

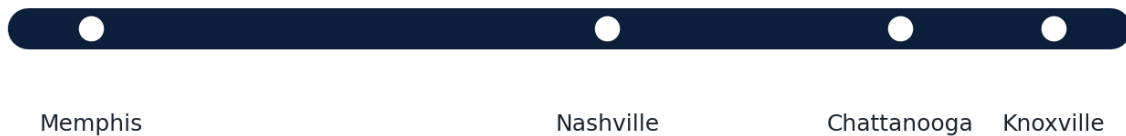
August 24, 2026

JERRI GREEN AND THE 2026 TENNESSEE GOVERNOR RACE

Strategy, Coalition Arithmetic, General-Election Scenarios, and the Challenge of
Defeating Marsha Blackburn

TENNESSEE 2026

Gubernatorial election strategy, coalition arithmetic and race outlook



Original report graphic - schematic corridor, not a geographic map

Figure 1. Original schematic report graphic.

The American Newspaper | <https://americannewspaper.org>

The Tennessee Times | <https://tennesseetimes.org>

Neutral research report. No endorsement. Candidate statements are identified as such; scenario arithmetic is not polling or a recommendation.

Executive Summary

The race is structurally Republican-favored. The latest complete August 6 primary returns show Jerri Green winning the Democratic nomination with 69.0% (244,194 votes), while Marsha Blackburn won the Republican nomination with 43.6% (311,328). The November 3 ballot also includes 13 independents. As of this report date, Tennessee Firefly continued to label the complete primary returns as awaiting county certification by the August 24 statutory deadline; no newer statewide certification publication was located in the indexed sources reviewed. [S11][S12][S13]

Green enters the general election with a clearer Democratic mandate than Blackburn had inside her own primary, but that comparison should not be confused with statewide strength: the Republican primary electorate was roughly twice as large, and Tennessee voted 64.2% for Donald Trump and 63.8% for Blackburn in the 2024 presidential and Senate races. [S12][S13][S25]

The financial disparity is also large. Green's latest pre-primary filing-period data aggregated from Tennessee Registry of Election Finance reports show about \$698,000 raised, \$578,000 spent and \$118,000 cash on hand; Blackburn's corresponding figures are about \$10.77 million raised, \$8.05 million spent and \$2.69 million cash on hand. Blackburn-aligned PACs had separately raised about \$12 million during the primary cycle. [S9][S20][S21]

Public general-election polling is sparse and stale. The two widely indexed Green-Blackburn polls were conducted before the primary: Targoz/Beacon in April 2026 showed Blackburn 51%, Green 27%, 22% other/undecided; Quantus in August 2025 showed Blackburn 49%, Green 28%, with the balance elsewhere. National race raters listed by Tennessee Firefly are uniformly Safe/Solid Republican. No sufficiently current post-primary public poll with useful demographic cross-tabs was found. [S23][S24]

A narrow numerical upset path exists only under demanding assumptions: much stronger Democratic margins in Shelby and Davidson, near-parity in Hamilton and Knox, substantial improvement in fast-growing Nashville suburbs, and a dramatic reduction in Republican margins across the other 85 counties. In the report's turnout-normalized hypothetical model, an illustrative upset threshold reaches 50.6% only when Green gets about 75% in both Shelby and Davidson, 50-52% in Hamilton/Knox, 40-50% in the named suburban counties, and about 40% across the remaining 85 counties while core urban turnout holds up better than rural turnout. This is arithmetic, not a forecast.

On the requested 0-100% probability question, this report does not assign its own probability because that would amount to an independent candidate rating. For context only, two third-party automated models found in the public web sources imply roughly a 1-5% Green chance (Blackburn 95-99%); both should be treated cautiously and are not polls. Established race-rating organizations instead use categorical Safe/Solid Republican ratings. [S23][S36][S37]

Information labels used throughout

Label	Meaning
VERIFIED FACT	Official records, government pages, established election returns or directly checkable public filings.
GREEN POSITION	Green campaign statement or official platform; inclusion is not validation of factual claims embedded in campaign language.
BLACKBURN POSITION	Blackburn campaign statement or official platform.
THIRD-PARTY ASSESSMENT	Media, forecaster, pollster, expert or political actor assessment, identified by source.
MODEL / SCENARIO	Arithmetic or hypothetical conditions used to show what a result would require; not polling and not a probability forecast.

