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SPOTLIGHT

The Hegseth Dominos

If the embattled defense secretary run for Tennessee governor, he could shakeup multiple races.

By Kirk A. Bado

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth privately discussed running to replace term-limited Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee (R), according to a bombshell report from NBC News.

The discussions started “within the past three weeks and that it was serious, not simply spitballing ideas,” according to the report. Hegseth would have to meet certain residency requirements (a citizen of Tennessee for seven years before the election) to qualify for the ballot and the state Republican Party has its own voting requirements for potential nominees.

Tennessee GOP operatives who spoke with *Hotline* since the story dropped were surprised that Hegseth was reportedly mulling a bid. Rep. John Rose (R-06) is already running, and Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R) could launch a potential bid in the coming months. Blackburn is a staunch ally to President Trump and she’s widely considered the prohibitive favorite if she runs.

Hegseth briefly challenged Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in 2012, but withdrew from the race after failing to secure the GOP nomination at the party convention. Scandal and personnel dysfunction have plagued his tenure at the Pentagon and those controversies could be a liability on the campaign trail. One Tennessee Republican floated to *Hotline* that even if Hegseth and Blackburn both ran, the senator would still cruise to the nomination next year.

These gubernatorial trial balloons could also be a way for the embattled secretary to plot a graceful transition out of the Pentagon. This vacancy could lead to another shakeup in the Senate. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), not without her own recent controversies, is rumored to be eying the Defense secretary spot. If Trump appoints her as Hegseth’s replacement, that would open up a highly-coveted in-cycle Senate race. Rep. Ashley Hinson (R-02), a rising GOP star, could have an opportunity to run for a statewide office.

— *Kirk A. Bado*

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Quote of the Day

" Unlike many of my colleagues, I have won tough races in a swing state. " — Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) pushing back on Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), New York Times, 7/29.

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Trump says Jeffrey Epstein 'stole' young female spa employees from Mar-a-Lago

By Erika Filter

DEMOCRATS: Democrats Clash Over How to Handle Trump

Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) accused Democrats of being “complicit” with President Trump in a heated speech on the Senate floor.

- **BOOKER SAYS:** “I say we stand, I say we fight, I say we reject this. When will we stand and fight this president? When are we going to stand up as a body and defend our work, defend our jurisdiction, defend this coequal branch of government?” (*New York Times*)
- **REALITY CHECK.** On the other side of the clash, Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) said: “Unlike many of my colleagues, I have won tough races in a swing state. Standing up to Trump isn’t about long speeches, it’s about winning and then legislating and getting stuff done for the American people.” (*New York Times*)
- **AGE VERIFICATION.** Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA 03) discussed her proposed legislation that would require mental fitness evaluations for members of Congress, saying, “I think it’s good to have the full spectrum of ages,” but adding that “Congress is run by unelected staffers, and there’s a decline in confidence in the body.”
- **GLUESENKAMP PEREZ SAYS:** “It’s still important to people that it’s their elected member of Congress steering the ship and calling the shots.” (*Free Press*)

REPUBLICANS: Trump Says Epstein ‘Stole’ Young Female Spa Employees

President Trump said convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein “stole” prominent Epstein accuser Virginia Giuffre “and other young women who worked at the spa in his Mar-a-Lago club.”

- **TRUMP SAYS:** “People were taken out of the spa, hired by him. In other words, gone.” (ABC News)
- **CARING LESS.** “The flurry of criticisms” over the Trump administration’s handling of the Epstein case from within the MAGA “movement have quieted, and Trump officials say they are plotting steps to try to shape the public narrative to their advantage.” (*Washington Post*)
- **FAILURE TO LAUNCH.** Former Trump adviser Elon Musk’s “new political party is so far a no-go on the launch pad.”
- **RUMORS FADE.** Musk has not yet formally filed for the America Party, and buzz from third-party consultants has quieted. (*Axios*)

2028 WATCH: Democratic Governors Bullish on a Governor's Presidential Chances

Democratic governors are “full of swagger because they believe they’ll nominate one of their own for president, and win, in 2028.”

