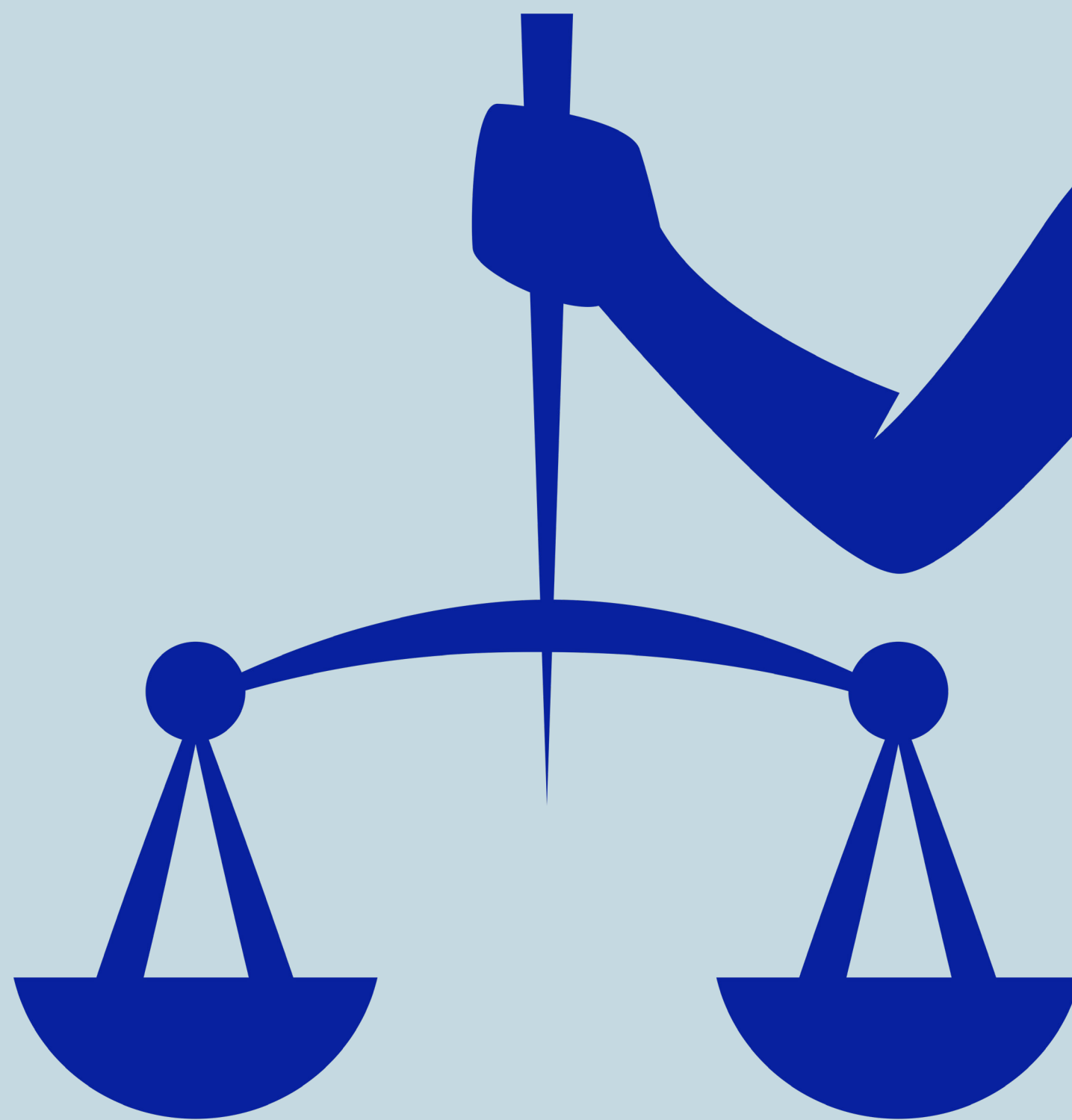


**MICHIGAN**  
**MINNESOTA**  
**NEBRASKA**  
**NEVADA**  
**NEW MEXICO**



50 State



# **AG POWER PLAY**

## **THE CONTENDERS**

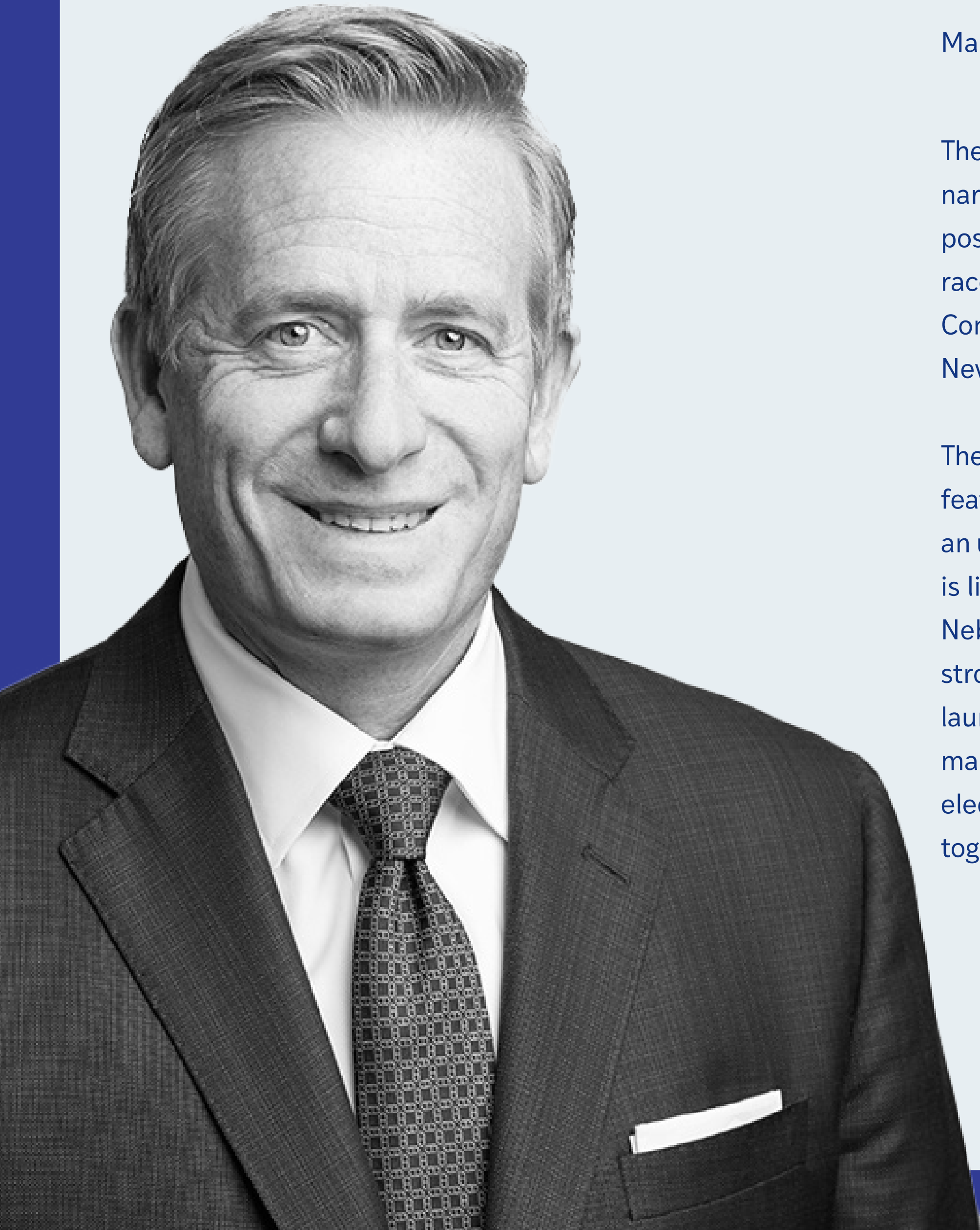
March 28, 2025

The constitutional tug-of-war between the Executive and Judicial branches has reshaped the political and litigious narrative surrounding the initial actions of the Trump Administration. Now more than ever, State Attorneys General possess unprecedented power to transform both state and national policy landscapes. The 30 State Attorneys General races in the 2025-2026 cycle will have real-world impact for businesses and organizations. Our AG Power Play: The Contenders series from the HB Strategies 50 State Team continues its analysis with Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, and New Mexico.

