

No-Contest Elections™ 2002

A report on the lack of competitiveness and voter control
in Minnesota's state legislative elections

Predicting the results of elections for the
newly redistricted state legislature

By FairVote Minnesota

October 10, 2002

About FairVote Minnesota

FairVote Minnesota is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that educates the public about the effect our voting system has on the quality of our democracy and about alternative voting systems that may improve public life. Voter choice and control over election outcomes, majority rule, the ability of all voters to win representation, and incentives for elevated discourse and for civic participation emanating from the voting system are attributes of an improved public life and higher performing democracy promoted by the organization.

About the Author

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Acknowledgements

The author thanks Ken Bearman, Caleb Kleppner, and Rob Richie for reading and commenting on early drafts. The author acknowledges the Center for Voting and Democracy, whose *Monopoly Politics* report on noncompetitive congressional elections inspired this study. The author is especially indebted to the Minnesota Legislative GIS Office for providing data and maps.

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What the analysts are saying about *No-Contest Elections*™ 2002

This report shines needed light on the backroom decisions that shape Minnesota districts. It shows that Minnesota election contests for the state legislature are more competitive than before the last election but that most are still "safe" for one of the two major political parties. Responsive government flourishes best when elected officials are not safe. It's good for democratic politics for our representatives to have a fire under them to listen to their constituents and for us to see that our votes truly matter in deciding elections. "Safe" seats are not safe for vibrant democracy.

Lawrence R. Jacobs, Professor, Dept of Political Science, University of Minnesota. His most recent book is *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Executive Summary

This report is the second in a biennial series. The inaugural 1999 report faulted noncompetitive elections as undemocratic, failing to provide adequate accountability, creating imbalance in political power, Balkanizing the state, excluding most voters from the campaign debate, and taking away incentives to vote. This report adds discussion of the trade-offs associated with ‘minority opportunity’ districts that show themselves in this districting plan.

Party preferences and voting patterns are consistent from one election to the next. If there are more voters in a district who prefer one party over others, the preferred party will have an advantage in electing its candidates. This makes the results of most elections a foregone conclusion.

After the inaugural report was published, much attention was given to the issue of competitiveness. The Ventura administration championed the issue, political competitive assessments of various districting plans were publicly available on the internet, and the court panel that issued the final redistricting plan appears to have considered competitiveness as a criterion in drawing new boundaries.

The new legislative districts are more competitive and more favorable for Republicans than they were in the previous decade. There are far fewer ‘Untouchable’ districts and more districts that could go to either party in a closely contested election. The DFL lost safe seats in both houses while the Republicans gained safe seats in both houses. More competitive seats are leaning toward Republicans than Democrats.

But most seats are still ‘safe’ for one party or the other. In the Senate, 54 percent of the seats are ‘safe,’ while in the House the figure is 55 percent. The number of seats where the Independence Party could affect the election results is up. However, the party failed to recruit candidates in many of the districts where it could have had its best showing.

Safe DFL seats are concentrated in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and the northeastern part of the state. There are additional pockets of strength around Montevideo and Austin. Safe Republican seats are in the outer ring of suburbs and around Rochester, New Ulm, and in the Otter Tail-Wadena County area. Competitive areas are in the first ring of suburbs and in much of the rest of the state not mentioned above, ranging from the northwestern corner through the center of the state and down into the southeast and southwest corners.

The lack of competitiveness is a symptom of deeper problems with single-winner districts and plurality elections. Instant runoff voting and proportional representation are systemic solutions. Initial steps toward change include local experimentation by home rule cities, assurance that new voting equipment is ranked-ballot compatible, and study by a high-level commission.

Introduction

This is the second in the biennial series, *No-Contest Elections*TM. The inaugural 1999 report is available at www.fairvotemn.org/resources/publications/nce.pdf.

What's wrong with non-competitive elections?

The 1999 report identified the following faults of noncompetitive elections:

- A principle of democracy is that voters should determine the outcome of elections. When they do not, elected officials are not structurally accountable to the voters and can become unresponsive to the concerns of the voters.
- Political power is tied to geography. Committee chairs and caucus leadership posts tend to go to those with seniority, an attribute that comes most easily to those in the safest seats. This punishes areas where there is competition between parties and where good candidates from both of the largest parties are going in and out of the legislature with some regularity. The state becomes Balkanized into regions controlled by one party or the other. The interests of each region are pitted against each other as a result of partisanship. Republicans in Democratic areas (or Democrats in Republican areas) are permanently unrepresented, as are those who do not identify with either of these parties.
- The real campaign is directed at the swing voters in swing districts, leaving most voters feeling like politics is not about issues that affect them.
- Taken together, these effects of noncompetitive elections reduce voter turnout.

To that introduction to the 1999 report, it should be added that noncompetitive elections violate the one-person, one-vote principle. No matter how many votes are piled up for the winning side, those votes can elect only one voice to represent each district at the legislature. The like-minded voters who are 'packed' into the same district could win more representation for themselves if they were spread among more districts.

Some of the most heavily Democratic 'untouchable' districts are ones with high percentages of people of color. It illustrates the trade-off that occurs in the creation of 'minority opportunity' districts. While drawing these districts makes it more likely that racial minorities can hold their representatives accountable, it also limits the number of representatives influenced by minority voters and makes it less important for minority voters to mobilize on Election Day.

Minnesota legislative elections are largely noncompetitive

The 1999 report demonstrated that the 2000 legislative elections were so noncompetitive that two-thirds of the elections could be predicted a year ahead of time with 95 percent accuracy. The reason for this is that voters' party preferences tend to be constant over time. If there are more voters in a district who prefer one party over others, the preferred party will have an advantage in electing its candidates. The greater the dominant party's advantage, the 'safer' the seat will be for that party's candidates.

Party strength is measured by taking a sample of elections and averaging the percentage of the votes received by a party's candidates in the sampled elections. Districts in which the percentage of the vote separating the winning party and the second place party averages less than 10 percent are traditionally described as 'marginal,' meaning the election could be won by either of the two largest parties. If that percentage is between 10 percent and 20 percent, the district is considered 'safe' for the dominant party. The district is called a 'landslide' district if the dominant party generally wins by 20 percent or more of the vote. In the *No-Contest Elections*TM series, these profiles are given the terms 'leaning' toward one party or another, 'comfortable,' and 'untouchable,' respectively.