- **THE ROSTER.** Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro (D) and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore (D) reportedly have emerged as early favorites. Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker (D) and Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear (D) also make the list, though some governors are “skeptical either can claim a nomination and general election.” Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) “is well-liked, especially among the other women governors, but there are doubts she’ll run for president.”
- **OUTSIDER.** Governors are “less enamored with” California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D), “to put it mildly, who has never really been part of the governor’s club.”
- **HOLD YOUR HORSES.** “It can’t be emphasized enough, these are early days.” (Jonathan Martin, *Politico*)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Dems look to avoid competitive primaries in Senate battlegrounds

By Nicholas Anastácio

PRIMARY ROUNDUP: Dem Leaders, Donors Work to Squash Competitive Primaries

Democratic leaders and donors are getting involved in potentially competitive primaries in battleground states.

- **MICHIGAN.** Democratic sources told CNN that Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and his team have “privately signaled they believe” Rep. Haley Stevens (D-11) “is the strongest general election candidate” to succeed retiring Sen. Gary Peters (D) and keep the seat blue. “And two people involved in Michigan politics said” DSCC Chair Kirsten Gillibrand “has privately encouraged donors to support Stevens.”
- **AWKWARD.** Stevens faces state Sen. Mallory McMorrow (D), 2018 GOV candidate Abdul El-Sayed (D), and state Rep. Joe Tate (D) in the Democratic primary.
- **TEXAS.** Amid the GOP primary showdown between Sen. John Cornyn (R) and state Attorney General Ken Paxton (R), several Democrats are eyeing a Senate run in the Lone Star State. 2024 nominee Colin Allred (D) is currently in the race, and 2022 GOV nominee Beto O’Rourke (D) is considering a second Senate run.
- **MAKE SOME ROOM!** “Some officials and donors have sought to steer potential Senate candidates into other races,” pushing state Rep. James Talarico (D) to run for governor and Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-20) to run for state attorney general. (CNN)

ENDORSEMENT ROUNDUP: Nate Morris Scores Second Senator Endorsement

Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-OH) endorsed waste removal entrepreneur Nate Morris (R) to replace retiring Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), joining Sen. Jim Banks (R-IN). (*Politico*)

- **GEORGIA.** Rep. Mike Collins (R-10) announced more than ten state legislative endorsements for his bid against Sen. Jon Ossoff (D). The list includes state Senate Majority Leader Jason Anavitate (R) and state House Majority Whip James Burchett (R). (X/X)
- **RACKING THEM UP.** Other Republican endorsements for Collins include state Sens. Lee Anderson, Max Burns, Clint Dixon, Russ Goodman, and Shawn Still and state Reps. Beth Camp, Robert Dickey, Matthew Gambill, and Marcus Wiedower.
- **ILLINOIS.** Brady PAC, the political arm of the gun violence prevention-focused Brady Campaign, will endorse Rep. Robin Kelly (D-02) to succeed retiring Sen. Dick Durbin (D). (*Chicago Tribune*)
- **MINNESOTA.** Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) said he met with Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan (D) “a month or so” ago as she runs to succeed retiring Sen. Tina Smith (D). Sanders said he has “not made that decision” on whether to get involved in the primary. (*Minnesota Star Tribune*)
- **TEXAS.** A dozen agricultural groups in Texas, including the Texas Farm Bureau AGFUND, are backing Sen. John Cornyn (R) over state Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) in the GOP primary. The organizations collectively represent roughly 535,000 members across the state. (*Politico*)

BATTLE FOR THE SENATE: DSCC to Host Battleground State Press Conferences

The DSCC will announce a lineup of August press conferences focused on Medicaid in Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, and New Hampshire. The events will highlight the 60th anniversary of Medicaid and recent reductions to federal Medicaid spending in the GOP-backed OBBB. (*NOTUS*)

MAINE: Janet Mills Questions Her Senate Potential

Despite Democrats’ optimism that Gov. Janet Mills (D) will challenge Sen. Susan Collins (R), the term-limited governor is still undecided about entering the race. Several Democrats are considering runs against the senator, but are awaiting Mills’ decision.