These five races showcase how term limits and open seats create ripple effects across electoral arenas. Michigan will feature a rare political reshuffling as AG Dana Nessel (D) reaches her term limit and eyes the open Senate race, creating an unprecedented scenario where every state office will be open simultaneously. While Minnesota AG Keith Ellison (D) is likely to run for re-election, national and state political forces could reshuffle the state's entire political landscape. Nebraska offers a stark contrast with AG Mike Hilgers (R), who has a likely uncontested re-election in the Republican stronghold. Nevada demonstrates the competitive nature of purple-state politics as term-limited AG Aaron Ford (D) launches a gubernatorial challenge against incumbent Joe Lombardo (R), leaving an open AG seat where razor-thin margins have decided the last nine statewide races. Meanwhile, New Mexico's AG Raul Torrez (D) is focused on re-election despite an open governor's race. These races illustrate the distinct political character of each state, which together, will significantly influence legal and regulatory frameworks across the United States.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN





# MICHIGAN

Elective politics will be front and center in Michigan during the 2026 election cycle. With Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) being term-limited and Sen. Gary Peters (D) announcing he will not seek re-election means Michigan will host an open Governor and Senator campaign together for the first time in the modern political era. Additionally, all of the state's constitutional officers, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General, are also term-limited meaning every statewide office will be running in open seat status.

Attorney General Nessel (D) cannot succeed herself and is looking toward the open US Senate race. Lt. Governor Garlin Gilcrest (D) and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson (D) are headed for the Governor's campaign. Ms. Benson is already an announced gubernatorial candidate, and Mr. Gilcrest is scheduled to soon declare his own bid for Governor.

At this point, no one in either party has entered an open Attorney General's campaign, but it is a sure bet that we will at least see several state legislators and local district attorneys vying for the office.

With so many campaigns from which to choose, Michigan politics will take some time to decipher. It is probable that Gov. Whitmer sits out the 2026 election in order to prepare a presidential run in 2028.

In the Senate, it is likely Ms. Nessel will at least face former US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg for the Democratic nomination, and likely others. Former US Representative and 2024 US Senate nominee Mike Rogers (R) is also strongly considered to be preparing another Senatorial bid.

We can expect many moving pieces and fast paced changes in the Michigan electoral races this year. The Wolverine State will be one of the premier political battlefields in the 2026 election cycle.

## INCUMBENT: Dana Nessel (D)

FIRST ELECTED: 2018

VICTORY PERCENTAGE: 49%

RE-ELECTED 2022: 53.2%

### OUTLOOK:

**AG Nessel is ineligible to seek a third term and likely to run for the state's open US Senate seat. Therefore, we will see an open Attorney General's race in 2026.**



Previous Five Attorneys General: 3 Democrats; 2 Republicans

Previous Five AGs Advancing to Governor or Senator: 1; Michigan has had 54 Attorneys General, and only 2 have been women.

The only recent AG to serve as Governor and later US Energy Department Secretary is Jennifer Granholm (D).

Trump 2024 %: Carried Michigan with 49.7% to Kamala Harris' 48.3%

Presidential History: Michigan has voted for the Democratic presidential nominee in 7 of the past 13 elections since 1976. Last

time voting for a Republican presidential nominee: 2024: Donald Trump

Michigan Primary: August 4, 2026



# MINNESOTA

U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D) surprisingly announcing her retirement has changed Minnesota's political dynamics for 2026.

Several Democrats are already looking to run for what is now an open Senate race. Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan (D) was the first to declare for the Senate even before Governor and 2024 Vice Presidential nominee Tim Walz (D) had decided not to run. It is likely the Governor will instead seek a third term. It is also probable that US Rep. Angie Craig (D-Prior Lake) will enter the open Senate race.

