

2026 SENATE BATTLEGROUND GUIDE



JOSH TUREK
IOWA



ABDUL EL-SAYED
MICHIGAN



SHERROD BROWN
OHIO



CHRIS PAPPAS
NEW HAMPSHIRE



MARY PELTOLA
ALASKA



JAMES TALARICO
TEXAS



ROY COOPER
NORTH CAROLINA



TROY JACKSON
MAINE

INTRODUCTION

This November, voters across 2026 battleground states will select a new class of U.S. Senators, shaping the 120th Congress and U.S. foreign policy through the rest of the second Trump Administration and beyond.

Voters deserve to know what these candidates believe and what they have actually done. Some are newcomers, while others are political veterans. But whether their records are long or short, voters should know how they will respond to our nation's pressing security challenges.

POLARIS National Security's Senate Battleground Guide examines the 2026 field of Democratic candidates across projected swing states, with candidate profiles that cut through campaign rhetoric—and provide the receipts so the public can judge for themselves.

A number of candidates openly embrace the far-left's most radical positions on foreign policy. Others cloak similar instincts in moderate rhetoric. But across the board, a troubling pattern emerges: when these candidates are forced to choose between American strength or the far-left's demands, they consistently bend to the latter.

The Democratic field of candidates in these states represents a dramatic departure from the bipartisan national security consensus that has defined American politics for decades. Positions once considered fringe—weakening our military, sympathizing with terrorists, embracing adversaries over allies—have entered the progressive mainstream.

This is not simply a group of Senate candidates with a different vision for U.S. foreign policy. **This is the most radical field of prospective Democratic Senators in modern American history.**

Though their records differ, their instincts are largely the same: blame America first, put our interests last, and retreat the moment strength is required. By and large, their proposed “strategies” for confronting our adversaries amount to little more than dressed-up surrender.

The stakes for America's future are high. U.S. Senators are tasked with the world's most pressing questions of war and peace. They also determine which senior officials are confirmed to carry out President Trump's national security agenda—and whether Congress advances or reverses the progress made by this Administration.

Candidates may label themselves moderates or pragmatists, but the relevant question is what these candidates actually say and do when faced with real national security decisions. Have they supported a strong military? Will they confront America's adversaries and stand with our allies? And when the moment comes to choose between strength and the radical left's demands, where will they stand?



Abdul El-Sayed

Michigan – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Terrorist Sympathizer



- [Equates](#) Al Qaeda's 9/11 terrorist attacks with America's response to the attacks.
- [Minimizes](#) 9/11 death toll, refuses to disavow a streamer who said America deserved it.
- [Calls](#) U.S. counter-terrorism efforts after 9/11 "a new American imperialism."
- [Accuses](#) the U.S. of giving rise to terrorist attacks by "creating pain" for terrorists.
- [Excused](#) a terrorist attack on a Michigan synagogue as retaliation for striking Hezbollah.

Defense Nihilist



- [Supports](#), reportedly, slashing defense spending by \$100 billion, crippling our military.
- [Promises](#) to block defense spending unless anti-racism funding for schools is boosted.
- [Accuses](#) America of using military assistance to "destroy other people's schools."
- [Calls](#) for laundering unrelated climate initiatives inside the defense budget.
- [Condemns](#) Obama for not withdrawing from Afghanistan even more rapidly than Biden.

Enemy of Israel



- [Refuses](#) to accept Israel's right to exist, [denies](#) it's a U.S. ally.
- [Calls](#) Israel evil, [peddles](#) claims of genocide and apartheid, and [downplays](#) Hamas attacks.
- [Demands](#) a total arms embargo, including on defensive weapons protecting civilians.
- [Supports](#) more funding for UNRWA, whose employees helped Hamas execute October 7.
- [Accuses](#) Israel of dragging America to war instead of thanking it for tackling U.S. threats.
- [Slanders](#) America as complicit in genocide, [attacks](#) Israel's leader as a war criminal.

