

PADPAC Insider: 2026 Pennsylvania Midterms Election Preview

Top takeaways

- Control of both chambers of the Pennsylvania General Assembly is potentially in play. Republicans hold a 27–23 Senate majority, while Democrats hold a very narrow House majority. Only a handful of competitive districts may determine which party controls the legislative agenda in 2027.
- The Senate battlefield is concentrated in suburban Philadelphia, the Lehigh Valley and Lancaster County. Democrats' best opportunities are Republican-held seats represented by Sens. Frank Farry, Jarrett Coleman and Tracy Pennycuik. Republicans' clearest pickup opportunity is Democratic Sen. James Malone's Lancaster County seat.
- Democrats enter the fall with momentum following Brandon Dukes' narrow victory in the August 18 special election for the 12th House District. Dukes won a Butler County district that supported President Trump by more than 18 percentage points in 2024. However, Dukes and Republican Scott Timko will face each other again in November with much higher turnout.
- For dentistry, chamber control will determine committee leadership and which bills receive hearings and floor votes. Dental insurance reform, for example, provides credentialing, workforce shortages, professional licensure, Medicaid reimbursement and access to oral health care could all be affected.

State Senate

Republicans have controlled the Pennsylvania Senate almost continuously since the early 1980s and currently hold a 27–23 majority. Twenty-five even-numbered districts are on the ballot this year.

Democrats need a net gain of three seats to hold an outright majority. A 25–25 tie could give Democratic Lt. Gov. Austin Davis an important procedural tiebreaking role, but bipartisan support would still generally be needed to pass legislation.

Senate District 6

Frank Farry (R) vs. Eileen Hartnett Albillar (D) **Bucks County — Republican-held**

- Farry is seeking a second Senate term in a suburban district that both parties are expected to contest seriously.
- He won his initial Senate race in 2022 by approximately 10,000 votes. Republicans retain a registration advantage, but recent Democratic gains and turnout trends have made Bucks County increasingly competitive.
- Farry also holds a substantial fundraising advantage. Available campaign-finance data show approximately \$763,000 in contributions for Farry, compared with about \$322,000 for Albillar. That advantage gives Farry greater flexibility for advertising and voter outreach, although Albillar could

receive additional help from Democratic Party organizations because of the district's importance to the fight for Senate control.

- This is not necessarily Democrats' easiest pickup opportunity, but it could become decisive if a strong Democratic year develops.

PADPAC perspective: Bucks County lawmakers frequently play influential roles in health care, insurance and professional licensing policy discussions. Regardless of the outcome, maintaining a relationship with the senator representing this district will remain important to PDA.

Senate District 16

Jarrett Coleman (R) vs. Mark Pinsley (D)
Lehigh and Bucks counties — Republican-held

- This is a rematch of the 2022 election, when Coleman defeated Pinsley by roughly eight percentage points.
- Pinsley currently serves as Lehigh County controller and emerged from a competitive Democratic primary.
- Coleman entered the general-election campaign with an overwhelming financial advantage. As of the June reporting period, Coleman had approximately \$503,000 available, compared with just over \$10,000 for Pinsley following the Democratic primary. Pinsley will likely need substantial assistance from the Senate Democratic caucus or allied organizations to close that gap and communicate across the district.
- Coleman's advantage is important, but it does not remove the race from consideration. Changing political conditions in the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia suburbs could still make the district competitive.

PADPAC perspective: The Lehigh Valley continues to be one of Pennsylvania's most politically competitive regions. Coleman's financial advantage strengthens his position, but the district could attract outside spending if Democrats view it as a realistic pickup opportunity. The winner could become an important voice on dental workforce, insurance and access-to-care issues affecting a rapidly growing population.