Should Gov. Walz run for a third term, and the Senate draw top contenders, Attorney General Keith Ellison (D) is likely to stand for a third term. He remains a controversial figure just as he was during his tenure in the US House of Representatives for staking out the far left faction of the Democratic Party. AG Ellison indicated publicly that he is looking at the Senate race, but it is a better than even bet that he will remain in his current position. Mr. Ellison's status could change, however, if Gov. Walz suddenly decides to retire.

In 2022, AG Ellison had a close call against business lawyer Jim Schultz who launched his first run for public office as an unknown. He was able to secure the party endorsement and then won the Republican primary against better known opponents. Mr. Schultz is now said to be considering the Governor's race but could make a return appearance as the Attorney General nominee.

The Minnesota political situation will settle when the Senate field stabilizes, and Gov. Walz officially makes his electoral plans public. At that point, races for the other statewide offices, including Attorney General, will form.

Previous Five Attorneys General: 5 Democrats

Previous Five AGs Advancing to Higher Office: 1; The most prominent historical figure to once occupy the Minnesota Attorney General's office is former Vice President and US Senator Walter Mondale

Trump 2024 %: Lost Minnesota with 46.7% to Kamala Harris' 50.9%

Presidential History: Minnesota has voted for the Democratic presidential nominee in all 13 elections since 1976.

Last time voting for a Republican presidential nominee: 1972: Richard Nixon

Minnesota Primary: August 11, 2026

## INCUMBENT: Keith Ellison (D)

FIRST ELECTED: 2018

VICTORY PERCENTAGE: 49%

RE-ELECTED 2022: 50.4%

OUTLOOK:

AG Ellison is eligible to run for a third term but says he is open to running for the U.S. Senate.





# NEBRASKA

With Gov. Jim Pillen (R) and Sen. Pete Ricketts (R) both on the ballot for re-election, it appears that Nebraska will host a quiet 2026 election cycle. Therefore, we can expect little in the way of primary or general election opposition for Attorney General Mike Hilgers (R) who won by a better than 2:1 margin in 2022.

AG Hilgers won his statewide post in 2022 and did not even face a Democratic opponent in the open general election. Mr. Hilgers overwhelmingly defeated a candidate from the Legal Marijuana Now Party. Earlier in his career, Mr. Hilgers lost close elections for both the unicameral legislature and Attorney General. He rebounded in 2016 to win a seat in the state Senate from the north Lincoln area and was re-elected in 2020. He would later become the unicameral body's Speaker.

With no perceived major opponent on the political horizon, AG Hilgers will have an easy run for re-election, and possibly stand unopposed for re-election.

## INCUMBENT: Mike Hilgers (R)

FIRST ELECTED: 2022

VICTORY PERCENTAGE: 69.7%

### OUTLOOK:

AG Hilgers, in his first term, is eligible to run for re-election and is expected to do so.



Previous Five Attorneys General: 5 Republicans

Previous Five AGs Advancing to Governor or Senator: None

Trump 2024 %: Carried Nebraska with 59.3% to Kamala Harris' 38.9%

Presidential History: Nebraska has voted for the Republican presidential nominee in 15 consecutive elections. In 2008 and 2024, the 2nd District voted Democratic even though the state voted Republican.

Last time voting for a Democratic presidential nominee: 1964: Lyndon Johnson

Nebraska Primary: anticipated date May 12, 2026



# NEVADA

Two-term Attorney General Aaron Ford (D) is ineligible to seek re-election, so he has decided to launch a challenge to Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo. Since Nevada is now purple for all statewide elections, the Governor's race will be competitive.

In the 2024 election, President Trump carried Nevada for his first time in his three races. The last time Nevada previously voted for a Republican presidential candidate came in 2004 with President George W. Bush's re-election. In '24, the two parties split the statewide elections (Trump won as a Republican; Sen. Jacky Rosen re-elected as a Democrat). Two years earlier, Democrats won four of the statewide constitutional offices and Republicans three. Therefore, the idea of Nevada being ensconced as a swing state has a credible foundation.