- **NOT A LIFE GOAL.** “Mills said she would contact prospective candidates directly when she makes a decision,” indicating the Senate has never been a goal for her.
- **MILLS SAYS:** “I mean, look, I wasn't born with a burning desire to be in Washington, D.C.—any month of the year. ... And what's going on there is a bit chaotic. It's not something anybody would want to jump into and be a part of automatically.”
- **FRIENDLY BANTER.** Mills said former North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper’s (D) Senate run won’t pressure her to challenge Collins next year. The two are friends, and Cooper called Mills last week to tell her about his campaign. (Maine Public Radio)
- **DEM CANDIDATES.** Former congressional staffer Jordan Wood (D) is the most recognizable Democrat in the race at the moment. Brewer Dan Kleban (D) could soon join him as he hires staff for a potential run. (*Punchbowl News*)

NORTH CAROLINA: Roy Cooper Touts \$3.4M Haul in 24 Hours

Former North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper (D) said he raised \$3.4 million within 24 hours of announcing his campaign to replace retiring Sen. Thom Tillis (R) on Monday. The haul includes \$2.6 million raised to his campaign account and \$900,000 raised into joint fundraising committees with the party. (*Politico*)

- **RECORDS TO BREAK.** The race is set to be one of the most expensive of the 2026 cycle, estimated by both parties to cost \$650 to \$800 million. “That would crack the previous national record set by the 2022 Georgia Senate race, which cost nearly \$500 million.” (*Politico*)

- **PAT ON THE BACK.** Rep. Pat Harrigan (R-10) passed on a Senate bid as RNC Chairman Michael Whatley prepares to run for the seat with President Trump's blessing. Harrigan will instead run for reelection to the House. (X)
- **STILL A TOSS UP.** Despite Cooper's entry into the open race, the *Cook Political Report with Amy Walter* continues to rate the contest as a Toss Up. "In a state like North Carolina, the political environment—especially the economy and the impact of Medicaid cuts in the state—may well decide this contest by a point or so in either direction." (*Cook Political Report with Amy Walter*)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Texas Republicans unveil congressional map proposal

By James A. Downs and Amelia Monroe

TEXAS REDISTRICTING: Republicans Release New 30-8 Map

Republican legislators released the new map proposal today. The new lines aim to create five seats President Trump carried by 10 or more points, potentially giving Republicans a 30-8 edge in the congressional delegation, up from the current 25-13 split.

- **HOTLINE ANALYSIS.** At first glance, it looks like Republicans moved parts of Hidalgo County, a historically blue border county, out of Rep. Vicente Gonzalez's (D-34) seat. It's replaced with part of Rep. Michael Cloud's (R-27) seat to the north. Former President Biden carried Hidalgo County by 17 points in 2020, but Trump took it by 3 points last year. The map also takes liberal Bexar County out of Rep. Henry Cuellar's (D-28) seat, and it assumes part of Hidalgo County as well as areas in Rep. Tony Gonzales' (R-23) seat.
- **MEMBER ON MEMBER.** Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-37) and Greg Casar (D-35) are drawn into each other. Reps. Marc Veasey (D-33) and Roger Williams (R-25) are also drawn into each other. Reps. Chip Roy (R-21) and Joaquin Castro (D-20) would represent the same seat. Other member-on-member matchups could include Rep. Monica De La Cruz (R-15) with Gonzalez, Reps. Al Green (D-09) with Wesley Hunt (R-38), and Rep. Julie Johnson (D-32) with Rep. Beth Van Duyne (R-24) are also drawn into each other.
- **PRIME PICKUPS.** Cuellar and Gonzalez could be in the most danger in the Rio Grande Valley.
- **LET'S HEAR IT FOR H-TOWN.** A new seat in the Houston area would throw a wrench into the vacant TX-18, which has been open since March after Rep. Sylvester Turner (D) died.
- **BETTING THE HOUSE.** "Republicans expect there will be more majority Hispanic districts in the new map proposal than there are in the current one. They're making a big bet that the rightward shift of Latino voters seen in November is here to stay."
- **BY THE NUMBERS.** Trump would have won three of the new seats by 10 points, one by 16 points, and another by 18 points. (*Punchbowl News*)
- **SEE FOR YOURSELF.** The new map can be seen here. For a comparison of the current lines, look here.
- **NOW SHOWING.** The Democratic-aligned House Majority Forward is boosting a liberal outside group's ads in TX-02, TX-05, TX-15, and TX-24 with a six-figure investment. "It's the opening salvo of the Lone Star Fund, which is expected to deploy upward of \$20 million in spending before Election Day 2026." The ads focus on health care cuts as part of the GOP budget bill. (*Politico/Hotline* reporting)