Senate District 24

Tracy Pennycuick (R) vs. Christopher Thomas (D)
Berks and Montgomery counties — Republican-held

- Pennycuick won the seat in 2022 by approximately four percentage points, making this one of the most competitive Republican-held Senate districts on the ballot.
- Thomas is a teacher and community organizer running in a district that combines Republican-leaning areas with rapidly growing suburban communities.
- Pennycuick holds one of the largest candidate-level fundraising advantages among the competitive Senate races. Available reports show approximately \$534,000 in contributions for Pennycuick, compared with roughly \$16,000 for Thomas. Her support includes significant assistance from Republican Senate leaders, political committees and the state Republican Party.
- Thomas will likely need substantial party or independent assistance to compete with Pennycuick's campaign operation. Because this remains one of Democrats' clearest potential pickups, outside organizations could still invest heavily as Election Day approaches.

PADPAC perspective: A change in this district could alter the balance of power in the Senate and, in turn, committee assignments and the prospects for health care legislation. Pennycuick’s financial advantage makes her a stronger incumbent than the district’s narrow partisan margins alone might suggest, but the race remains one of PADPAC’s most important to monitor.

Senate District 36

James Malone (D) vs. Tom Jones (R) Lancaster County — Democratic-held

- Malone won a major upset in the March 2025 special election, flipping a district that had traditionally favored Republicans.
- Republicans are attempting to reclaim the seat with state Rep. Tom Jones, who previously served in local government and law enforcement roles.
- Malone has established a significant fundraising advantage and began airing television advertisements early in the general-election campaign. That has allowed him to introduce himself to the larger November electorate and attempt to define Jones before the final weeks of the campaign.
- Jones has also aired advertising and has received support from PACs and Republican-aligned contributors. Because this is probably the GOP’s best opportunity to gain a Democratic-held Senate seat, additional help from the Senate Republican caucus or allied outside organizations remains possible. Advertising from both campaigns is already playing a prominent role in the contest.
- A Republican victory here would make the Democratic path to Senate control considerably more difficult. Conversely, Malone’s ability to defend the seat would demonstrate that Democrats can remain competitive even in a district that favors Republicans at the presidential level.

PADPAC perspective: The race demonstrates why PADPAC must remain bipartisan. The district’s political makeup favors Jones, but Malone’s incumbency, fundraising advantage and early television presence strengthen his position. The winner may hold a pivotal vote in a closely divided Senate, making productive relationships with both candidates especially important.

Fundraising figures reflect the latest publicly available data reviewed for this report and may not include subsequent contributions, expenditures or independent spending.

State House

All 203 House seats are on the November ballot. Democrats currently hold a very narrow majority, meaning the outcome could be determined by only one or two districts.

The battlefield extends from western Pennsylvania and the former coal regions to the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia suburbs. Several districts regularly support one party for president while electing a state representative from the other party.