Apologist for Iran's Regime



- [Demands](#) that Congress block U.S. military funding to force America to stand down.
- [Refused](#) to comment on the Ayatollah's killing to appease his pro-regime supporters.
- [Opposes](#) military action to halt the nuclear program, [wants](#) a return to Obama's deal.
- [Denies](#) the President's constitutional power over the military as commander-in-chief.
- [Evasive](#) when asked if he stood against the murderous IRGC and Islamic Republic.

ICE Abolitionist



- [Demands](#) the abolition of ICE, which he [calls](#) a "tool for autocracy" that "terrorizes."
- [Denies](#) that ICE's deportation efforts advance public safety or relate to border security.
- [Attacks](#) law enforcement as "government thugs" with a "culture of aggression."
- [Supports](#) not only defunding ICE, but redirecting its funding to amnesty measures.



POLARIS Verdict | *El-Sayed is dangerously unfit for the Senate. He shows terrible judgment, radical instincts and a deranged worldview fundamentally incompatible with the responsibilities of a Senator entrusted with decisions of war and peace.*





Josh Turek

Iowa – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Defunding the Military, Silent on China



- [Calls](#) to stop “blank checks” for America’s defense apparatus and military deployments.
- [Pretends](#) dollars spent on the military prevents funding for domestic priorities.
- [Skipped](#) a funding vote for Iowa’s veterans for a Schumer-backed fundraiser.
- [Slams](#) tariffs on China as “farmageddon” without condemning China’s trade practices.
- [Remains](#) silent on China buying Iowa farmland, despite calling for a “Wall Street” ban.

Grounding the Guard



- [Backed](#) a reckless bill [barring](#) Iowa’s Guard from combat, even if the President directs it.
- [Fought](#) to make Iowa’s Guard effectively impossible to deploy, hampering the military.
- [Ignored](#) law establishing federal authority supersedes states’ on National Guard control.

Leaving the Homeland Exposed



- [Says](#) “Iowa First” is “taking care of citizens here,” not stopping threats like a nuclear Iran.
- [Claims](#) he wants border security, but promises to hobble the agencies doing exactly that.
- [Skipped](#) a vote to block visa holders tied to foreign adversaries from Iowa colleges.
- [Skipped](#) nearly 60 percent of votes this year to fundraise instead of keeping Iowa safe.
- [Dismissed](#) the capture of indicted narco-terrorist Maduro as an “unconstitutional war.”

Bad on Israel, Soft on Terrorism



- [Tried](#) to water down a resolution backing Israel's right to eliminate terrorist groups.
- [Refused](#) to say whether he opposes arms sales and transfers to Israel.
- [Claims](#) to oppose Iran getting a nuclear bomb but [rejects](#) strikes to stop them.
- [Tried](#) to add an [attack](#) on Trump and January 6 to a resolution on October 7 victims.
- [Refuses](#) to condemn a far-left streamer who calls America worse than al-Qaeda.

Siding with Sanctuary Cities



- [Advertised](#) ways for illegal immigrants to avoid law enforcement in a newsletter.
- [Vowed](#) to block DHS funding and force a shutdown until his ICE demands are met.
- [Voted](#) to stop Iowa police from working with ICE to enforce immigration law.
- [Opposed](#) restrictions on taxpayer-funded welfare benefits for illegal immigrants.
- [Trumpeted](#) his opposition to a bill requiring proof of citizenship to vote.



POLARIS Verdict | Josh Turek’s “prairie populist” persona masks an alarming national security record. His record shows a willingness to weaken America’s defenses, turn a blind eye to our adversaries, and a fundamental failure to understand the threats of our time.





Sherrod Brown

Ohio – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Playing Politics with Energy Security



- [Backed](#) Biden's freeze on natural gas exports, [pushing](#) allies toward Russian energy.
- [Supported](#) more fees on U.S. oil and gas production, empowering hostile energy powers.
- [Voted](#) against the Keystone XL pipeline, fueling the collapse of a vital energy project.
- [Voted](#) for a measure banning oil exports from the Keystone pipeline.

