



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on July 21, 2023

GOP Gains Momentary Fundraising Advantage in Battle for the House

As Democrats and Republicans vie for control of the House of Representatives, both parties are working overtime to take the fundraising lead.

The GOP appears to have come out on top, at least for now — a development that observers believe the party wants to leverage to discourage challengers to its most vulnerable incumbents.

As [Politico](#) reports, 65 Republican candidates have raised \$500,000 or more in the second quarter of this year, compared to only 40 Democrats who crossed that threshold. This is good news for the GOP; four years ago, the tables were turned, with only 30 Republicans having made it to \$500,000, compared to 50 Democrats.

This comes as Republicans face a heated battle to retain their slim House majority of five seats — 18 of the seats they're defending are in Democratic territories, such as California and New York. The GOP's strategy is to make a show of their massive fundraising numbers in these seats so that potential Democratic challengers will stay out of the race.

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Politico noted of the financial situation surrounding some of this cycle's most prominent races:

Of the 31 Republicans whom Democrats have vowed to oust in 2023, three raised more than \$1 million in the second quarter of the year: Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Young Kim (R-Calif.) and Michelle Steel (R-Calif.). And many more came close — notably, some of those in the GOP's toughest turf such as Michigan's Macomb County, New York's Hudson Valley, and northern Los Angeles County.

None of the incumbents or leading candidates in three dozen Democrat-held seats that Republicans are targeting crossed that million-dollar threshold.

"While there's still time to address the fundraising gap, Democratic incumbents are going to need to step it up if they are serious about taking back the majority," said one Democratic strategist involved in House races who was granted anonymity to speak candidly.



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However, all is not lost for Democrats. The above gains for Republicans have not translated across the board to battleground seats, where only six Republican challengers to 36 targeted Democrats made it over the \$200,000 mark in the second quarter.

Democrats have long had an advantage over Republicans when it comes to small-dollar donors, but innovation by the GOP has allowed the party to close the gap. In an effort to mirror Democrats' successful ActBlue platform, Republican strategists two years ago created WinRed, which has become the go-to fundraising mechanism for GOP candidates.

In addition, the party has guided its candidates in investing in email list rentals and digital ads in order to capture more small-dollar donations from a broader range of donors.

"Over the last two cycles, House Republicans have fought to get to parity with Democrats when it comes to candidate dollars," House Majority Whip Tom Emmer of Minnesota told *Politico*. "We've turned a fundraising disadvantage into a massive strength."

Some Democrats contend that the GOP's momentary advantage is nothing more than an illusion, a deliberate attempt by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) to send money to vulnerable Republicans to make them appear more invincible than they really are, giving them temporary leads that may not last as the campaign season progresses. Per *Politico*:

"I think that the NRCC is very aggressively directing money to their frontline [incumbents] in a way that may very well show greater strength in fundraising than these people really have," said Rep. Susan Wild (D-Pa.).... "If the money is just being deposited there because Kevin McCarthy told certain members or certain organizations or whatever to do it, that doesn't really tell me that person is a good fundraiser."

Meanwhile, Dan Conston, president of the McCarthy-aligned Congressional Leadership Fund, told *Politico* that he has faith in the strategy. According to Conston, "ensuring targeted Republican incumbents are cash-flush is already paying dividends," creating "a shield of armor [that] will allow us to focus on our core mission: persuasively defining Democrats."

One of the circumstances of this cycle that could play to Democrats' favor is the fact that the party has an incumbent president, while Republicans have a crowded field of presidential candidates. This could potentially be a drain on funds for congressional candidates, as GOP donors could give more of their money to any number of the primary candidates battling it out for the presidential nomination — a contest that, for many voters, takes center stage and elicits more attention and enthusiasm than congressional races.

The congressional race has reportedly been off to a slow start; approximately half of the targeted Republicans and Democrats still do not have challengers at the close of the second quarter. This benefits the incumbents of both parties, who have the advantage of established name recognition and campaign infrastructure.

Despite the momentary advantage held by Republicans, the contest remains close and any number of factors could drastically change between now and Election Day, especially with the presidential race serving as an important spoiler that could have far-reaching consequences for the down-ballot.



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