**District Seat status and
 matchup**

PADPAC insider assessment

HD-12	Rep. Brandon Dukes (D) vs. Scott Timko (R) Butler County	Dukes narrowly defeated Timko in the August special election, despite the district voting strongly Republican in 2024. The November rematch will have much higher turnout and will test whether the special-election result reflected a lasting political shift or a low-turnout upset. Dukes reported approximately \$50,000 raised and benefited from nearly \$134,000 in advertising by the House Democratic Campaign Committee. Timko has partially self-funded his campaign and received substantial Republican assistance during the special election, including approximately \$50,000 in party-funded mail.
HD-16	Rep. Rob Matzie (D) vs. John Costanza (R) Beaver County	Matzie is an experienced Democratic incumbent in a region that has moved toward Republicans in federal elections. His continued crossover appeal makes this a difficult but important Republican target. Matzie entered the general-election campaign with a commanding financial advantage, reporting approximately \$77,000 raised, while Costanza reported only about \$1,300 and virtually no cash on hand as of June. Unless Costanza receives substantial party or outside support, Matzie's financial and organizational advantages make an upset considerably more difficult.
HD-41	Rep. Brett Miller (R) vs. Brad Chambers (D) Lancaster County	Democrats view this as a potential pickup opportunity as they attempt to capitalize on recent gains in Lancaster County. Chambers has demonstrated unusual fundraising strength for a challenger and entered the summer with a cash-on-hand advantage over Miller. Available reports also show Chambers substantially outpacing Miller in new contributions during the 2026 cycle. That financial strength allows Democrats to treat the district as a genuine pickup opportunity rather than a speculative target.
HD-45	Open seat: Brittany Bloam (D) vs. James Julius (R) Allegheny County	Democratic Rep. Anita Kulik is retiring. Without an incumbent on the ballot, Republicans have a better opportunity to contest a district that narrowly favored Democrats in recent elections. Bloam emerged from the Democratic primary with a significant financial and organizational advantage, reporting approximately \$178,000 raised and nearly \$38,000 in in-kind assistance from outside organizations, led by the Working Families Party. Her support from Democratic and progressive organizations gives her a substantial head start, although the open-seat nature of the race could still attract late Republican investment.
HD-72	Rep. Frank Burns (D) vs. Philip Rice (R) Cambria County	Burns is a Democratic incumbent who has repeatedly survived in a region that now strongly favors Republicans at the presidential level. This race will test whether established Democratic incumbents can continue attracting crossover voters.
HD-118	Rep. Jim Haddock (D) vs. John Lombardo (R) Lackawanna and Luzerne counties	Northeastern Pennsylvania remains politically unpredictable, with voters regularly splitting their tickets. This district could become critical if control of the House comes down to only a few seats. Haddock reported approximately \$82,000 in contributions, compared with about \$25,000 for Lombardo. Haddock's support includes assistance from the House Democratic Campaign Committee and organized labor. The advantage gives him a stronger campaign infrastructure, although Republican outside spending could narrow the gap in a region that has shifted toward the GOP.
HD-137	Rep. Joe Emrick (R) vs. Jeff Warren (D) Northampton County	Located in the competitive Lehigh Valley, this Republican-held district may attract increased Democratic attention. The candidates have both demonstrated the ability to raise competitive sums. Warren's support includes approximately \$30,000 from Change PA and more than \$20,000 associated with his own campaign resources, while Emrick held a cash-on-hand advantage of roughly \$140,000 to \$105,000 as of June. Neither candidate faces an insurmountable financial disadvantage, making party assistance and late outside spending especially important.
HD-160	Rep. Craig Williams (R) vs. Elizabeth Moro (D) Delaware and Chester counties	This is a rematch in a politically competitive suburban district. Williams is defending one of the Republican seats most likely to be affected by continued Democratic strength in the Philadelphia suburbs.

Fundraising figures reflect the latest publicly available reports reviewed for this briefing. Candidate totals and cash on hand do not necessarily include subsequent contributions, coordinated party expenditures or independent spending.

Why these races matter to dentistry

The election will determine more than which party holds the most seats. It will also determine:

- Who serves as Speaker of the House and Senate President Pro Tempore.
- Which legislators lead the health, insurance, appropriations and professional licensure committees.
- Which dental bills receive hearings, committee votes and floor consideration.
- Whether the House and Senate can agree on dental insurance reform, provider credentialing standards and workforce legislation.
- How receptive the General Assembly may be to Medicaid dental investments and initiatives addressing access to care.
- How many newly elected legislators PADPAC and PDA will need to educate before the 2027–28 session begins.

Many of PDA's priorities require bipartisan support, especially when control of the House, Senate and governor's office is divided. PADPAC's ability to maintain relationships on both sides of the aisle will remain essential regardless of which party wins.

Bottom line

The Senate currently leans Republican, but Democrats have a credible path if they can win in suburban Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley while defending Malone's Lancaster County seat.

The House is even more uncertain. Democrats must protect incumbents in western and northeastern Pennsylvania while Republicans defend several suburban seats. Brandon Dukes' special-election victory gave Democrats momentum, but the November electorate will be much larger and could produce a different result.

A shift of only a few seats could change committee leadership and the prospects for PDA's legislative agenda. These are the races PADPAC will continue to monitor as Election Day approaches.

Help PADPAC prepare for 2027

Your past support has helped PADPAC establish relationships with candidates and lawmakers from both political parties. Those relationships give Pennsylvania's dental community a voice when legislators consider insurance practices, professional licensure, workforce policy, Medicaid funding and patient access to care.

An additional contribution of \$25, \$50 or \$100 will help PADPAC remain engaged in the races that matter, educate candidates about dentistry and begin opening doors before the next legislative session.

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