Since the 1999 report was published, the administration of Governor Jesse Ventura confronted legislative redistricting, championing the issue of competitiveness first introduced by FairVote Minnesota's *No-Contest Elections*TM. For the first time in history, a public entity evaluated Minnesota's legislative plans for average party strength and made the results available to the general public.

The state reports used a different sample of elections than FairVote Minnesota's 1999 study and they only drew from the 1998 election. They do not use the same categories as this report. They also limit themselves to reporting party strength percentages at the district level, refraining from labeling any individual district as competitive or noncompetitive. They do, however, provide aggregate reports on the number of districts that are competitive within an 8 percent margin and the number of districts where one party's strength exceeds 54 percent and 60 percent. Altogether, the state's efforts are a good step toward accountability to the public for the redistricting process.

For the 1999 *No-Contest Elections*TM report, the sample of elections was taken from district-level results of legislative, congressional, and statewide races in the two previous general elections. Due to redistricting, using that methodology for this report would have been complicated by the need to work with data at the precinct level. The state GIS offices had precinct level data which it converted from old districts to new districts. So, instead, *No-Contest Elections*TM2002 will use the state's measurements of party strength as the basis for making predictions about the November 2002 legislative elections. Of particular interest in this year's report is a look at the competitiveness of the new redistricting plan in comparison with the plan of the previous decade.

Methodology

Party Strength - This report uses party strength as the basis for assessing the level of competitiveness in Minnesota's legislative elections. The data are the average percent of the vote received in each district by Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL), Republican (GOP), and Reform (now Independence) (IND) Party candidates for the offices of Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, and Attorney General in 1998. In other words, the votes were tallied as if they had been cast in the newly configured districts.

DFL-GOP Party Strength Difference – The difference was calculated between the DFL party strength and the GOP party strength (DFL% minus GOP%).

District Profile – Each district was categorized according to its party strength difference:

<u>Calculation of difference between DFL & GOP averages</u>			
20% <=	Untouchable DFL		
10% <=	Comfortable DFL	< 20%	
0% <	Leaning DFL	< 10%	
-10% <	Leaning GOP	< 0%	
-20% <	Comfortable GOP	<= -10%	
	Untouchable GOP	<= -20%	

Predicted Winner – The elections for state representative and state senator in districts categorized as either 'Untouchable' or 'Comfortable' for a party were predicted to be won by that party. The results for districts categorized as 'Leaning' one way or the other were not predicted, or 'Not called.'

Independence Party Potential Impact – Districts with potential for an Independence Party candidate to influence the results were determined by subtracting the absolute value of 'DFL-GOP Party Strength Difference' from 'Independence Party Average %.' Districts in which the difference between these two figures was greater than zero were determined to have the greatest potential for Independence Party impact.

'Impact' means that the presence of an Independence Party candidate would make it likely that the election would be decided by less than a majority of the voters and where the winner might be different than if there were no Independence Party candidate in the race.

The Green Party is a major party this year and will have some legislative candidates running on their ballot line. As a minor party, the Greens' statewide candidates did not receive a significant percent of the votes. It remains to be seen if support for its candidates will grow. A Green candidate on the ballot in any district increases the possibility that the winner of that election will receive less than a majority of the vote. This report does not analyze the potential impact of Green legislative candidates.

Findings

Minnesota profile

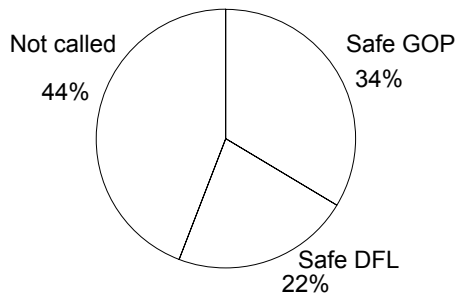
The newly drawn house and senate districts have the following profile going into the 2002 elections:

Profile (margin)	2002 House Districts			Change from 2000		
	<u>DFL</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>DFL</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>Total</u>
Leaning (less than 10% margin)	28	31	59	+5	+11	+16
Comfortable (from 10% up to 20%)	8	32	40	-13	+18	+5
Untouchable (20% or greater margin)	22	13	35	-14	-8	-22
Total	58	76	134			

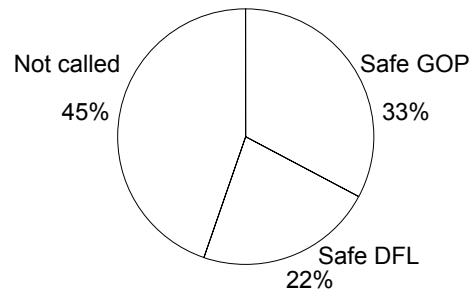
Profile (margin)	2002 Senate Districts			Change from 2000		
	<u>DFL</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>DFL</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>Total</u>
Leaning (less than 10% margin)	13	17	30	+1	+4	+5
Comfortable (from 10% up to 20%)	5	17	22	-4	+10	+6
Untouchable (20% or greater margin)	10	5	15	-7	-4	-11
Total	28	39	67			

Graph. Minnesota profile

House Elections



Senate Elections



Overall predictions

The following are predicted to be the results of the 2002 elections.

<u>Prediction</u>	<u>House 2002</u>	<u>House change from 2000</u>	<u>Senate 2002</u>	<u>Senate change from 2000</u>
DFL	30	-27	15	-11
GOP	45	+10	22	+6
Not called	59	+17	30	+5
Total	134		67	

<u>Potential IND Impact</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change from 2000</u>
House Districts	51	34	+17
Senate Districts	27	20	+7

District profiles and predictions

The tables in this section detail our assessment of the competitiveness of each district and predict the results of the elections in November 2002. The far right column indicates the top districts in which the Independence Party could significantly affect the elections if it fielded candidates in those districts. Each table is followed by a summary of the analysis.