AG Ford was twice elected to the state Senate and became the party's floor leader. He won his first statewide term with only plurality support but rebounded with a majority 52% in 2022. In fact, Mr. Ford's electoral percentage was the highest of any Nevada statewide winner of either party in the 2022 election. In just one of the other six statewide electoral contests did the victorious individual, State Controller candidate Andy Matthews (D), break the 50% mark and he did so with a mere 50.1% of the vote. The remaining five election winners secured their statewide office with plurality support.

In succeeding Mr. Ford, we can expect another seriously competitive open seat Nevada race. At this point, however, no one has yet come forward to indicate they are considering entering the open Attorney General's position.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson (D) would clearly be in position to run, and he must be considered as a potential candidate. Expect this race to have multiple candidates in both parties, but Clark County political figures will dominate the statewide field. A total of 73.1% of the state's residents live in Clark County according to the latest available US Census data.

Previous Five Attorneys General: 3 Democrats; 2 Republicans

Previous Five AGs Advancing to Governor or Senator: 2; Catherine Cortez Masto (D) is currently a US Senator and Brian Sandoval (R) was elected Governor

Trump 2024 %: Carried Nevada with 50.6% to Kamala Harris' 47.5%

Presidential History: Nevada has voted for the Republican presidential nominee in 7 of the past 13 elections.

