

POLITICS

Senate Democrats are making a late push in red-leaning states as they try to hold majority



BY KEVIN FREKING

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats looking to [preserve their Senate majority](#) in the face of a difficult election cycle announced Thursday they were making a “multi-million dollar investment” in television advertising in Texas and Florida races with the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee saying he’s “very confident there’s going to be more coming.”

Sen. Gary Peters, chair of the DSCC, discussed the new spending during an appearance at the National Press Club. Peters declined to be more specific about the amount of money the committee will invest in the two Republican-leaning states, but emphasized that the investment won’t come at the expense of Sen. [Jon Tester](#) of Montana, who is viewed as the most vulnerable Democratic incumbent seeking office.

“There is no world that you can conceive of that I’m not going to be in the Montana race to the very end,” Peters said. “Jon Tester will have everything that he needs to win.”

The Texas race features Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, who is seeking a third term against Rep. Colin Allred. Cruz won his last race by less than three percentage points with 51% of the vote. The Florida race features Sen.

Rick Scott., who is seeking his second term against former Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell. Scott won his race six years ago with 50% of the vote.

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Democrats hold a slim majority but are likely to lose a seat in West Virginia now that Sen. Joe Manchin is retiring. Republicans would only need to flip one more seat to take the majority and much of their focus is on Montana, which former President Donald Trump won by more than 16 percentage points four years ago. There, Republican Tim Sheehy is hoping to [unseat Tester](#), who is completing his third term in the Senate.

Philip Letsou, a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee, responded to Peters' announcement by saying it was "effectively an admission from Chuck Schumer and the DSCC that Jon Tester, who is polling very badly, looks like a lost cause."

He went on to criticize the two Democratic challengers, saying "Allred and Mucarsel-Powell are bad fits for Florida and Texas, and voters will reject them."

Peters cited the close wins that Cruz and Scott experienced six years ago in explaining the decision to go on the offense in the Republican-leaning states.

"Ted Cruz's numbers are worse now than they were when he ran last time," Peters said. "In Florida, Rick Scott has run several statewide races, and even when he has a wind at his back with a strong Republican year, he's never won by just a hair over one point."

Democrats are also hoping a Florida referendum on abortion will benefit Democratic candidates on the ballot. Florida law currently bans most abortions after [six weeks](#) of pregnancy, before many women even know they are pregnant. If approved by 60% of voters, the [ballot initiative](#) known as Amendment 4 would ensure that abortions are legal until the fetus is viable, as determined by the patient's health care provider.

Peters said data was "definitely showing some great momentum" for Democrats in Florida.

"We expect there's a lot of upside, particularly when folks get to know our candidates better," Peters said. "It's pretty powerful in terms of the numbers, so we made the decision that we've got to start investing."