Table. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota House of Representatives by district

<u>District</u>	<u>DFL Avg %</u>	<u>GOP Avg %</u>	<u>IND Avg %</u>	<u>DFL-GOP Difference</u>	<u>District Profile</u>	<u>Predicted Winner</u>	<u>IND Impact</u>
01A	47.0	41.7	4.5	5.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	No
01B	49.3	40.0	3.9	9.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	No
02A	45.4	43.0	4.9	2.4	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
02B	45.2	43.0	4.9	2.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
03A	55.8	30.9	5.4	24.9	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
03B	48.4	38.1	6.2	10.3	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
04A	45.2	42.3	5.3	2.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
04B	39.8	47.1	6.2	-7.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
05A	67.2	20.3	5.4	46.9	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
05B	63.3	24.6	5.7	38.7	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
06A	55.8	31.1	5.2	24.7	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
06B	55.9	32.2	5.2	23.6	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
07A	50.3	35.7	4.9	14.6	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
07B	61.8	23.9	6.0	37.9	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
08A	57.4	29.7	6.2	27.8	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
08B	44.4	35.6	10.6	8.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
09A	42.3	46.7	4.2	-4.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
09B	43.9	43.8	5.0	0.0	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
10A	37.4	51.8	4.9	-14.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
10B	37.7	49.5	6.1	-11.8	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
11A	39.9	47.6	6.0	-7.8	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
11B	40.0	45.2	6.8	-5.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
12A	41.5	45.0	6.4	-3.5	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
12B	43.2	41.2	7.3	1.9	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
13A	40.1	46.3	6.9	-6.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
13B	42.5	46.1	5.9	-3.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
14A	37.8	45.5	8.9	-7.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes

District	DFL Avg %	GOP Avg %	IND Avg %	DFL-GOP Difference	District Profile	Predicted Winner	IND Impact
14B	35.8	45.0	9.0	-9.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
15A	36.5	46.9	7.7	-10.4	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
15B	39.5	40.9	9.0	-1.4	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
16A	41.0	40.8	9.5	0.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
16B	33.6	46.9	10.5	-13.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
17A	41.1	39.7	10.7	1.4	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
17B	39.6	39.5	11.3	0.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
18A	34.4	47.3	10.4	-12.8	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
18B	39.3	44.2	9.2	-4.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
19A	35.7	46.0	10.0	-10.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
19B	32.7	47.3	10.6	-14.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
20A	51.7	37.2	5.3	14.5	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
20B	47.3	39.8	6.5	7.5	Leaning DFL	Not called	No
21A	39.1	48.3	6.1	-9.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
21B	36.4	50.1	6.7	-13.8	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
22A	44.9	43.7	4.4	1.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
22B	44.3	44.4	5.3	-0.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
23A	38.9	46.0	7.9	-7.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
23B	40.5	41.6	9.4	-1.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
24A	40.0	47.1	7.3	-7.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
24B	40.8	43.5	9.0	-2.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
25A	40.5	42.5	9.6	-2.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
25B	43.4	39.0	8.6	4.4	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
26A	35.4	49.4	8.1	-14.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
26B	41.0	41.6	8.9	-0.6	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
27A	46.1	42.3	5.6	3.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
27B	50.0	37.0	5.7	13.0	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
28A	40.5	44.3	8.7	-3.8	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
28B	37.5	47.8	7.8	-10.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
29A	33.7	50.3	8.1	-16.6	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
29B	32.5	52.9	6.0	-20.4	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
30A	36.4	47.9	6.7	-11.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
30B	32.3	52.6	7.3	-20.2	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
31A	41.4	44.4	5.3	-3.0	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
31B	40.7	47.3	4.8	-6.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
32A	28.0	52.5	9.2	-24.5	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
32B	31.8	48.0	10.3	-16.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
33A	28.4	53.6	8.7	-25.2	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
33B	26.9	57.7	7.3	-30.8	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
34A	30.3	50.9	9.3	-20.5	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
34B	28.8	54.1	7.9	-25.3	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
35A	35.0	46.2	9.7	-11.2	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
35B	31.8	49.1	9.7	-17.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
36A	30.4	51.2	9.1	-20.8	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
36B	36.0	44.2	10.4	-8.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
37A	32.8	51.6	7.2	-18.8	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
37B	34.2	49.3	7.8	-15.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
38A	35.8	47.3	7.8	-11.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
38B	33.0	51.8	6.5	-18.8	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
39A	41.1	43.2	7.4	-2.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
39B	41.5	38.8	9.7	2.6	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
40A	34.1	48.7	8.5	-14.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
40B	36.5	49.5	6.9	-13.0	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
41A	30.1	58.1	4.9	-28.0	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
41B	30.2	57.8	5.6	-27.6	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
42A	31.6	53.7	6.9	-22.0	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
42B	27.0	58.2	6.3	-31.2	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
43A	30.8	53.9	6.9	-23.1	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
43B	34.6	50.7	7.0	-16.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
44A	43.1	39.3	8.3	3.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
44B	44.9	39.2	7.2	5.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
45A	40.2	42.8	8.4	-2.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
45B	43.8	38.5	9.1	5.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
46A	39.5	39.2	12.3	0.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
46B	43.2	37.6	10.8	5.6	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
47A	33.5	46.8	10.0	-13.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
47B	35.3	46.3	9.5	-11.0	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
48A	34.8	44.8	10.2	-10.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	Yes
48B	32.1	48.2	9.7	-16.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
49A	31.1	50.1	9.3	-19.0	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
49B	36.7	45.0	9.5	-8.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
50A	45.2	36.0	9.3	9.2	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
50B	35.9	48.2	7.3	-12.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
51A	37.3	42.5	10.0	-5.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
51B	41.8	38.3	10.6	3.5	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
52A	36.0	44.1	10.3	-8.1	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
52B	34.9	48.0	8.2	-13.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
53A	34.2	48.8	7.8	-14.6	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
53B	37.7	44.4	9.1	-6.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
54A	40.4	44.1	7.1	-3.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes

District	DFL Avg %	GOP Avg %	IND Avg %	DFL-GOP Difference	District Profile	Predicted Winner	IND Impact
54B	38.6	44.2	8.1	-5.6	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
55A	44.3	37.5	9.4	6.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
55B	41.7	39.7	9.2	2.0	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
56A	35.0	47.5	8.6	-12.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
56B	33.8	48.4	7.2	-14.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
57A	46.8	32.2	10.8	14.5	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
57B	40.3	40.1	9.0	0.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
58A	52.1	25.8	11.4	26.3	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
58B	62.2	18.4	7.3	43.8	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
59A	50.7	26.5	10.8	24.2	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
59B	52.9	23.3	9.0	29.6	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
60A	53.5	28.1	7.2	25.4	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
60B	52.9	29.8	7.2	23.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
61A	58.4	17.4	9.3	41.0	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
61B	63.0	16.5	8.4	46.5	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
62A	56.2	23.4	9.4	32.8	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
62B	49.6	32.3	8.2	17.3	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
63A	45.3	39.3	6.8	6.0	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
63B	44.1	39.9	8.2	4.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
64A	53.1	28.9	7.3	24.2	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
64B	47.1	36.4	6.4	10.7	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
65A	59.8	18.9	9.3	40.9	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
65B	53.3	24.8	9.7	28.5	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
66A	49.1	29.1	10.6	20.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
66B	50.5	30.4	8.1	20.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
67A	50.2	28.7	10.7	21.5	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
67B	47.5	32.0	10.5	15.5	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No