Last time voting for a Democratic presidential nominee: 2020: Joe Biden

Nevada Primary: June 9, 2026

# HB

STRATEGIES

50 State

## INCUMBENT: Aaron Ford (D)

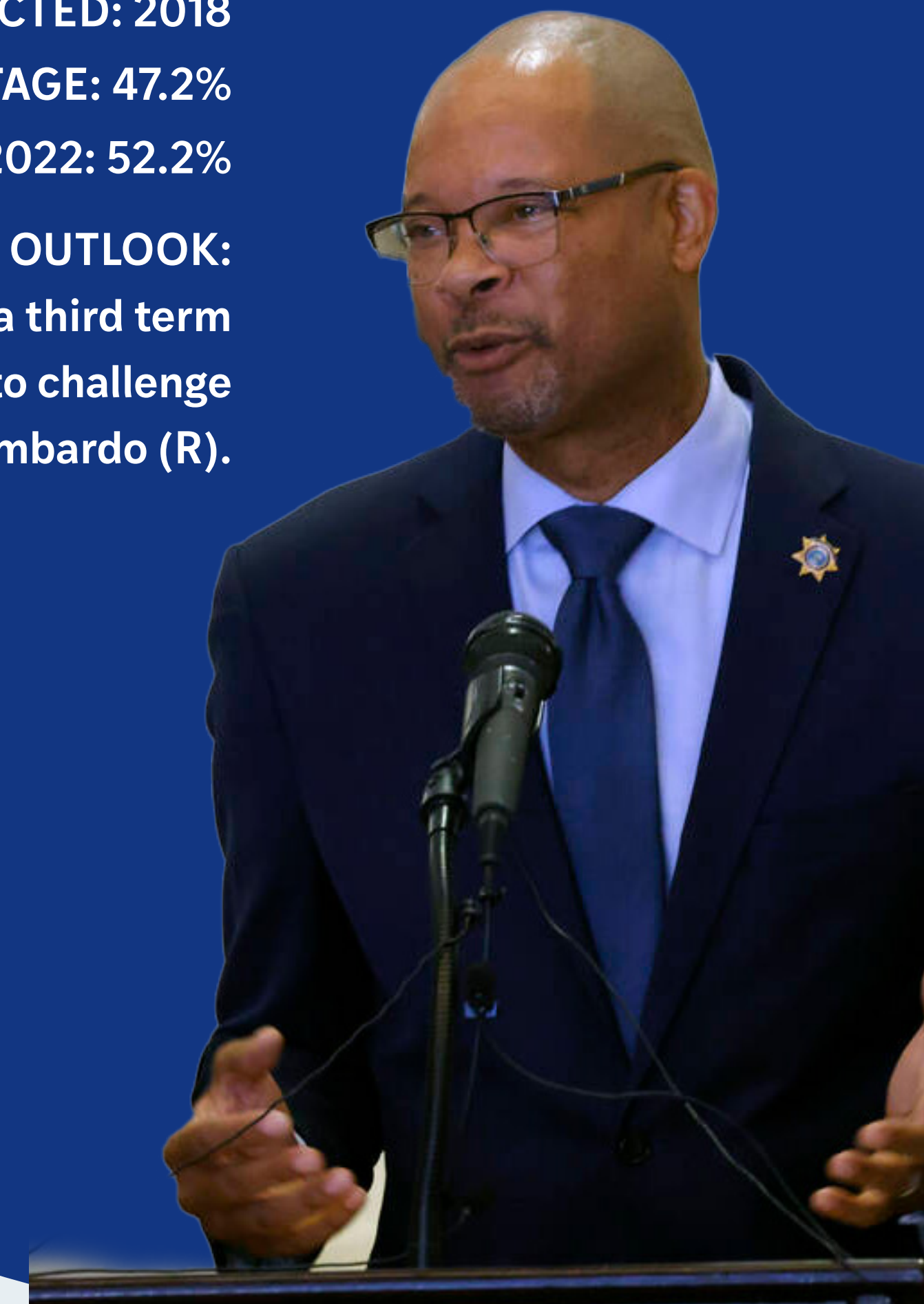
FIRST ELECTED: 2018

VICTORY PERCENTAGE: 47.2%

RE-ELECTED 2022: 52.2%

OUTLOOK:

**AG Ford is ineligible to run for a third term and has announced plans to challenge Gov. Joe Lombardo (R).**





# NEW MEXICO

Despite New Mexico hosting an open Governor's race and a US Senate campaign, a relatively quiet political year is still expected.

Gov. Michelle Grisham Lujan (D) is ineligible to seek a third term and former US Interior Secretary, and ex-New Mexico Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D) appears to hold the inside track for both the Democratic gubernatorial nomination and the general election.

Recently, former Las Cruces Mayor Ken Miyagishima (D) formed a gubernatorial exploratory committee, but he will not likely become a major impediment to Ms. Haaland securing the party nomination.

Attorney General Raul Torrez (D) was elected to his current position in 2022 with a 55-45% victory margin over Republican Jeremy Gay. Mr. Torrez, then a two-term Bernalillo County District Attorney, defeated State Auditor Brian Colon in the Democratic primary.

Aside from the Governor's office, the Lt. Governor and Secretary of State are both term-limited. The current Attorney General, State Auditor, and State Treasurer are all eligible to seek re-election.

Mr. Torrez, a career criminal justice attorney, should have little trouble winning re-election. He has made no move to enter the Governor's race at this point in the election cycle but certainly could do so in succeeding elections. For now, count on Mr. Torrez having an easy political run in 2026.

## INCUMBENT: Raul Torrez (D)

FIRST ELECTED: 2022

VICTORY PERCENTAGE: 55.3%

### OUTLOOK:

Though the Governorship is open due to term limits, AG Torrez appears intent on seeking re-election.



Previous Five Attorneys General: 5 Democrats

Previous Five AGs Advancing to Governor or Senator: 1; Tom Udall (D) was elected US Senator

Trump 2024 %: Lost New Mexico with 45.8% to Kamala Harris' 51.8%

Presidential History: New Mexico has voted for the Democratic presidential nominee in 8 of 13 elections and the last five consecutively.

Last time voting for a Republican presidential nominee: 2004: George W. Bush

New Mexico Primary: date pending





## Andy Blunt

*Executive Chairman  
Chief Executive Officer*

As a founding partner, Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of HB Strategies, Andy has helped build a trusted national brand for federal and state lobbying with revenues and a client base to match. While Andy is leading the firm with its remarkable growth trajectory, clients continue to turn to him for help managing a crisis, polishing a brand, and understanding how government works and how to make it work for them. Andy advises top executives in boardrooms across the country and political candidates and elected leaders at all levels of government. He is a trusted advisor nationally whose extensive network of personal relationships is built on his lifelong immersion in politics and public policy. A tireless advocate, Andy has helped companies of all sizes successfully navigate complex legislative and regulatory environments and is consistently recognized as one of Washington’s “Top Lobbyists” by national media.