Shambolic on Immigration



- [Refuses](#) to say whether he supports abolishing ICE, feigning ignorance.
- [Fought](#) against efforts to block illegal immigrants from getting U.S. taxpayer benefits.
- [Opposed](#) funding to deport and [bar](#) amnesty for criminal illegal immigrants
- [Opposed](#) barring the use of taxpayer dollars to fly illegal immigrants to America.
- [Co-sponsored](#) a bill to protect sanctuary cities and hobble immigration operations.

Open Borders Warrior



- [Dismissed](#) concerns about Biden's open border as only from the "far right."
- [Voted](#) to cancel projects and block construction of the border wall.
- [Voted](#) against CBP funding to catch lethal opioids and narcotics at the border.
- [Cast](#) a key vote killing funds needed to install fentanyl detection tools at the border.
- [Voted](#) no less than 10 times to protect federal funds for sanctuary cities.

Wrong on the Middle East

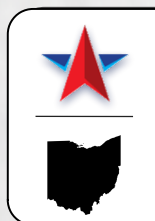


- [Claimed](#) not to trust Israel to abide by a Gaza ceasefire, excusing Hamas' violations.
- [Urged](#) a "non-militarized" Palestinian state after 10/7, rewarding Hamas' terrorism.
- [Refuses](#) to say whether he would support or oppose arms sales to Israel.
- [Backed](#) Obama's weak Iran deal, which Tehran used to covertly pursue nuclear weapons.
- [Tried](#) to shield Iran's terror regime by opposing a measure to block sanctions relief.

Running with the Radical Left



- [Fundraised](#) with a socialist who disparaged America as a "s-hole" and insulted the flag.
- [Embraced](#) defunding the police in 2020, claiming police "reinforce" racism in America.
- [Called](#) the U.S. a "fascist police state," defended Communist propaganda as a student.
- [Said](#) military action against Maduro's regime would be "reckless and irresponsible."



POLARIS Verdict | *Brown claims to fight for Ohio, but his record says otherwise. He cast deciding votes enabling open borders, undercutting energy security, and backing Biden's Middle East disasters. Ohio sent him packing in 2024, and he's given them every reason to do so again.*





Mary Peltola

Alaska – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Selling Out Alaska's Energy



- [Caved](#) to lower 48 liberals and backed off confronting Biden's attacks on Alaska's energy.
- [Abandoned](#) a bill she championed requiring Biden to reinstate cancelled drilling leases.
- [Urged](#) colleagues in Congress to block her own energy measure—then refused to herself.
- [Told](#) fellow Democrats to vote against Alaska energy jobs.

Putting Alaska Last on Defense



- [Wants](#) Congress to be commander-in-chief and usurp the President's constitutional powers.
- [Demands](#) the immediate end of the Iran campaign, giving its terror regime victory.
- [Voted](#) against a pay raise for American troops and funding for our military.
- [Opposed](#) Arctic security moves like funding icebreakers and reopening Adak Naval Base.
- [Missed](#) nearly one-in-five House votes—including on major national security legislation.

Not Concerned About China



- [Voted](#) against a move to stop money from Chinese nationals from election interference.
- [Scolded](#) Alaskans concerned about the CCP spy balloon crisis “not to be alarmist.”
- [Told](#) Alaska not to be overly concerned after reported CCP spies tried to breach bases.
- [Voiced](#) “full faith” in the Biden Administration protecting Alaska from China's attacks.

Supports Lower 48 Liberals on Border Security



- [Gave](#) Biden high marks at the height of his border crisis—then [flipped](#) to opposing it.
- [Opposed](#) hiring CBP agents, improving border tech, and ending catch-and-release.
- [Failed](#) to call on leftists in Congress to end their reckless homeland security shutdowns.
- [Failed](#) to support a measure to deport immigrants who assault law enforcement.
- [Aligned](#) with a far-left group pushing to hamstring ICE and abolish Border Patrol.
- [Voted](#) twice against holding former DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas accountable.

