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Could Arizona swing back?

The 2026 governor's race will test Democrats' hot streak winning statewide offices in the Grand Canyon State.



Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

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The once reliably Republican stronghold of Arizona has leaned more purple in recent election cycles due to a spike in Democratic turnout. But, coming off of President Trump's siege of the Grand Canyon State in 2024, the Democratic Party could lose its footing in the upcoming gubernatorial race.

Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs won in 2022 by less than a point against her opponent, former news anchor Kari Lake. The race was among three other high-profile statewide elections that swung Democratic that year: for attorney general, secretary of state, and U.S. Senate. Despite the swing to the left in 2022, experts say that dampened Democratic enthusiasm could be a roadblock for Hobbs in 2026.

"2022 was a high-water mark for Democrats, where they had sizable participation, making up a much greater than usual portion of the electorate," said Paul Bentz, senior vice president of research and strategy at Highground Inc. "Typically, Arizona has

a Republican advantage.... They had lowered it to less than 4 points in 2022. It rebounded in 2024, and Republicans in the presidential election had almost a 10-point advantage.”

This time around, Hobbs won’t be going against a candidate like Lake, who had a campaign muddled with [controversies](#)

(<https://www.factcheck.org/person/kari-lake/>),

like election-fraud allegations, that even the state GOP hesitated to [get behind](#)

([https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/arizona-senate-race-lake-gallego-election-2024-a34a762d?](https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/arizona-senate-race-lake-gallego-election-2024-a34a762d?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=ASWzDAi-)

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Biggs and 2022 candidate Karrin Taylor

Robson, who are both running in the

GOP primary with Trump’s support,

have stronger résumés than Lake.



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Biggs is the only candidate for a statewide office in the country to secure an endorsement from Charlie Kirk's Turning Point USA at this point in the cycle. The organization was instrumental in mobilizing young voters in 2024 and could give Biggs a boost against Robson, who has already out-raised him.

Robson has [more money in the bank](https://www.queencreektribune.com/news/robson-edges-out-biggs-in-money-so-far/article_11975625-d88c-4fce-ad71-cdd0be1f99f3.html)

(https://www.queencreektribune.com/news/robson-edges-out-biggs-in-money-so-far/article_11975625-d88c-4fce-ad71-cdd0be1f99f3.html), \$875,000

to Biggs' \$437,000, but the congressman has had more outside help. Turning Point Action, the fundraising arm of TPUSA, has already spent more than \$400,000, including six figures in TV ad buys.

Trump issued dual endorsements for both Republican candidates, which longtime Arizona Republican political consultant Jason Rose said was a “godsend” for Robson in particular.

Rose, like other political strategists, predicted that Biggs would win the party's nomination. Like Hobbs, Biggs has a name-recognition factor that

should help him in a statewide race. He has a long history in Arizona politics, having served as a state representative for the 22nd district and as majority leader in the state Senate before winning election to Congress.

“Those who think that it’s a slam dunk that [Hobbs] will beat [Biggs], I think, are kidding themselves,” Rose said.

“Andy Biggs is a very smart, very shrewd, very capable person.... I think he would be a formidable candidate against Governor Hobbs, much more so than people believe.”

No matter who wins the nomination, Bentz emphasized that the Republican-led state Legislature has also worked to well position either Republican candidate in 2026. Hobbs has issued 185 vetoes since taking office in 2023, which, Bentz said, can “box her in on a variety of topics.”

Republicans have managed to get at least [three policy items](#)

(<https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2025/08/03/legislature-to-refer-three-bills-to-voters-in-2026/>), onto the 2026 ballot that are similar to legislation that was vetoed by Hobbs

two years ago. Now Arizonans have the chance to vote on provisions like capping the municipal food tax rate at 2 percent. Bentz said this is a strategic move to ensure Republican turnout, and that it gives Biggs or Robson points of attack during their campaigns.

