



TO: Indivisible Action
FROM: Donna Victoria, Victoria Research
RE: Massachusetts' 1st Congressional District Primary
DATE: June 29, 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1st District in Massachusetts covers the western portion of the state, from the Berkshires to Springfield and then meandering east from Springfield to capture a small portion of Worcester County. It is a safe Democratic district that Trump lost by 20 points in 2016. Despite this, the district is represented by a man who is increasingly losing his way as a Democrat and cares more about his high dollar corporate donors than the people of western Massachusetts. Richie Neal's **pay-to-play politics, refusals to answer voter questions in townhalls** for 2 years, and **repeated votes against the economic interests of workers in the 1st** have largely gotten a free pass during his **16 terms in Congress**, but in 2020 his time is up. **Alex Morse** is a product of the same working class communities as Richie Neal, but he is a fierce advocate for ordinary people and rejects corporate PAC donations, unlike the incumbent. **Primary voters have an opportunity to elect a transformational new leader in Alex Morse.**

A DIFFICULT START BUT A RAPID ASCENT

To an inexperienced eye, this may look like there is too tall a mountain to climb: the initial trial heat is Richie Neal 55%, Alex Morse 25%, and 20% Undecided. However, here are the key elements that are easy to overlook at a glance:

- Richie Neal starts out getting only 55% of the vote from his supposed base – i.e., Democratic Primary voters whom he has represented for 32 years. This is not an impressive level of support from the most active members of your own party.
- Undecided voters tend to break heavily for challengers – they know the incumbent yet are holding back on committing to that person for a reason. The undecided is quite large, with 1 in 5 voters Undecided.
- Currently, only about half of Primary voters are familiar with Alex Morse (53% name ID) but this **race can be won by getting Alex's positive story in front of this large segment of voters who do not recognize him**. Often, the cost of getting that story out makes this a daunting task, but MA01 has extremely affordable media markets, with 70% of the likely Primary vote served by the Springfield DMA.
- The poll actually proves out how thin Neal's support is: the first messaging test compared two positive biographical and position statements about Morse and Neal, and with this single piece of information, the race radically changes: **44% Morse to 43% for Neal**.

RICHIE NEAL ISN'T JUST WEAK, HE'S NOT WORKING FOR US

- Voters are overwhelmingly concerned about **healthcare** and the economic fallout of the pandemic -- and letting them know what Richie Neal has been up to on those fronts is deadly to his re-election prospects. Again, Morse can win providing we can sufficiently broadcast what interests Neal has been serving in Washington:
 - Neal killed the bill to fix surprise out-of-network billing after taking \$54,000 from lobbyists opposed to the fix.
 - Neal negotiated Covid19 relief that gave Trump a \$500 billion slush fund for corporations, but Neal opposed rent relief and paycheck guarantees in the package.
 - Neal is the only Democrat from MA who has not signed the No Fossil Fuels money pledge – possibly because he has raked in over \$12 million of corporate PAC money.
- After hearing these and other criticisms about Neal voters side with Alex Morse 53% - 28%.

This memorandum reports on the findings of a poll of likely Primary election voters for September 2020, conducted in the 1st CD of Massachusetts June 16-18, 2020. 492 complete 16-minute interviews were conducted by live interviewers calling landline and wireless phones, and online self-administration. The margin of error for a sample of this size is 4.4% at the 95% confidence level.