## Rochelle Mallett

*Executive Vice President  
State Government Affairs*

As Executive Vice President, State Government Affairs, Rochelle manages the firm’s network of state lobbying offices in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. HB Strategies clients benefit from Rochelle’s success in coordinating and fine-tuning legislative and public strategies that are targeted to specific client needs. She achieves significant outcomes through her careful approach to detailed strategies and an extensive national network of public policy and elected leaders - ultimately establishing trusted relationships on behalf of HBS clients. Earlier in her career she served as a legislative aide to U.S. Senator Deb Fischer.



## Dustin Brighton

*Managing Principal*

Dusty is a widely recognized expert in consumer privacy and anti-trust issues representing e-commerce and tech name brands like eBay and Microsoft. He has established a network of trusted relationships and credibility with elected leaders and influencers across the nation on issues such as privacy, net neutrality, and Section 230 liability protections. Dusty has also represented companies as members of industry trade associations and groups such as the National Association of Attorneys General, National Governors Association, and the Democratic and Republican Legislative Campaign Committees.



## Beverly Haydel

*Senior Advisor*

Beverly has more than a decade of experience working in both the private, public and nonprofit sectors. She has particular expertise in project management, coalition building, stakeholder engagement, public outreach, issue advocacy, policy development and legislative strategy. Beverly earlier served as Director of Civic Leadership Initiatives at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation where she managed the Foundation’s long-term projects throughout the greater Baton Rouge area. She began her career at Goldman Sachs as an Investment Banking Analyst based out of the company’s New York City headquarters.



## Maddie McMillian Green

*Deputy General Counsel for Contracting  
Principal*

An experienced attorney and successful advocate, Maddie recently served as Deputy Attorney General for Policy in the Missouri Attorney General’s Office. She advised the Attorney General on policy and legislation as well as developed and managed the office’s outreach initiatives. She previously served as Assistant Attorney General for Special Litigation, handling high-profile litigation at the state and federal level. Maddie began her career in the Missouri Governor’s Office, serving two governors and working closely with the executive cabinet. Maddie earlier served as chief of staff to the First Lady in the Missouri Governor’s Office, where she worked closely with the governor’s policy and legislative teams on issues including foster care, adoption, and child welfare advocacy.



## Carrie Hackenberger

*Principal*

Carrie is an experienced public policy advocate whose skill in the legislative process guides clients through complex challenges and creates valuable opportunities. She earlier served as Associate Director of the American Petroleum Institute Colorado where she helped lead the organization’s legislative and policy efforts across the state. Carrie was an effective advocate for the state’s oil and natural gas industry whether it was through regulatory proceedings or guiding legislative strategies in the General Assembly.



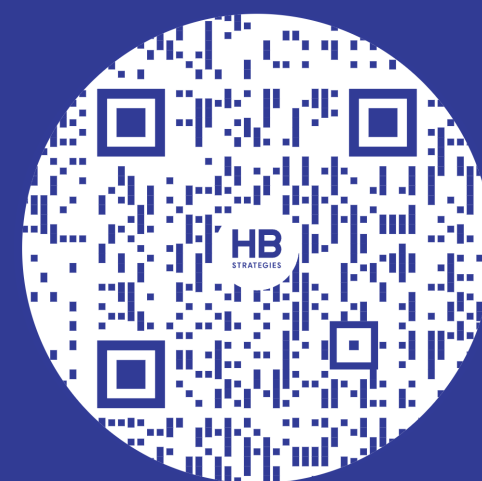
## Bradley Cooper

*Policy Associate*

Bradley assists teams of the federal practice group with research and readiness for client projects. He completed a term as a Fellow with the HB Strategies Federal team in the summer of 2024. Earlier he operated a successful Missouri-based consulting practice. Bradley studied socio-political communication at Missouri State University and was appointed the student representative to the school’s Board of Governors by Missouri Governor Mike Parson.



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