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In this blog, we look beyond the headlines to understand how political developments throughout the country affect our Israeli-American community and the issues we all hold dear. Our goal is to provide basic context and foster understanding that encourages greater civic engagement and informs decision-making by our community members.

Michigan - a window into the Democratic Party's present, a determining factor for its future

A major dynamic of this election cycle is the ongoing internal battle among Democrats, between the moderate and progressive factions of the party. Nowhere was this dynamic on fuller display than in last week's Senate Democratic Primary race in Michigan. The two-way race gained national attention as Rep. Haley Stevens, backed by party establishment, went head-to-head with progressive candidate Abdul Al-Sayed, who enjoyed the backing of prominent progressives such as Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

One major point of contention in the race was AIPAC's heavy financial support for Stevens, and a key reason the race gained the national attention it had received. The pro-Israel lobby group spent roughly \$32 million on behalf of Stevens, more than on any other primary campaign in their history. Ultimately, Al-Sayed won by a 1% margin, or 15k votes in a race that saw more than 1.5 million cast their ballots. In this battle - the progressive wing came out on top.

What sets Al-Sayed's win apart from other progressive wins in this cycle, is that it is an extremely rare occurrence that the Democratic party nominates an ultra-progressive in a swing state. In 2024, Donald Trump won the Presidential Election in Michigan, and that same year the Republican nominee for Senate, former Congressman Mike Rogers, lost his race by 0.3%. This year, Rogers will be the Republican nominee once again. The upcoming general election race between Rogers and Al-Sayed will be seen as the ultimate test to the "electability" of progressive candidates in swing races, and its results will set the tone for future nominations within the party, including as we begin to look toward the 2028 Presidential Election. Al-Sayed's win last week is not merely another episode in the ongoing internal battle within the Democratic Party, but the beginning of the biggest political experiment the party has pursued in this era.

Florida - big shifts happening under the radar

Next Tuesday, Aug. 18th, is Primary Election Day in Florida. Among the races that should receive especially close attention by our community is that of Rep. Randy Fine, who's being challenged by antisemitic internet influencer Dan Bilzerian. Fine was elected in 2025 in a special election, following the resignation of Rep. Mike Waltz who left Congress to serve as Ambassador to the United Nations. Fine is one of just four Jewish Republicans in the US House of Representatives, and is the first one to regularly wear a yarmulke, or kippah.

Another major race is that of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a prominent figure among Jewish pro-Israel Democrats. Due to Florida's redrawing of Congressional districts this year, Wasserman Schultz faces a tough primary field that includes businessman and television figure Luther Campbell, and former Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick. Cherfilus-McCormick served in Congress between 2023-2026, and resigned earlier this year following her indictment on corruption charges. While she's decided to run for re-election, her trial is still set to begin in February 2027. Wasserman Schultz's newly drawn district excludes much of her old territory, and now includes a large African-American community that may opt for Campbell or Cherfilus-McCormick.