REDISTRICTING ROUNDUP: Democrats Look to Narrow Options to Respond

New Jersey is unlikely to pursue changes to its congressional map due to time constraints. The New Jersey Constitution forbids mid-cycle redistricting, meaning Democrats would need to get an amendment on the ballot.

- **LEGAL HURDLE.** The same constitution also requires amendments “be published in newspapers in each county ‘not less than three months prior to submission to the people.’ That would create a deadline of Aug. 4, or Monday.
- **ANOTHER LEGAL HURDLE.** Moreover, that very same constitution requires lawmakers to wait 20 days after introducing an amendment before holding a public hearing. Then legislators can vote to put it on the ballot. It seems plausible that the only possible way to accomplish this plan would be to delay the Nov. 4 election.
- **POLITICAL HURDLE.** Democrats already hold a 9-3 advantage in the congressional delegation, meaning any changes could be a political risk. (*New Jersey Playbook*)
- **CALIFORNIA DREAMIN’.** Meanwhile, in the Golden State, California Attorney General Rob Bonta (D) said the Legislature could pass new maps and then have voters decide in a special election to affirm them or not. Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) has been public about responding to Texas’ push to redraw, but California uses an independent commission, which makes a mid-decade redraw nearly impossible. Bonta said this plan would be defensible in court. (KCRA)
- **HOOSIER CANDIDATE?** The White House would like to draw Rep. Frank Mrvan (D-IN 01) out of his seat, but there does not seem to be much appetite in Indianapolis to do a redraw. (*Politico*)

PRIMARY ROUNDUP: John Larson Draws Primary From Former Hartford Mayor

Former Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin (D) announced a challenge to Rep. John Larson (D-CT 01).

- **FIRST IMPRESSIONS.** In his campaign launch video Bronin, 26, touts his almost decades-long experience in local politics and hinted that current lawmakers aren’t fighting hard enough to combat moves made by President Trump and his administration. There are growing concerns that aging Democratic lawmakers will make the party susceptible to strengths that a younger Republican coalition may have. Larson is 77-years-old, which was part of Bronin’s motivation for entering the race. (WTNH)
- **IA-04.** Former social media executive Ryan Rhodes (R) announced a run for the seat currently held by Rep. Randy Feenstra (R), who’s likely to pursue a run for governor. Rhodes, who was CEO of right-wing site Parler, said the race is “about two very different visions for the future of conservatism.” He previously worked on former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson’s 2016 presidential campaign.
- **THE FIELD.** Siouxland Chamber of Commerce President Chris McGowan (R), state Rep. Matt Windschitl (R), and former Kyle Larsen (R) are running in the deeply conservative seat. (*Des Moines Register*)
- **IL-02.** Allies of former Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D) released a new internal poll (July 21-25; 500 LVs; +/-4.5%) conducted by Lester & Associates. Jackson had 21%, Matteson Village Clerk Yumeka Brown (D) had 11%, followed by Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller (D) at 10%, and state Sen. Robert Peters (D) at 4%. 43% of voters were undecided. Friends of Jesse Jackson Jr. for Congress 2026 Exploratory Committee paid for the poll. (*Illinois Playbook*)
- **HOTLINE ANALYSIS.** The takeaway from this poll is that the field remains largely undecided, but Jackson Jr.’s allies can claim that the former member could enter the race in pole position thanks to his familiar name.
- **IL-07.** Rep. Danny Davis (D) reportedly will not seek reelection after nearly 30 years in Congress. Davis is expected to make the announcement Thursday and endorse state Rep. La Shawn Ford (D). (WMAQ) Davis, 83, raised just \$46,000 last quarter. Meanwhile, businessman Jason Friedman

(D), also running in the primary, raised \$1.1 million. (*Hotline* reporting)

TEXAS 28: Republicans See Red Amid Cuellar Legal Battles

Rep. Henry Cuellar's (D) looming trial date for bribery and foreign agent charges are worrying Democrats. The legal troubles “present a conundrum for Democrats” who are battling with hypocrisy allegations if they opt to defend Cuellar “from the very attacks they leveled against convicted fraudster” and expelled Rep. George Santos (R-NY).