A Fading Pro-Israel Record



- [Refuses](#) to say whether or not she supports Israel despite repeated inquiries.
- [Stood](#) by Rashida Tlaib after she called for Israel's destruction and jihad against Jews.
- [Voted](#) to block a Treasury Department crackdown on non-profits supporting terrorism.
- [Opposed](#) emergency security assistance for Israel after the October 7 attacks by Hamas.



POLARIS Verdict | *Peltola has put Alaska last on national security. Her time in Congress shows she can't be trusted to challenge the radical left, let alone deliver for the state. Alaska deserves leadership that will defend its security in the Senate.*





Troy Jackson

Maine – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

The Far Left's Main Man



- [Touted](#) the DSA's backing, which vow to gut defense spending and close bases abroad.
- [Refuses](#) to disavow the endorsement of Hasan Piker, who [says](#) America "deserved" 9/11.
- [Stood](#) by Graham Platner's Nazi tattoo, the emblem of a regime Americans died to defeat.
- [Excused](#) Platner's disastrous controversies with a shrug: "people can change."
- [Refused](#) to condemn violent rioters from 2020, framing as justified unrest.

Morally Confused on Israel



- [Vows](#) to oppose all military aid to Israel, including for missile defense to save civilians.
- [Smears](#) Israel's October 7 response as "genocide" despite the claim being debunked.
- [Repeated](#) the allegation, even after Maine's Jewish clergy [called](#) it a corrosive purity test.
- [Claimed](#) Jewish Mainers won't call Gaza a "genocide" simply because they're Jewish.
- [Said](#) anyone who disputes the Gaza genocide charge lacks "eyes and a heart."
- [Pushed](#) Hamas' propaganda that Israel caused October 7 by "killing innocent civilians."
- [Accused](#) Prime Minister Netanyahu of being a "war criminal."

Hopelessly Misguided on Iran



- [Supports](#) defunding the U.S. military to force an end to the Iran campaign.
- [Calls](#) President Trump's campaign to deny Iran a nuclear weapon "ridiculous."
- [Pledges](#) he'd "put diplomacy ahead," presumably like Obama and Biden's appeasement.
- [Calls](#) the Iran intervention an "illegal war," ignoring constitutional powers.
- [Pledges](#) to try to block the President from protecting Americans from Iran's regime.

Undermining Maine's Security



- [Wants](#) to abolish ICE, hampering our ability to enforce our own immigration laws.
- [Excuses](#) illegal immigration as "part of Maine" in response to ICE crackdowns.
- [Backs](#) a fossil fuels ban, hampering U.S. energy security and increasing foreign reliance.
- [Supported](#) measures forcing higher energy bills and leaving Mainers less energy secure.
- [Downplayed](#) Maduro's narco-terrorism while Maine battles a transnational drug crisis.



POLARIS Verdict | *Despite his logger-populist image, Troy Jackson's record shows he lacks the judgment to defend Maine in the U.S. Senate. He runs with anti-American socialists, never misses an opportunity to excuse threats, and displays a shocking level of moral confusion.*





Chris Pappas

New Hampshire – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Refusing to Stand Up to the Left



- [Refused](#) to condemn the DSA, [dismissing](#) a resolution doing so as a “political stunt.”
- [Embraces](#) anti-American candidates as part of the Democratic coalition’s “big tent.”
- [Refused](#) to call out Biden for his Afghanistan withdrawal, expressing vague concerns.
- [Voted](#) against holding Biden officials responsible for the withdrawal and its fallout.

Sabotaging New Hampshire’s Security



- [Voted](#) against defense authorization for 2027, endangering readiness at a critical time.
- [Vows](#) to lower real defense spending while global threats grow more dangerous.
- [Backed](#) more fees on oil and gas producers, undercutting U.S. energy security.
- [Opposed](#) expanding affordable American energy, ceding ground to Russia and Iran.