28 Leaning DFL	22 Untouchable DFL	8 Comfortable DFL	30 Predicted DFL Winners	51 IND Potential Impact Districts
31 Leaning GOP	13 Untouchable GOP	32 Comfortable GOP	45 Predicted GOP Winners	
59 Total 'Marginal' Competitive Seats	35 Total Untouchables	40 Total Comfortables	75 Total 'Safe' Predictable Seats	

Source: Party average percent data was provided by the Legislative GIS Office, Minnesota Legislature, Saint Paul Minnesota.

'Top ten lists'

10 Most 'Untouchable' Representatives				10 Most Vulnerable Representatives				10 Representatives Most Affected by an Independence Party Candidate		
District	Predicted winner		Safety margin	District	Incumbent		Risk margin	District	Incumbent	Relative impact
05A	Tom Rukavina	DFL	46.9%	07B	Dale Swapinski	IND*	55.8%	46A	Open	No IND
61B	Neva Walker	DFL	46.5%	20A	Richard Mulder	GOP	14.5%	17B	Open	11.2%
58B	Keith Ellison*	DFL	43.8%	47A	Luanne Koskinen	DFL	13.3%	17A	Rob Eastlund	No IND
61A	Karen Clark	DFL	41.0%	16B	Leslie Schumacher	DFL	13.3%	16A	Sondra Erickson	No IND
65A	Cy Thao*	DFL	40.9%	40B	Ann Lenczewski	DFL	13.0%	57B	Open	No IND
05B	Tony Sertich	DFL	38.7%	50B	Geri Evans	DFL	12.3%	23B	John Dorn	No IND
07B	Mike Jaros	DFL	37.9%	23A	Ruth Johnson	DFL	7.1%	26B	Lynda Boudreau	No IND
62A	Jim Davnie	DFL	32.8%	01A	Maxine Penas	GOP	5.3%	15B	Joe Opatz	7.6%
42B	Erik Paulsen	GOP	31.2%	11B	Mary Ellen Otremba	DFL	5.2%	25A	Open	7.6%
33B	Barb Sykora	GOP	30.8%	25B	John Tuma	GOP	4.4%	55B	Nora Slawik	No IND

*Dominant party nominee for open seat

* Elected as DFL; now running as IND

'No IND' = No Independence Party candidate

'Safety margin' refers to the amount by which a safe incumbent's party strength exceeds his/her rival party's strength. 'Risk margin' means the amount by which an incumbent party's strength is less than the rival party's strength.

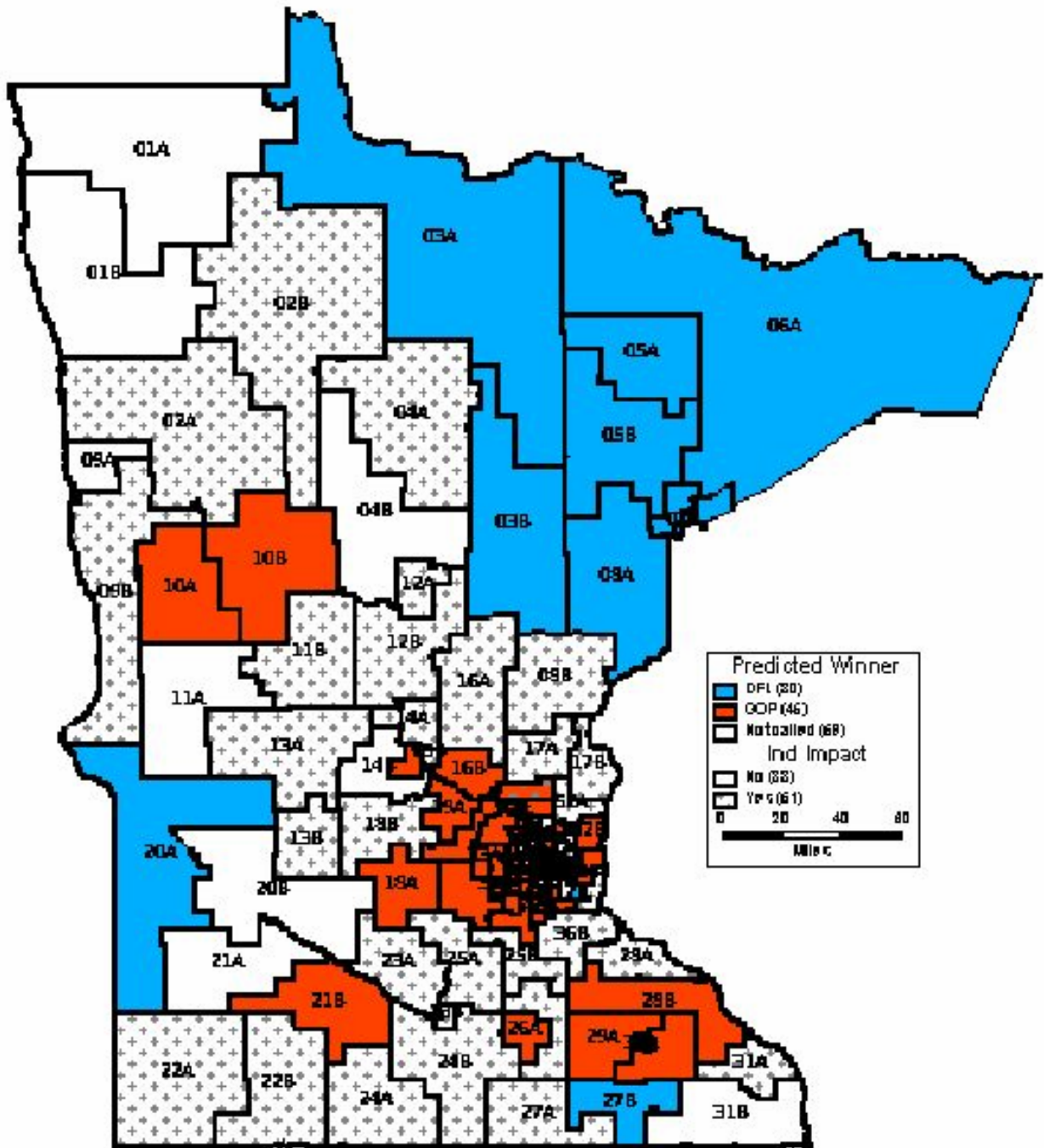
Paired Incumbents

Redistricting has paired incumbents in five House races. Here are the match ups.

