

# Know Before You Go: NJ-05 District Primer

*June 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!*

In the last election, Democrat Josh Gottheimer won this district by only 15,000 votes (4%). That's too close! With your help, we're going to keep this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

## About the Incumbent

**Introduction:** Democrat Josh Gottheimer was elected as NJ-05's representative in 2016, narrowly defeating seven-term incumbent Republican Scott Garrett by a margin of 51% to 47%. Garrett, a Tea Party Republican who opposed same-sex marriage and abortion rights, defeated 20-year incumbent moderate Republican Marge Roukema in 2002. Gottheimer is a former Bill Clinton speechwriter, Hillary Clinton advisor, communications executive at Ford Motor Company, Executive Vice President at Burston Marsteller, Senior Counselor at the FCC, and Strategist at Microsoft.

**Issues:** Gottheimer has branded himself as a "fiscally conservative, socially progressive" candidate. His campaign focused on bringing new businesses and jobs to the district, reducing taxes and regulations, infrastructure improvements, advocating for civil rights, and preserving Medicare and Social Security.

**Committees:** Gottheimer is a member of the House Financial Services Committee. He is also the co-chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus with Republican Tom Reed of New York.

**Strengths:** Gottheimer is an aggressive fundraiser with deep ties to Democratic establishment figures. He has branded himself as a Blue Dog Democrat, which may satisfy both centrist Democrats and moderate Northeast Republicans in the district.

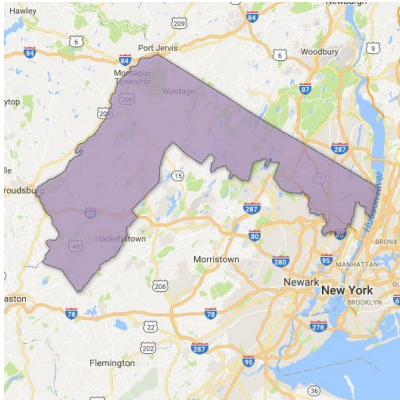
## About the Challenger

**Introduction:** Republican John McCann is an attorney who served as General Counsel to the New Jersey Sheriff's Association and as legal advisor for many Chiefs of Police. He has been a committee member in the Bergen County GOP for more than 20 years. McCann is a Bergen County resident.

**Issues:** John McCann supports President Donald Trump's policies on trade and immigration and in particular wants to put an end to sanctuary cities. McCann wants to fully repeal the Affordable Care Act in favor of a market-based approach. McCann is against abortion, though he has indicated that he would not support any further limits to access. He is also a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, although he supports universal background checks. On taxes, McCann said that he would bring back the SALT deduction provided it could be offset by other federal budget cuts.

**Strengths:** In the primary, McCann ran an effective grassroots campaign. He beat establishment-backed Steve Lonegan who raised \$1.4 million to McCann's \$186,600. McCann performed better than expected in Sussex and Warren counties, and won big in his home Bergen county. Until Gottheimer's election in 2016, NJ-05 was long considered a safe Republican seat and Republicans are eager to take it back. McCann claims to be a moderate, and with his support of bringing back the SALT deduction, he could woo moderate voters.

**Potential Weaknesses:** Some on the far right see McCann as too moderate. Lonegan painted him as a pro-abortion Democrat. Conversely, McCann may be alienating moderates with his enthusiastic support of Donald Trump and his agenda.



## NJ-05: Better Know the District

### Four Counties

NJ-05 stretches across four of the northernmost counties in New Jersey, encompassing a wide range of communities:

- *Bergen County*: A bedroom community of New York City, densely populated with numerous, diverse large towns and historically liberal politics. It's one of the wealthiest counties in the US, with excellent educational systems, but 15.5% of the population of Hackensack, the largest city, lives below the poverty level, compared to 5.5% for the rest of the district.
- *Passaic County*: Some parts of the county are suburbs of NYC, but the parts in NJ-05 are relatively rural. Median household incomes are between those of the more urban Bergen County and the more rural Sussex and Warren counties.
- *Sussex County*: Culturally conservative, with a middle-class feel. Median household income is generally lower and local private employers are smaller. Despite the long commute, some workers are still part of the larger New York City and eastern New Jersey economies.
- *Warren County*: Culturally conservative, with a middle-class feel. Median household income is generally lower and local private employers are smaller. Despite the long commute, some workers are still part of the larger New York City and eastern New Jersey economies.

## NJ-05: Facts & Stats

### Population Centers

- Hackensack, 43,010
- Fair Lawn, 32,457
- West Milford, 25,850
- Vernon, 23,943
- Hackettstown, 9,607
- Washington, 6,498

### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 174K (48%)
- Trump: 178K (49%)

### 2016 House Results

- Gottheimer (D): 173K (51%)
- Garrett (R): 158K (47%)
- Other: 7K (2%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 175K
- Eligible, not registered: 122K

### 2014 House Results

- Cho (D): 82K (43%)
- Garrett (R): 105K (55%)
- Other: 2K (1%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 297K

### Education

Between 90% and 94% of NJ-05 residents are high school graduates, although Passaic County, where 82% graduate from high school by age 25, falls below the New Jersey average. In Bergen, 46% have college degrees or higher, but the other counties, ranging from 26% to 34%, fall below the state average of 37%. Each county has a community college, and there are a number of other renowned colleges and universities: Centenary College, William Patterson, Ramapo, Fairleigh Dickinson.

### Industries

The top industries for Bergen County are retail trade, based around Paramus with a payroll of \$1.7 billion; healthcare and social assistance with the Hackensack University Medical Center being the largest employer; professional and business services. The key industries in Passaic County are government (mainly public education), healthcare, and retail trade. Sussex and Warren Counties had long been heavy on agriculture, mining, and milling. With the decline of these industries, most Sussex residents now commute to other work in other nearby counties or NYC.

### Elections

The makeup of the Freeholder boards (county commissioners) further highlights the differences between the northeastern and northwestern sections of NJ-05. Bergen County has Freeholders from both parties. As of 2015, Passaic County had an all-Democratic Freeholder board. Sussex County is more conservative—its five-member Freeholder board is currently all Republican. Warren County's three-member board of Freeholders continues to be entirely Republican.