



MARIA'S LIST

Maria Jobin-Leeds
DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION

CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT June 2020

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As past Rivera Consulting, Inc. analysis has shown, college-educated voters have been highly motivated throughout the Democratic primary cycle, accounting for record turnout across several demographically distinct states. While vote share for people of color has primarily remained static or slightly below average, this environment presents a distinct opportunity to boost the political power of regions, districts, and communities that will benefit from motivated college-educated Democratic turnout.

For the remainder of this year, Maria's List will continue its strategy of funding the Southern progressive candidates and movement organizations that will deliver the turnout needed to elect Democrats to the White House, Congress, and state legislatures in November. Based on our deep democracy 2.0 research findings, the focus for the General election will be the following top five deep democracy states - Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas.

By identifying congressional districts and county-level down-ballot races within these targeted states, progressive donors will be better able to intentionally boost turnout amongst people of color while benefiting from self-motivated college-educated voters in the 2020 cycle. We will take this data to prioritize US Senate and Congressional races, as well as to inform county and down ballot research for candidates and movement organizations. By focusing our efforts on bolstering the turnout of people of color in these targeted regions, we can increase the viability of women and women of color candidates at all levels of the ballot. This will ultimately benefit Democrats at the U.S. Senate and Presidential level who will rely on people of color to put them over the top in closely contested races.

To learn more about our research framework, click [here](#).

New Mexico Primary Summary

Tuesday, June 2nd was unequivocally an historic night for progressive women of color in the state of New Mexico. While the state features a Democratic supermajority in the legislature, the New Mexico state house has seen years of stagnation and active hostility regarding issues of reproductive and environmental justice. In particular the State Senate, with four-year terms, had become a poster child for the ills of incumbency. The primary elections held on Tuesday dealt a crushing blow to those ills, with progressive women of color delivering decisive victories over Democratic incumbents in the State Senate.

DONATE to NEOMI



Noemi Martinez-Parra, New Mexico State Senate 35 Progressive Democratic Pick Up

Democratic Primary Election: June 2, 2020

Noemi Martinez-Parra, an early Maria's List endorsee in 2019, captured the most stunning upset of the evening, defeating thirty-two-year incumbent John Smith in Senate District 35. As Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Smith is considered perhaps the most powerful legislature in state government. His anti-choice and pro-austerity positions made him infamous within progressive circles. With his financial power and industry connections, Smith raised over \$80,000 in 2020, and entered the final weeks of the election with over \$100,000 in his campaign account. **Martinez-Parra**, driven by grassroots energy, defeated Smith with only \$35,000 raised over the entirety of the campaign. Her victory is emblematic of the historic gains made in the Senate on Tuesday.

DONATE to MELISSA



Melissa Ontiveros, New Mexico State Senate 31 Progressive Democratic Pick Up

Democratic Primary Election: June 2, 2020

In one of the few disappointing results of the evening, challenger **Melissa Ontiveros** was easily defeated by sitting State Senator John Cervantes. **Ontiveros** struggled to fundraise in the final two months of the campaign, only raising \$1,300. The district itself had a paltry turnout rate of only 20%, well below the statewide average of 37%. This was most likely due to a lack of passion for unseating Cervantes, who is generally well-liked in Democratic circles. The district is also 80% Hispanic, a potential red flag for Hispanic voter enthusiasm in rural New Mexico for the rest of the 2020 election cycle.

[Brenda McKenna](#), [Siah Correa Hamphill](#), [Pamela Cordova](#), and [Carrie Hamblen](#) were not Maria's List candidate, but played a critical role in the historic progressive victories in New Mexico.

Along with Martinez-Parra, Carrie Hamblen scored perhaps the other biggest upset of the evening, defeating Senate President Pro Tem Mary Papen. Like others, Hamblen ran against Papen's opposition to the repeal of the state's 1969 abortion ban. Papen received much of her campaign funds from industry, including oil behemoth Chevron. Hamblen was driven by small donor donations as well as pro-choice political action committees.

A win for these mostly first-time women candidates who are ideologically left running to defeat these mostly male Democrats who lean more to the right could be a shift in New Mexico politics, according to [political analyst Lonna Atkeson](#), a political science professor at the University of New Mexico.

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Texas Primary Recap

The biggest winner of the March 4th was voter turnout. 2.2 million voters went to the polls on Super Tuesday, yielding a 50.1% increase in voter turnout from the 2016 primary. While not all of the women of color running were victorious, their contributions to voter turnout are remarkable.

Yet, Texas yielded a mixed bag of progressive victories on its March 4th primary. Gina Ortiz Jones won her primary for the Texas 23rd open seat, but incumbent challenger Jessica Cisneros lost her Representative Henry Cuellar. In the Senate primary, Cristina Ramirez did not advance to the July run off with establishment darling MJ Hager. Joe Biden [also swept the state, receiving 34.5% of the vote](#). However, if democrats in Texas are this activated for their primary, the possibility of a blue swing this November seems within reach.

