



## Democrats Say Heavily Republican 7th Congressional District Could Go Either Way

NJ political pundits predict fireworks in the 3rd, which could be the closest House race in the state this year

By **Colleen O'Dea**, **September 12, 2012** in **More Issues**

With the national party conventions over, the focus turns to congressional races, and the election season has already delivered one surprise to New Jersey.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has put the 7th District, currently represented by Republican Leonard Lance, on its list of 20 "emerging races" across the country, meaning it is one that the DCCC believes has the potential to become competitive.

That move came as a surprise, because there are about 30,000 more registered Republicans than Democrats in the sprawling district, which covers Hunterdon County and portions of Essex, Morris, Somerset, Union, and Warren counties. What's more, Lance, seeking his third term, won in 2010 with nearly 60 percent of the vote.

"The addition of my campaign to this list is a reflection of the hard work of our volunteers and the aggressive campaign that we have run," said Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula (D-Middlesex) and Lance's main opponent.

Already on the committee's **50 Red to Blue Races**, districts the Democrats are seeking to win from the GOP, is South Jersey's 3rd, which has seesawed between the parties over the last three elections. U.S. Rep. Jon Runyan, a former pro football player and Republican, won two years ago, defeating incumbent John Adler, a Democrat, who had two years earlier won the seat when Republican Rep. Jim Saxton retired. Adler's widow Shelley Adler, a lawyer, is opposing Runyan this year.

New Jersey political observers see the 3rd as likely to be the closest House race in the state this year.

"One-termer Congressman Runyan benefits from incumbency and a favorable outcome from redistricting," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the **William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton State College**. "CD3 is still a close district. Shelly Adler benefits from name recognition, reasonable amount of campaign resources, and perhaps some help from the top of the ticket."

Douglas is referring to this year's presidential race and President Barack Obama's expected win in New Jersey. Last week, a Quinnipiac University poll of likely voters had the president getting support from 51 percent of those surveyed to 44 percent for Republican Mitt Romney, while in late August the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll had Obama ahead 51-37.

Similarly, U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, a Hudson County Democrat in his seventh year in the upper house, holds a 47-35 lead over state Sen. Joseph Kyrillos (R-Monmouth), according to the **latest Rutgers poll**, while Quinnipiac gives Menendez 50 percent to 40 percent for Kyrillos.

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