

YOUR DOLLAR, YOUR SENATE

A Portola Valley Resident's Action Guide to Flipping Competitive U.S. Senate Seats in 2026

Prepared for Silicon Valley donors committed to a Democratic Senate majority

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SECTION 1 — WHY THESE THREE SEATS DECIDE THE SENATE

The 2026 midterms present Democrats with a narrow but real path to recapturing the Senate majority. Three Republican-held seats stand out as the highest-probability flip opportunities, based on presidential performance, polling trends, candidate recruitment, and structural vulnerabilities. Here's why Portola Valley donors should focus their dollars here.

State	Current Senator	Vulnerability Reason	Cook Rating	Trump 2024 Margin
Maine	Susan Collins (R)	Ticket-splitter history; Collins has survived before but faces strong generic environment	Toss-Up	Trump -7 (Biden+7 in 2020)
Pennsylvania	Dave McCormick (R)	Flipped from Fetterman in 2022; Biden won state; union country	Lean R / Toss-Up	Trump +2
Arizona	Open / Republican-held	Latino growth, suburban Maricopa shift, strong Dem infra	Toss-Up	Trump +0.3

SECTION 2 — WHY MAINE, PENNSYLVANIA & ARIZONA — DEEP DIVES

MAINE — Susan Collins

Collins has survived blue waves before (2020) but the political environment in 2026 is fundamentally different — no split-ticket coattail from a popular presidential candidate on the ballot.

A strong Democratic challenger in a presidential off-year cycle puts Collins' personal brand under maximum pressure.

Maine uses ranked-choice voting — progressive and moderate votes consolidate, minimizing spoiler risk.

Donors here fund field operations in rural Maine, which is the deciding battleground.

PENNSYLVANIA — Dave McCormick

McCormick flipped the seat in 2024 but Pennsylvania remains a genuine purple state — Biden won it in 2020; Harris nearly held it in 2024.

Philadelphia suburbs (Montgomery, Chester, Delaware counties) — identical voter profile to Portola Valley — are the margin-makers.

Union households in western PA are persuadable; donor dollars fund targeted labor outreach.

A Democratic pickup here alone could shift Senate control.

ARIZONA — Republican-Held Open/Vulnerable Seat

Maricopa County has shifted 8+ points toward Democrats since 2016 — the largest suburban realignment in the country.

Latino turnout infrastructure, built by organizations like LUCHA Arizona, requires sustained outside investment.

Arizona's margin in 2024 was under 0.5% — every dollar in voter contact has outsized ROI.

Strong Democratic candidate recruitment in Phoenix-area suburbs makes this a genuine toss-up.

SECTION 3 — HOW YOUR MONEY ACTUALLY MOVES VOTES

Direct candidate contributions and targeted independent expenditures work differently. Here's a clear breakdown:

Direct to Candidate

Legal max: \$3,300/election (primary + general = \$6,600)

Funds: TV ads, field staff, mail

Best for: Candidates with strong infrastructure

State Party (DSC / State Dem Party)

Legal max: \$41,300/year

Funds: Coordinated voter contact, GOTV

Best for: Down-ballot amplification

Senate Majority PAC (SuperPAC)

Legal max: No legal maximum (independent expenditure)

Funds: Late-stage TV/digital blitzes

Best for: Maximum-impact high-net-worth giving

PORTOLA VALLEY DONOR LEVERAGE: A \$3,300 max-out in Arizona or Maine is equivalent to registering ~300 voters or funding 3,000 voter contact attempts.

SECTION 4 — LOCAL RELEVANCE: WHY PORTOLA VALLEY DONORS HAVE UNUSUAL LEVERAGE

- Silicon Valley donors are among the most sophisticated political investors in the country — your dollars attract matching commitments from national donor networks.
- **Bundling:** Portola Valley residents who bundle contributions (collect checks from neighbors, colleagues) can unlock VIP candidate access and amplify total impact.
- Technology-sector wealth means many residents hit individual maximums quickly — consider multiple giving vehicles: candidate + state party + PAC.
- Non-partisan civic groups in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties coordinate donor education events — ask your neighbors.
- Your giving is publicly reported to the FEC — consider how your visible participation signals to others in your community.

SECTION 5 — DOCUMENTATION & COMPLIANCE — DON'T LEAVE MONEY ON THE TABLE

Federal election law requires campaigns to collect certain information. Be ready.

- ☐ Full legal name (as it appears on government ID)
- ☐ Home mailing address (must be U.S. residential — PO Box not accepted for FEC purposes)
- ☐ Occupation (specific: "Software Engineer at [Company]," not just "Tech")
- ☐ Employer name (or "Self-employed" / "Retired")
- ☐ Contribution amount and date
- ☐ Check or credit card — no cash contributions over \$100 are permitted by federal law
- ☐ Ensure you are a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (green card holders may contribute)
- ⚠ Foreign nationals, including visa holders, are prohibited from contributing to federal candidates. This is non-negotiable and vigorously enforced.**

SECTION 6 — COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

Contributing in Someone Else's Name

It is a federal crime to make a contribution in another person's name (straw donations). Each contribution must come from the actual donor's funds.

Double-Maxing Without Tracking

Keep a personal log of every contribution by candidate, cycle, and committee type. Exceeding limits triggers FEC enforcement and embarrassing public refunds.

Waiting Until October

Senate campaigns spend the majority of funds in Q2–Q3. Contributions made after Labor Day have 40–60% less operational impact. Give early.

READY TO ACT? YOUR SENATE FLIP CHECKLIST

- ☐ **I've identified my top flip-target state: _____**
- ☐ **I've confirmed my \$3,300 contribution limit (per election) for the primary and general**
- ☐ **I have my occupation and employer info ready for FEC compliance**
- ☐ **I've explored bundling with neighbors or professional networks**
- ☐ **I've researched state party and PAC giving vehicles for maximum impact**
- ☐ **I've set a reminder to give by July 1 (Q2 FEC reporting deadline — high visibility)**
- ☐ **I've shared this sheet with at least 3 neighbors or colleagues**