- **BLOOD BATH.** Cuellar is the “undisputed top candidate for Democrats” with an 11-time track record of holding the seat. But the legal battle Cuellar is still to face gives Republicans ready ammunition for their campaigns, such as corruption-related attack ads. If Cuellar is ultimately forced to resign it would leave the party scrambling to find a candidate with the same name recognition.
- **PARTY DIVIDED.** State Democratic Executive Committee member Jen Ramos said “a generic Democrat would fare better and give us a fighting chance ... Not to mention it would reinstate trust with some of the allies and coalition groups that have already said they are fed up with Henry Cuellar.”
- **TEEING UP.** 2024 candidate Jay Furman (R) and former Rep. Mayra Flores (R) are currently running. Other potential candidates include Webb County Judge Tano Tijerina (R) and state Rep. Ryan Guillen (R), who have both switched parties in the last five years. (*NOTUS*)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Marjorie Taylor Greene opts out of gubernatorial bid

By Abby Turner

GEORGIA: Marjorie Taylor Greene Won't Run for Governor

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-14) announced she will not run for governor, instead opting to run for reelection in the House.

- **THOUGHT ABOUT IT.** Greene flirted with a gubernatorial bid for weeks, promoting “internal polls showing her strong position in a contested primary thanks to her fiercely loyal MAGA following and near-universal name recognition.” (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*)
- **GREENE SAYS:** “I am humbled and grateful by the massive statewide support that I have to run for Governor, and if I wanted to run we all know I would win. It's not even debatable. And only because of that massive statewide support is why I ever considered it in the first place.” (X)

NEW JERSEY: Election Law Enforcement Commission Sets Debate Schedule

“The *New Jersey Globe*, On New Jersey, and Rider University will host the first debate of the race for governor between” Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11) and 2021 nominee Jack Ciattarelli (R) on Sept. 21. A second gubernatorial debate is slated for mid-October and one for the lieutenant governor candidates will take place in early October. (*New Jersey Globe*)

NEW YORK: Zohran Mamdani Leads Andrew Cuomo, Eric Adams in Head-to-Head Polling

A poll (July 16-24; 1,021 LVs; +/-3.9%) conducted by Zenith Research and Public Progress Solutions found state Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani (D) leading in a 5-way mayoral contest with 50%, followed by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo (I) with 22%, Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa (R) with 13%, and New York City Mayor Eric Adams (I) with 7%.

- **MAN V. MAN.** In a head-to-head race against Adams, Mamdani led, 59%-32%. In a head-to-head race against Cuomo, Mamdani led, 52%-40%. (*Politico*)
- **HOTLINE ANALYSIS.** Adams and Cuomo have spent significant airtime attacking each other as they jockey to become the strongest independent alternative to Mamdani. But with neither gaining enough traction to surpass the Democratic nominee in a crowded field, let alone in a head-to-head matchup in polling, both may need to shift their attacks toward Mamdani instead of one another.
- **HOCHUL DEFENDS MAMDANI.** While Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) has yet to endorse Mamdani, she “is willing, though, to defend him against” Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-21), “her possible 2026 Republican foe.”
- **ALL WHILE ATTACKING STEFANIK.** After Stefanik “blasted Mamdani for supporting defunding the police and quoted from a 2020 tweet,” Hochul quickly defended “Mamdani in a CNN interview while knocking Stefanik in return.” (*Politico*)
- **I’VE GOT A PLAN.** Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado (D) is planning to use New York’s Public Campaign Finance Program as he trails Hochul in fundraising. “Hochul is at least so far not participating in the program.”
- **INCHING ALONG.** “Delgado would need to raise \$500,000 from 5,000 in-state individuals in order to qualify for matching funds. The lieutenant governor has raised about \$220,000 in qualifying donations from just over 3,000 qualifying individual donors.” (WAMC)

OHIO: Amy Acton Hauls in \$1.4M

Former state Department of Health Director Amy Acton’s (D) campaign announced she raised \$1.4 million—the “most ever by Democratic challenger for Governor in July” of an off year in the Buckeye state. (release)

PENNSYLVANIA: Doug Mastriano Revamps 2022 Campaign Website Amid 2026 Speculation

2022 nominee Doug Mastriano (R) “unveiled a refreshed version of his Doug4Gov.com website,” the domain he used in his 2022 campaign. The site does not explicitly state that he “is running for governor, but it does include his previous campaign slogan, ‘Walk as Free People.’”

