D) tries to oust House Speaker Todd Huston (R), while Naomi Bechtold (D) is again challenging Representative Donna Schaibley (R).

Outside of Central Indiana, another three rematches from 2018 are also expected to be close. Dr. Don Westerhausen (D) is running against Representative Dale DeVon (R) in St. Joseph County, and Kyle Miller (D) is running against Representative Martin Carbaugh (R) in Fort Wayne. Representative Chris Chyung (D) in Dyer hopes to retain his seat against a challenge from the seat's previous occupant, former Representative Hal Slager (R).

For more information, please contact **Amy M. Levander** or a member of our Governmental Affairs and Public Advocacy Team.