District	Incumbent name	Party	Strength index	Incumbent name	Party	Strength index	Predicted winner
07B*	Mike Jaros	DFL	61.8%	Dale Swapinski	IND	6.0%	Jaros
16B	Leslie Schumacher	DFL	33.6%	Mark Olson	GOP	46.9%	Olson
23A	Ruth Johnson	DFL	38.9%	Howard Swenson	GOP	46.0%	Not called
44A	Betty Folliard	DFL	43.1%	Jim Rhodes	GOP	39.3%	Not called
47A	Luanne Koskinen	DFL	33.5%	Bill Haas	GOP	46.8%	Haas

***In District 7B, Dale Swapinski was elected as a DFLer, but switched parties to run with the Independence Party. That he had been a DFLer may moderate the extreme results suggested by a comparison of the Strength Indexes.**

Map. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota House of Representatives by district – state view



Map. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota House of Representatives by district – metro view

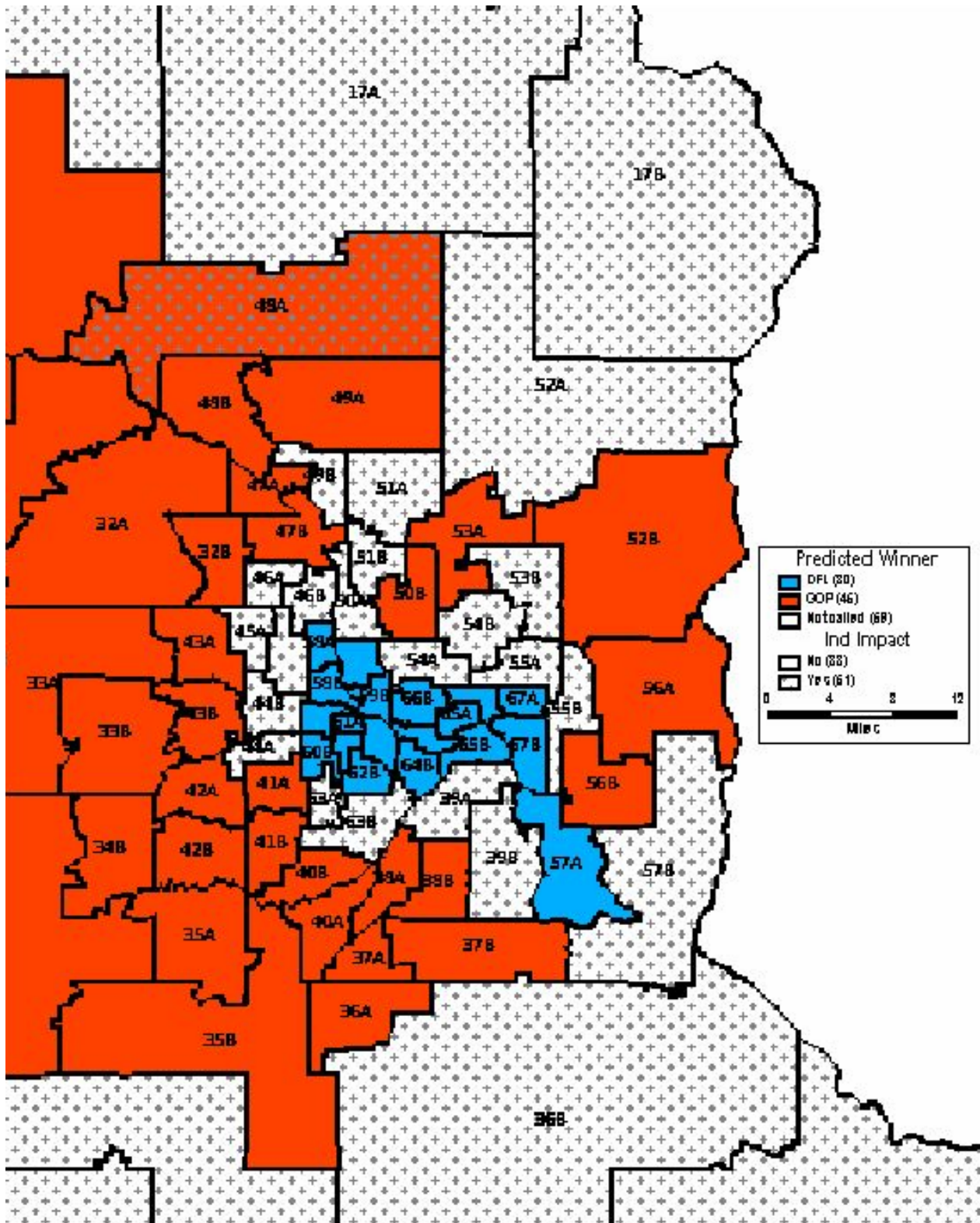


Table. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota Senate by district