- **ALREADY FUNDRAISING.** He also “sent out a fundraising request to supporters that directly positioned” him against Gov. Josh Shapiro’s (D) reelection bid. (WHTM)
- **HOTLINE ANALYSIS.** Mastriano has yet to formally announce his gubernatorial bid, but he’s already causing a major headache for the Pennsylvania GOP. Mastriano, who lost to Shapiro by 15 points in 2022, has indicated he’ll stay in the race even if the state party endorses another candidate—most likely state Treasurer Stacy Garrity (R). Party leaders are hoping an early endorsement this fall will help avoid a repeat of last cycle. But that strategy may have limited impact. Mastriano is already leading Garrity in early polling and shows no signs of stepping aside. His all but sure campaign will start a divisive primary fight that could distract from Republicans’ main goal: unseating Shapiro.

TENNESSEE: Pete Hegseth Privately Discusses Possible Gubernatorial Run

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth “has privately discussed the idea of running for” the open governor seat in Tennessee next year, “according to two people who have spoken directly with him about it.”

- **WHO SAID WHAT.** “One person said they discussed the eligibility requirements to run for governor of Tennessee and Hegseth’s chances of winning. The other person said they talked with Hegseth about the realities of a campaign.” Rep. John Rose (R-O6) is running and Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R) is considering a bid.
- **NOT SO EASY.** “Hegseth could face eligibility” laws that say “candidates for governor must have lived in the state for seven years before the election. Hegseth moved to the state around three years ago.” (NBC News)

WISCONSIN: Evers ‘Wrestled’ With Retirement Up Until Announcement

Gov. Tony Evers (D) “says he wrestled with his decision over whether to retire until shortly before he announced Thursday he wouldn’t seek a third term.” His comments conflict with the suggestion that low fundraising numbers in the first half of the year meant he “already decided against a run and an announcement was imminent.”

- **SHE KNEW.** Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez (D), the first Democrat to launch a campaign after Evers’ announcement, said the governor gave her “a heads up” about his decision, but she didn’t specify when that conversation occurred. (*WisPolitics*)

WYOMING: Secretary of State Polls for Possible Gubernatorial Bid

Secretary of State Chuck Gray (R) “said he is ‘exploring’ the option to run for governor of Wyoming or for Wyoming’s sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, saying he has been ‘strongly encouraged’ to run, though no official announcements have been made.”

- **WHAT ARE THE ODDS.** Gray hinted at a possible bid Tuesday after he released internal polling conducted by Fabrizio, Lee & Associates for his odds in both a gubernatorial and House race. (*Wyoming News Now*)

OVERLOOKED

No Driver’s License? No Problem.

By Amelia Monroe

It’s become standard to wait to reach certain age milestones; In most states you have to be 16 to get a driver’s license, 18 to cast a ballot in elections, 21 to drink and smoke, and 25 to rent a car. But in Washington and Vermont, two teenagers who can’t legally vote for themselves are running for governor. Dean Roy, a 14-year-old from Stowe, Vermont and Ethan Brunton, a 15-year-old from Chehalis, Washington are foregoing a student council bid for a run at the states’ highest-ranking elected position. While the idea of having a teenager managing the state may be perplexing, both Roy and Brunton aren’t the first of their kind. Washington sets a minimum age of 18-years-old to be sworn in

as governor, which Brunton will be months before the filing deadline in 2028. Brunton, if he wins, would be the second first-year adult to hold office after Lilian Hale, the stepdaughter of state Rep. Joel McEntire (R-19), who temporarily served in McEntire's place on the last day of the legislative session.