DONATE to JESSICA



Jessica Cisneros, TX-28
Progressive Dem Pick Up
Election: March 3, 2020

Texas's 21st Congressional District was one of the most highly anticipated democratic primaries of the season. Representative Cuellar is viewed as one of the last remaining democrats of his kind. Not only is he pro-life, but takes [hundreds of thousands of dollars from privatized corrections companies, and the oil and gas industry](#). **Jessica Cisneros**, thought to be the Alex Occasio Cortez of the 2020 cycle, ran on a platform that centered Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, and immigration reform. While she may have come up short, losing by 2,690 votes, Representative Cuellar's small margin of victory shows there is a path forward for progressive's leadership in Laredo, Rio Grande Valley, and San Antonio.

This race was a showdown between the establishment wing of the Democratic party, and it's rising progressive coalition; money was a crucial factor. **Cisneros** raised \$1.3 million by the March 4th primary, and received the national endorsement of Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Bernie Sanders, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, and Congresswoman Occasio - Cortez. However, Representative Cuellar was well prepared for his re-election, [entering 2019 with \\$2,545,003 cash on hand, and raising an additional \\$1.8 million during the cycle. Throughout the two year cycle](#), Representative Cuellar spent [\\$1.2 million on television ads](#) that framed **Jessica Cisneros** as wanting to "[provide abortions to minors](#)", and of being funded from outside of Texas.

Representative Cuellar was [endorsed by the DCCC](#), Representative Cher Bustos, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, both of whom came down to the district the weekend before the election. He was the top priority in incumbency protection. Additionally, Representative Cuellar became the first democrat to receive funding from Americans for Prosperity, a conservative PAC affiliated with the Koch family. They spent [\\$75,000 supporting Cuellar on television](#). The Koch family wasn't the only outside group who invested in this race. Bankers Association, the U.S. The Chamber of Commerce, and a new group called American Workers for Progress,

all spent money on behalf of Representative Cuellar in the district [in the last month of the campaign](#).

Total turnout in the congressional primary totaled 74,684 voters, a 34% increase from the 2016 primary which saw a perfunctory challenge to Cuellar. **Cisneros** ultimately lost in Webb County, where the county seat is Laredo. Both **Cisneros** and Representative Cuellar are from Laredo, and claimed it as where their base of support lived. Ultimately, [Representative Cuellar was able to earn 2,953 additional votes](#) from the county, more or less clinching his re-election. Notably, the **Cisneros** campaign overwhelmingly won in San Antonio, Bexar county. This was an area they identified as their expansion electorate, and a priority organizing area for the Texas Organizing Project.

This won't be the last of **Jessica Cisneros** - the 26 year old immigration attorney remains active in the district, and has not ruled out the possibility of running again. In light of Marie Newman's victory over Dan Lipinski on her second try, and Gina Ortiz Jones 2018 opponent retiring, losing a primary challenge to an incumbent is no longer a political career dead end.

DONATE to CRISTINA



**Cristina Tzintzun-Ramirez, TX U.S. Senate
Red to Blue Race**

**Democratic Primary: March 3rd, 2020
General Election: – November 3rd, 2020**

Maria's List endorsed candidate Cristina **Tzintzun-Ramirez** narrowly missed the Senate primary runoff, earning just 13.2% of the vote in the March 4th primary. In a crowded twelve person field, **Tzintzún-Ramirez** lost to MJ Hager and State Senator Royce

West both of whom had advantages over first time candidate **Tzintzún-Ramirez**. Hager was endorsed by the DSCC, and was able to raise [3.5 million dollars](#) ahead of the primary. State Senator Royce West has represented Dallas for over a decade, and [has prided himself on being a "Dallas king maker" in Democratic politics](#). Despite her deep roots in movement organizing, accrued from founding JOLT Texas, and raising 1.1 million dollars, **Tzintzún-Ramirez** was unable to overcome these two establishment candidates.

The presidential primaries may also have been a roadblock for a progressive candidate like **Tzintzún-Ramirez**. After winning South Carolina, [Biden also upped his presence in the Texas with a small Super Tuesday TV ad buy](#) and public events in both Houston and Dallas - both of which turned [out in major numbers](#). Democrats moved to vote for Biden were more likely to not only vote for more moderate candidates, but also Democrats they have heard of. Given State Senator Royce's long standing participation in Texas democratic politics, and MJ Hager's high profile 2018 Congressional race, for Democratic primary voters, their name ID may have been higher.

Tzintzun-Ramirez has thrown her support behind State Senator West because of his ability to "build a multiracial coalition that speaks to the diversity of this

state." However, MJ Hager is favored to win, [having raised 4.8 million dollars as of April 2020](#).

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DONATE to GINA



Gina Ortiz Jones, TX-23

Preliminary Election: March 3rd, 2020

General Election: November 3rd, 2020

After losing her 2018 election by 900 votes to incumbent Representative Will Hurd, **Gina Ortiz Jones** has won her 2020 primary and will move on to fight for the open seat in November. Texas's 23rd Congressional District from ["Toss Up" to "Lean Democratic" on Cook Report](#) after Rep. Will Hurd announced he would not seek reelection in 2020. While [polls show Jones with a 2% point advantage](#) over then anticipated Republican candidate, the race will still be close and **Gina** will need financial support. **Gina** continues to be a top priority of EMILY's List and the DCCC, with Speaker Pelosi attending virtual fundraising events. As of March 2020, **Gina** has raised over 3.2 million dollars. [Donate to Gina via ActBlue](#). [Visit Gina's website](#).