District	DFL Avg %	GOP Avg %	IND Avg %	DFL-GOP Difference	District Profile	Predicted winner	IND Impact
01	48.1	40.9	4.2	7.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	No
02	45.3	43.0	4.9	2.3	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
03	52.1	34.6	5.8	17.5	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
04	42.1	45.0	5.8	-2.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
05	65.4	22.3	5.6	43.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
06	55.8	31.6	5.2	24.2	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
07	55.3	30.6	5.4	24.7	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
08	50.6	32.8	8.5	17.9	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
09	43.2	45.1	4.7	-1.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
10	37.6	50.7	5.5	-13.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
11	39.9	46.4	6.4	-6.5	Leaning GOP	Not called	No
12	42.4	43.1	6.9	-0.7	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
13	41.3	46.2	6.4	-4.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
14	36.8	45.3	8.9	-8.5	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
15	37.9	44.1	8.3	-6.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
16	37.4	43.7	10.0	-6.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
17	40.3	39.6	11.0	0.7	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
18	36.9	45.7	9.8	-8.8	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
19	34.1	46.7	10.3	-12.6	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
20	49.4	38.5	5.9	10.9	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
21	37.7	49.2	6.4	-11.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
22	44.6	44.1	4.8	0.5	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
23	39.7	43.9	8.6	-4.3	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
24	40.4	45.3	8.2	-4.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
25	41.9	40.8	9.1	1.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
26	38.1	45.7	8.5	-7.6	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
27	47.9	39.8	5.7	8.1	Leaning DFL	Not called	No
28	39.1	46.0	8.3	-6.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
29	33.1	51.6	7.0	-18.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
30	34.1	50.5	7.0	-16.4	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
31	41.0	45.9	5.0	-4.9	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
32	30.0	50.1	9.8	-20.1	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
33	27.6	55.8	8.0	-28.1	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
34	29.6	52.4	8.6	-22.8	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
35	33.4	47.6	9.7	-14.2	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
36	33.5	47.3	9.8	-13.9	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
37	33.5	50.5	7.5	-17.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
38	34.3	49.7	7.1	-15.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
39	41.3	41.2	8.5	0.0	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
40	35.4	49.2	7.6	-13.7	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
41	30.1	58.0	5.2	-27.8	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
42	29.5	55.7	6.6	-26.3	Untouchable GOP	GOP	No
43	32.8	52.2	6.9	-19.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
44	44.1	39.2	7.7	4.9	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
45	42.1	40.5	8.7	1.6	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
46	41.5	38.3	11.4	3.2	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
47	34.5	46.5	9.7	-12.1	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
48	33.3	46.7	9.9	-13.3	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
49	33.4	47.9	9.4	-14.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
50	40.3	42.4	8.2	-2.0	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
51	39.4	40.6	10.3	-1.2	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
52	35.4	46.0	9.2	-10.6	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
53	36.0	46.5	8.5	-10.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
54	39.6	44.2	7.6	-4.6	Leaning GOP	Not called	Yes
55	43.0	38.6	9.3	4.5	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
56	34.4	47.9	7.9	-13.5	Comfortable GOP	GOP	No
57	43.3	36.5	9.9	6.8	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
58	56.0	23.0	9.8	33.0	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
59	51.6	25.1	10.1	26.5	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
60	53.2	29.0	7.2	24.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
61	61.1	16.9	8.8	44.2	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
62	52.7	28.1	8.8	24.6	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
63	44.8	39.6	7.4	5.2	Leaning DFL	Not called	Yes
64	49.9	32.9	6.8	17.1	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No
65	55.8	22.5	9.5	33.2	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
66	50.0	29.9	9.0	20.1	Untouchable DFL	DFL	No
67	48.9	30.4	10.6	18.5	Comfortable DFL	DFL	No

13 Leaning DFL	10 Untouchable DFL	5 Comfortable DFL	15 Predicted DFL Winners	27 IND Potential Impact Districts
17 Leaning GOP	5 Untouchable GOP	17 Comfortable GOP	22 Predicted GOP Winners	
30 Total 'Marginal' Competitive Seats	15 Total Untouchables	22 Total Comfortables	37 Total 'Safe' Predictable Seats	

'Top five lists'

5 Most 'Untouchable' Senators				5 Most Vulnerable Senators				5 Senators Most Affected by an Independence Party Candidate			
<i>District</i>	<i>Predicted winner</i>		<i>Safety margin</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Incumbent</i>		<i>Risk margin</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Incumbent</i>		<i>Relative impact</i>
61	Linda Berglin	DFL	44.23	30	Sheila Kiscaden	IND*	43.5%	17	Twyla Ring	DFL	No IND
05	David Tomassoni	DFL	43.08	38	Deanna Wiener	DFL	15.3%	51	Don Betzold	DFL	No IND
65	Sandra Pappas	DFL	33.22	56	Len Price	DFL	13.5%	39	James Metzen	DFL	No IND
58	Linda Higgins	DFL	32.99	47	Leo Foley	DFL	12.1%	46	Linda Scheid	DFL	No IND
33	Gen Olson	GOP	28.15	52	Jane Krentz	DFL	10.6%	25	Thomas Neuville	GOP	No IND

*Elected as GOP; running as IND (See Discussion section)

'No IND' = No Independence Party candidate

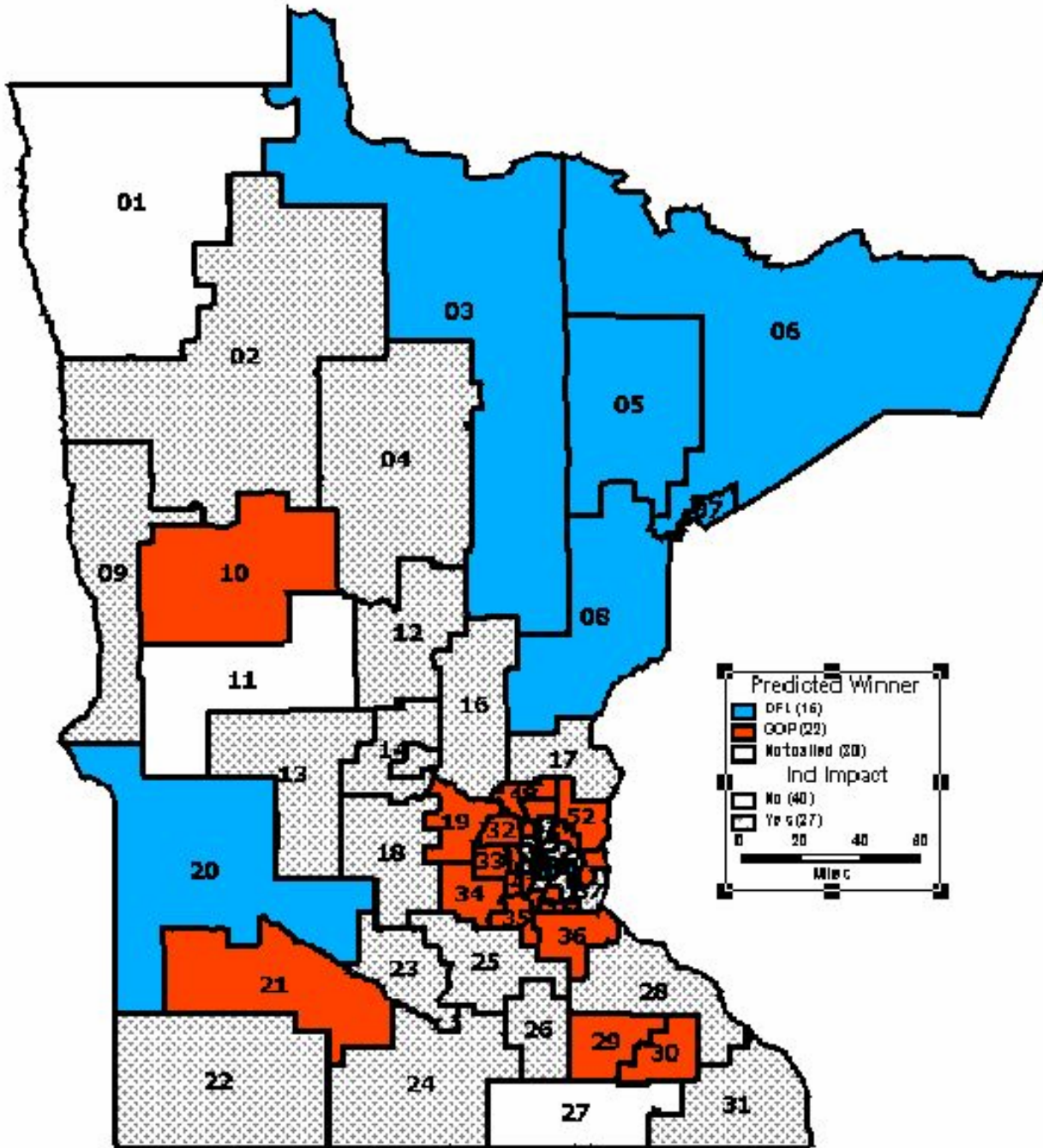
'Safety margin' refers to the amount by which a safe incumbent's party strength exceeds his/her rival party's strength. 'Risk margin' means the amount by which an incumbent party's strength is less than the rival party's strength.