Weak on Defending the Homeland



- [Voted](#) to shut down the government, backing Schumer’s attacks on homeland security.
- [Helped](#) the far-left hold DHS hostage, costing taxpayers nearly \$11 billion.
- [Voted](#) against deporting non-citizens convicted of drunk driving offenses.
- [Backs](#) funding for sanctuary cities that refuse to enforce federal immigration laws.

Siding With Adversaries



- [Voted](#) against the recently-passed Russia sanctions bill after initially backing it.
- [Opposed](#) the Maduro raid, warning it could cause “global instability” and “foreign war.”
- [Voted](#) six times to hobble President Trump’s ability to strike Iran for national defense.
- [Opposed](#) Trump’s strike on Soleimani, Iran’s top terrorist [plotting](#) to kill Americans.
- [Attacked](#) the President for Midnight Hammer and obliterating Iran’s nuclear sites.

Turning on Israel



- [Slammed](#) Israel’s warfighting, demanding a “reset” with our closest ally in the region.
- [Accused](#) Israel of causing “war and instability” with “disproportionate, extreme policies.”
- [Opposed](#) emergency security assistance for Israel after the October 7 attacks.
- [Refused](#) to stand up to a radical effort to ban U.S. military aid to Israel.
- [Voted](#) against denying federal funds to universities that discriminate against Israel.
- [Cheered](#) efforts to “drum” Netanyahu out of office, meddling in Israel’s election.



POLARIS Verdict | *Pappas sells himself as a moderate, but he gives in to the radical left when it counts. He makes common cause with socialists and hampers America’s ability to confront adversaries. New Hampshire can count on him to put politics first—and America second.*





Roy Cooper



North Carolina – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)

National Security Record

Putting Politics Before National Defense



- [Opposed](#) a \$200 billion package to keep our military armed and our adversaries cowed.
- [Called](#) equipping our troops and re-arming the U.S. military “misplaced priorities.”
- [Said](#) targeted funding to combat Iran’s terrorism could pay for Obamacare instead.
- [Blamed](#) President Trump’s strikes—not Iran’s regime—for U.S. service member deaths.

Sanctuary Governor



- [Spurned](#) immigration law, [vetoing](#) bills requiring sheriffs to cooperate with ICE.
- [Blocked](#) legislation protecting those charged with felonies from immigration authorities.
- [Helped](#) free criminal illegal aliens who went on to kidnap and assault American citizens.
- [Refused](#) to disavow open-borders socialists, saying Democrats have “got to be together.”
- [Backed](#) Schumer’s homeland security shutdown and withholding disaster relief funds.

Public Safety Liability



- [Launched](#) a task force [pushing](#) light sentences for violent repeat felons and fewer arrests.
- [Agreed](#) to release 3,500 inmates early; 600 were charged with felonies, like murder.
- [Vetoed](#) tougher penalties for violent rioters, calling them “unnecessary.”
- [Failed](#) to earn the endorsement of a single North Carolina law enforcement group.

Blind to Threats



- [Accepted](#) a \$7,000 campaign donation from a member of the Chinese Communist Party.
- [Recruited](#) a solar company with CCP ties, providing them millions in taxpayer dollars
- [Downplayed](#) the company’s ownership by a Chinese conglomerate with CCP leadership.
- [Opposed](#) the Maduro raid, calling it a reckless move for “big oil company profit.”
- [Failed](#) to call out Maduro’s crimes or dictatorship, even when fellow Democrats did.

Coddling Anti-Israel Extremists



- [Stayed](#) silent as anti-Israel protestors took over UNC Chapel Hill’s campus.
- [Tried](#) vetoing penalties for anti-Israel protestors using masks while committing crimes.
- [Failed](#) to condemn a resolution calling Palestinian security prisoners “hostages” for days.
- [Expressed](#) confidence in Joe Biden as the Middle East’s “best hope” for peace.