For her part, Hobbs is approaching the campaign similarly to last cycle, when she raised more than \$11 million by Election Day. Hobbs' campaign committee [reported](https://katiehobbs.org/elect-katie-hobbs-campaign-raises-1-1-million-in-q1-building-momentum-ahead-of-2026/)

[\(https://katiehobbs.org/elect-katie-hobbs-campaign-raises-1-1-million-in-q1-building-momentum-ahead-of-2026/\)](https://katiehobbs.org/elect-katie-hobbs-campaign-raises-1-1-million-in-q1-building-momentum-ahead-of-2026/), that the governor raised more than \$1.1 million by the end of the first quarter, with more than \$4 million on hand.

This will be especially important as Hobbs tries to mitigate the possibility for backlash as the national party's identification among voters continues to sour. In a [poll](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/08/07/trumps-approval-rating-still-negative-while-the-public-sours-further-on-democrats-cnbc-survey-shows.html)

[\(https://www.cnbc.com/2025/08/07/trumps-approval-rating-still-negative-while-the-public-sours-further-on-democrats-cnbc-survey-shows.html\)](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/08/07/trumps-approval-rating-still-negative-while-the-public-sours-further-on-democrats-cnbc-survey-shows.html), from CNBC, the national

party's net favorability has reached 24 percent, the lowest in nearly three decades.

"The governor is an entity unto herself with supporters, and [has] an apparatus, and vehicles, and organizations that, notwithstanding problems with the Democratic Party, will be able to operate," Rose said.

Aside from Hobbs' fundraising and campaign apparatus, her office maintains a center-left state government that has had the "typical ebbs and flows" of a governorship that deals with a state legislature of the opposite party, Rose said.

Despite butting heads with Republican lawmakers, Hobbs has compromised with the GOP during her tenure as well—for instance, deploying the National Guard at the border to assist with Republican-led security efforts. She also signed the [repeal](#)

(<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/arizona-governor-signs-repeal-1864-abortion-ban-rcna150364>), of the controversial 1864 abortion ban and oversaw a [record number](#)

[\(https://azbigmedia.com/business/economy/arizona-economic-growth-fy25-records-jobs-wages/\)](https://azbigmedia.com/business/economy/arizona-economic-growth-fy25-records-jobs-wages/) of new jobs.

"Governor Hobbs is entering re-election in a strong position because she's delivered real bipartisan results that are making life better for Arizonans. She has taken action to secure the border and take on drug smugglers, lowered costs by making housing more affordable and canceling medical debt, protected water access and restored abortion rights," Democratic Governors Association spokesperson Olivia Davis said in a statement to *National Journal*. "And that was all before the bipartisan budget she signed this summer that raises pay for state police officers and firefighters and improves public schools."

Gubernatorial races tend to be relatively insulated from nationalized politics, which could serve in Hobbs's favor.

Since 2016, incumbent Democrats have won 26 out of 27 governor's races in both swing and deep-red states, which should stay true in 2026, Davis pointed out.

Former DGA political director Marshall Cohen said that much of the organization's strategy has been to have candidates focus on strictly local issues “outside of the D.C. bubble.”

“What a Democratic governor has the ability to do is to defy the federal political gravity by connecting their campaign to the kitchen-table issues that voters care about,” Cohen said, adding that they can also draw a “distinction with the extreme positions that their opponents are taking.”

Biggs provided one of the 218 House votes that helped pass Trump’s “big, beautiful bill,” and he has a long record of voting against Medicaid expansion in the state. Robson was [quick](https://x.com/KTRcomms/status/1942264218017005898/photo/1)

[. \(https://x.com/KTRcomms/status/1942264218017005898/photo/1\)](https://x.com/KTRcomms/status/1942264218017005898/photo/1) to congratulate Trump on the passage of the bill, even bashing Biggs for his previous comments questioning whether it would pass.

Despite national politics not always playing a role in gubernatorial races, Cohen said Trump’s controversial policy

decisions, like his reconciliation package, will definitely be in play in Arizona.

“A big-picture reminder is that the president is unpopular and getting more unpopular every day,” he said, “Republicans are going to be in a very challenging electoral environment to run in with that very unpopular president in the White House.”