Paired Incumbents

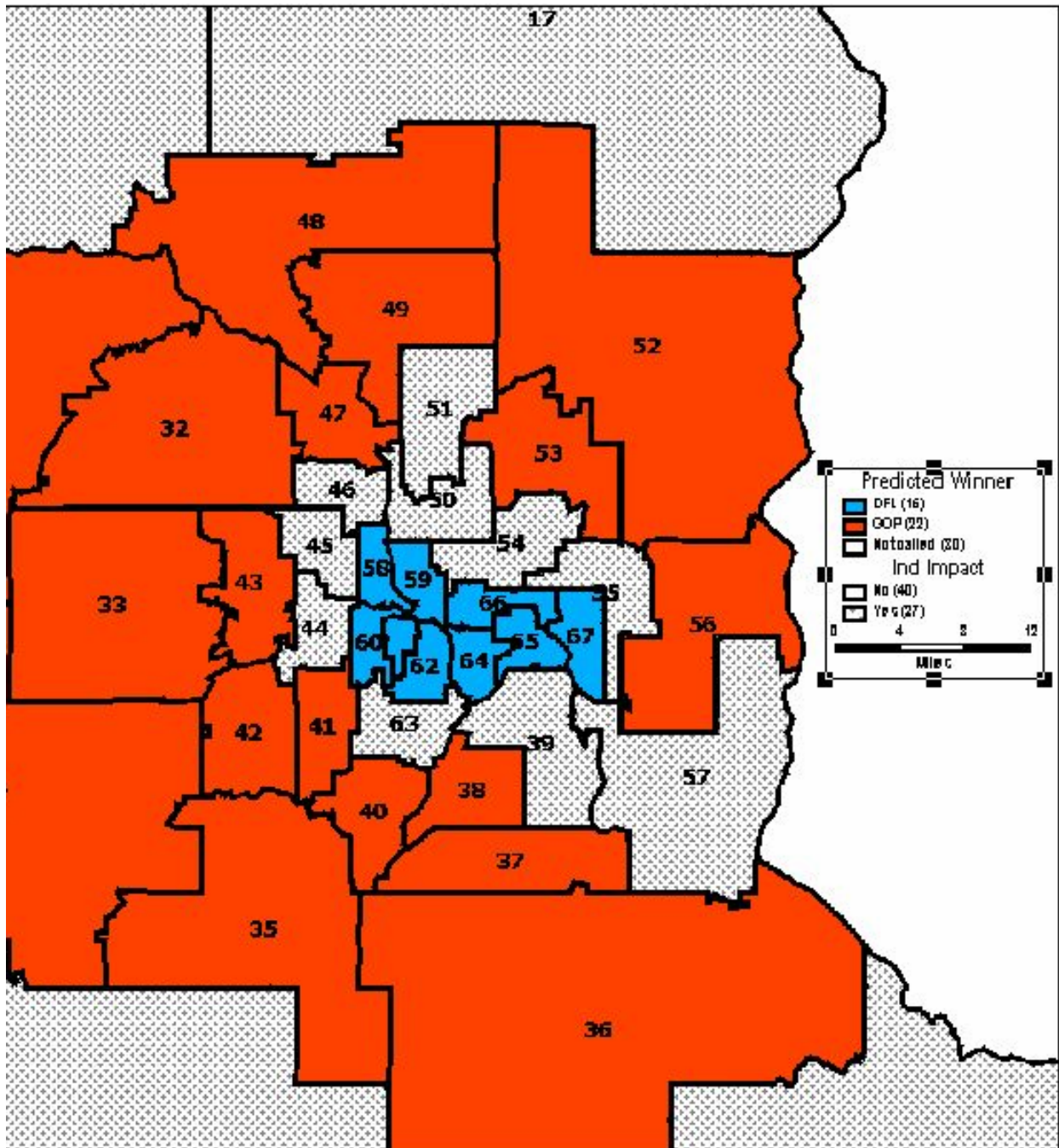
Redistricting has paired incumbents in one Senate race. Here is the match up.

District	Incumbent name	Party	Strength index	Incumbent name	Party	Strength index	Predicted winner
52	Jane Krentz	DFL	35.4%	Michele Bachmann	GOP	46.0%	Bachmann

Map. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota Senate by district – state view



Map. 2002 election predictions: Minnesota Senate by district – metro view



Discussion

Profile change from 2000

With a different data set and no data from the 2000 election included, the 2002 profile is an apples and oranges comparison with the 2000 profile. However, we believe they are close enough to look for characteristics of the new districting plan.