POLARIS Verdict | *Behind Roy Cooper’s moderate brand masks a radical record: sanctuary for criminals, mass prisoner releases, and weakness toward adversaries. Senators decide matters of war and peace—and Cooper has shown he cannot be trusted with either.*





James Talarico

Texas – Democratic Senate Nominee

Candidate Biography: [Here](#)



National Security Record

Far-Left Poster Boy



- [Said](#) America needs to look to Europe for “inspiration” on how to be a “true democracy.”
- [Accused](#) the U.S. military of indiscriminately “bombing people” around the world.
- [Peddled](#) Marxist claims America is seeking to “colonize Venezuela” by capturing Maduro.
- [Labeled](#) Trump’s Venezuela moves and push for a deal with Greenland “imperialism.”
- [Accused](#) the Trump Administration of “sending U.S. troops to die” in the Middle East.

Border Security Democrat?



- [Vowed](#) to oppose any DHS secretary refusing to destroy ICE, a “secret police force.”
- [Helped](#) illegal immigrants evade law enforcement and [lied](#) about ICE “kidnapping.”
- [Claims](#) he opposed Biden’s border policies despite producing no evidence of doing so.
- [Opposed](#) billions for border security, [called](#) border wall funding “anti-immigrant.”

Hostile to Israel



- [Supports](#) an arms embargo on aid to Israel until it stands down against terrorists.
- [Accuses](#) Israel of “slaughtering children” in Gaza and “waging war on civilians.”
- [Pledged](#) to use “every bit of U.S. leverage” on Israel to force it to stop striking Hamas.
- [Claimed](#) there is “evidence” of genocide in Gaza, accusing U.S. of complicity.
- [Accused](#) Israel of restricting aid, using forced famine, and collective punishment in Gaza.

Backwards on Terrorism



- [Accused](#) Trump of launching a “forever war” by striking Iran to deny it a nuclear weapon.
- [Opposed](#) imposing U.S. travel restrictions on countries with high incidents of terrorism.
- [Claimed](#) that striking Iran was somehow “the single best way to empower” its regime.
- [Argues](#) America somehow harmed Iran’s pro-democracy forces by striking its repressors.
- [Ignored](#) the gunman’s Iranian flag and Islamic hoodie in Austin’s mass shooting.

China’s Buddy in Texas



- [Condemned](#) calling COVID-19 the “China Virus” as racism against Chinese nationals.
- [Voted](#) against a bill stopping certain Chinese nationals buying farmland and real estate.
- [Opposed](#) efforts to prevent state entities from investing in CCP-controlled companies.
- [Encouraged](#) “sister-city relationships” with China, despite later flipping after the vote.



POLARIS Verdict | *Talarico casts himself as moderate but promotes far-left policies of retreat that double down on Obama and Biden’s failures. His radical stances are a roadmap for leaving Texas weaker, America vulnerable, and a dangerous world.*





CONCLUSION

The record is clear. When confronted with the national security issues of our time, **these candidates repeatedly demonstrate poor judgment and a lack of preparedness** to meet the challenges facing the nation. From Texas to Michigan, and across all the battleground states in between, these candidates are not up to the responsibilities of governing and policymaking on which the American people depend.

This moment demands leaders prepared to lead with strength and moral clarity.

The United States needs a Congress that will work with President Trump and his Administration to advance a Peace Through Strength agenda—not hamper it. Lawmakers play an indispensable role in securing our borders, strengthening America’s defenses, and ensuring the United States has the resources and resolve necessary to protect Americans from our adversaries abroad.

This slate of candidates would take the country in the opposite direction. They would work to unravel the Trump Administration’s successes and undo its hard work repairing the damage caused by Biden’s disastrous foreign policy.

America’s national security is too important to entrust to these candidates. **Their words and deeds point toward a weaker, poorer, and more vulnerable America.**