More competitive districts

The first change to note is the increase in the portion of districts which are competitive. In the House, 44 percent of the new districts are competitive compared with 31.3 percent in 2000. In the Senate, 44.8 percent of the new districts will be competitive, up from 37.3 percent in 2000. The number of ‘Untouchable’ seats is down in both houses and for both parties. That means there are fewer seats over which the dominant party claims an absolute lock on the seat.

Safe seats: DFL’s loss is GOP’s gain

The second change of note is the loss of safe seats for DFLers and the gain in safe seats for Republicans. In the House, the DFL is losing 27 safe seats, while the GOP is picking up 10 more than they had in 2000. In the Senate, DFLers are down 11 safe seats, while Republicans are gaining 6 additional safe seats. Combined with the increase in competitive seats, many of which lean Republican, the prospects for the GOP in 2002 are bright.

Still ‘No-Contest’ in most districts

In spite of a new districting plan with fewer ‘Untouchable’ seats and more competitive districts, the portion of elections in which the result is a foregone conclusion remains at more than half the total. In the House, 56 percent of the seats almost certainly have a winner already. In the Senate, the number is an almost identical 55 percent. This is down from roughly two-thirds of the elections being pre-determined in 2000, but still leaves voters in most districts without a decision of consequence in the elections.

Top Five and Top 10 ‘Untouchables’

“Introducing Representatives Keith Ellison and Cy Thao.” Barring catastrophe, those are words you will almost certainly hear after the swearing in ceremony in January 2003. These newcomers are the standard bearers for the dominant party in the list of Ten Most Untouchable Representatives and are the best bets to be new faces on the House floor next year. They replace retiring legislators Gregory Gray and Andy Dawkins, respectively. All the others, in the Senate as well as the House, are familiar faces representing northeastern Minnesota, central cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and the outer tier of the southwestern suburbs.

Independence Party impact: ‘A party was called, but no one came’

The total number of districts in which the Independence Party could make an impact on the election results is up in both houses. However, in spite of tremendous success in recruiting current and former elected DFLers and Republicans to run as Independence Party candidates, the

Independence Party has no candidates in most of the top ten districts where they would have been most likely to affect the results. These are largely the same districts in which the Independence Party had its best shot at winning a seat. The exceptions to the no-show rule are

- IP candidate P.J. Richardson, running for an open House seat in Chisago County,
- Ray Scherbel, running against incumbent Joe Opatz for a House seat representing Saint Cloud, and
- Terry Morrison, hoping to represent the area northeast of Mankato, a House district without an incumbent running.

The big question mark is whether Republican-turned-Independence-Party Senator Sheila Kiscaden will be able to prevail in her contest. By the numbers in this report, for any District 30 candidate not running on the Republican ballot line, the answer is “no.” However, she is still claimed as a member of the Senate Republican caucus, which has been at odds with the party in several endorsing contests. And in the primary election she outpolled her DFL and Republican rivals’ combined vote total. Though the IP has not made much of a showing in the Rochester area previously, Kiscaden could be the one to break through the barrier.

In recent times, not more than a handful of state legislators in the entire nation have been elected from a third party ballot line. (See *Ballot Access News*, November 16, 2000. <http://www.ballot-access.org/2000/1116.html#03>.) This underscores both the odds against Kiscaden – or any IP legislative candidate – and the magnitude of the accomplishment, should she manage to pull it off.

Dale Swapinski, the other incumbent running as an Independence Party candidate (after switching from the DFL Party), is highly unlikely to make a dent in the results of his contest in District 7B against fellow incumbent Mike Jaros. Jaros is one of the Top Ten ‘Untouchable’ Representatives and his votes in the primary election dwarfed the combined vote totals of Swapinski and the Republican candidate.

Impact of No-Contest Elections™ inaugural edition

When the first edition of *No-Contest Elections™* was published in November 1999, the notion that legislative districts ought to be drawn with political competitiveness as one of the criteria was not on the public radar screen. It had been a traditional game of legislative party caucuses to draw plans that would advantage one’s own party and disadvantage the other party. There had been no accountability to the public on how the plans would affect representation in the legislature.

Since FairVote Minnesota issued its groundbreaking report, several advances have been made. The administration of Governor Jesse Ventura took up the cause, championing political competitiveness as a criterion to evaluate new districting plans. By all appearances, the court panel that ultimately came up with the final districting plan gave consideration to political competitiveness as a criterion in how it drew the new map. Today, anyone with internet access can go to state-sponsored web sites and view the political competitiveness of any of the proposed

districting plans and of the final plan issued by the court panel. The public interest has been well-served by these developments.

Further recommendations

As discussed in the inaugural edition of this series, the problems of fairly representing Minnesota voters go deeper than whether districts are competitive or not. The issue lies in the nature of single-winner districts and plurality – or ‘First-Past-The-Post’ – elections. Minnesotans appear to be coming to grips with – maybe even embracing – the fact that this is a multi-party state. The principle of majority rule is increasingly at risk of not being upheld when candidates from more than two parties seek the same office. Awareness of alternative election systems that could address the root problems facing fair representation is just dawning on the political establishment.

Majority winners in single-winner districts could be assured with Instant runoff voting, a ranked-ballot voting method that carries out a series of runoff elections on one ballot. Even better, many more voters could win representation, the political diversity of the state could be represented, and overall majority rule could be assured with a form of proportional representation in multimember districts. There are several sensible immediate steps to assist these systems in being adopted statewide:

1. One or more home rule cities should consider amending their charter to conduct their elections with an alternative voting method, thus serving as a laboratory of democracy within the state’s borders. Many of the world’s major democracies use alternative voting methods. But it would be helpful to witness local usage of such a system and assess its strengths and weaknesses at close hand.
2. All new voting equipment purchased or certified for purchase in the state should be required to be compatible for use with a ranked-ballot method of voting. Hand-counted paper ballots can be formatted for this purpose. However, electronic optical scanners must be outfitted with firmware that will capture the ballot image, not merely tally the total number of votes cast for each candidate. The expense would be minimized if the firmware were included at the time of original purchase.
3. A blue-ribbon commission with broad, high-level participation should be appointed to examine various voting methods and evaluate them against performance criteria such as their effectiveness at winning representation for the greatest number of voters, for promoting competitiveness and accountability, for promoting discussion of issues important to a broad range of voters, and for promoting voter turnout. This commission should issue a report with recommendations on which voting systems would be most appropriate and provide the greatest benefits for Minnesota.

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