0. Race Verification and Ballot Status

Item	Verified status as of Aug. 24, 2026	Source/date
Democratic nominee	Jerri Green; 244,194 votes, 69.0% in Aug. 6 primary.	TN Firefly, current page; SOS-derived [S11][S12]
Republican nominee	Marsha Blackburn; 311,328 votes, 43.6% in Aug. 6 primary.	TN Firefly; SOS-derived [S13]
General election	Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026. Early voting Oct. 14-29.	TREF/TNDP election calendar [S15][S35]
Other ballot candidates	13 independents, for 15 names total.	TN Firefly candidate tracker [S14]
Primary certification status	Latest indexed tracker said complete results were still unofficial until county commissions certify by Aug. 24; no newer statewide publication was found in this review.	TN Firefly [S11][S12][S13]

August 6, 2026 Tennessee gubernatorial primary results

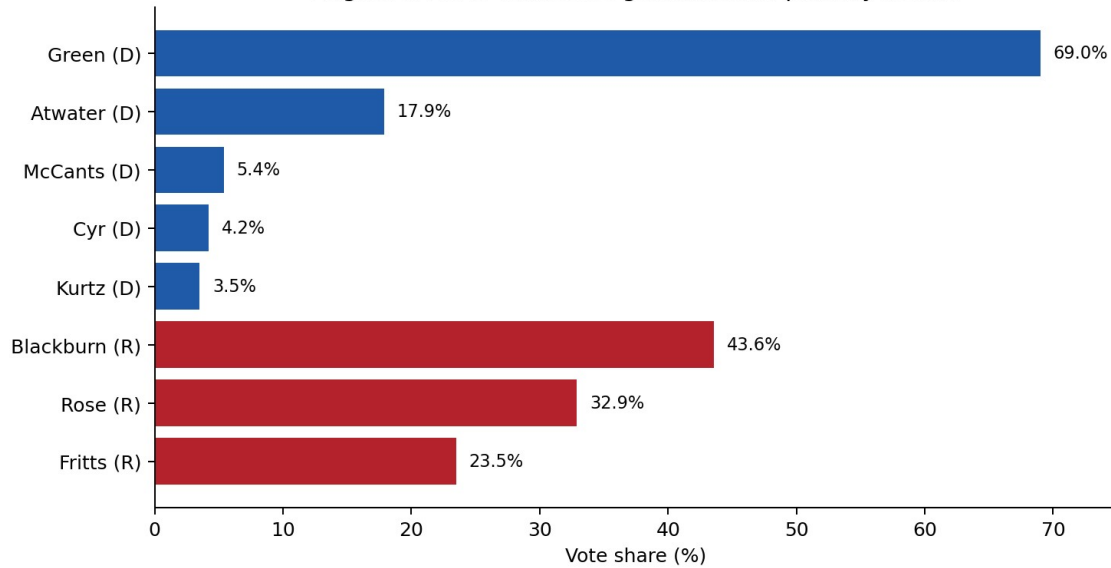


Figure 2. Complete primary vote shares reported from Tennessee Secretary of State data by Tennessee Firefly. [S12][S13]

Independent candidates on the November ballot

Misam Abidi; Dean Brewer; Ray Brown; David Hatley; Wendell Jackson; Charles Van Morgan; Eddie Lee Murphy; Lauren Pinkston; Victor L. Scoggin; Dave Seeman; Karl Knox Smithson; L. Webb Taylor; Robert C. Vick. Tennessee Firefly reports that independents qualified by petition rather than through the August primary. [S14]

Geographic distribution of Green's primary vote

County	Green votes	Green share	Dem. primary total
Shelby	53,919	63.8%	84,542
Davidson	44,792	74.7%	59,966
Knox	23,255	70.1%	33,159
Hamilton	16,812	65.1%	25,810
Rutherford	10,576	69.6%	15,205
Williamson	10,918	78.5%	13,911
Montgomery	5,807	60.4%	9,614
Wilson	6,048	70.7%	8,551
Sumner	5,127	75.5%	6,790
Maury	2,971	69.0%	4,306
Fayette	979	38.4%	2,548

The pattern is notable for breadth: Green ran strongly not only in Shelby but also Davidson, Knox, Hamilton and affluent Williamson. Fayette was a notable exception in this selected table, where Carnita Atwater led Green. That breadth supports a conclusion of statewide Democratic organizational superiority in the primary; it does not by itself demonstrate general-election crossover strength because the primary electorate is partisan. [S12]

1. Jerri Green: Background, Legal Career, and Candidate Image

Verified biography

- **Birth/upbringing.** Green's campaign and Memphis City Council biography say she was born and raised in Memphis and graduated from White Station High School. A precise birth date is not used here because the strongest official sources reviewed do not publish it. [S1][S2]
- **Education.** B.A. in English and Political Science from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center. [S1][S2]
- **Legal career.** Her official biographies describe public-interest practice spanning criminal defense and international human rights in Washington, Nashville and Memphis, plus teaching criminal law and juvenile justice for almost a decade. [S1][S2]
- **Public-interest leadership.** Former Executive Director of the Community Legal Center; later Senior Policy Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff to Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris. [S1]

- **Public defender.** Her campaign says she was appointed Shelby County Chief Public Defender in January 2026. [S1]
- **Memphis City Council.** Memphis records say she was elected to represent District 2 on Nov. 16, 2023 and took office for the 2024 term. [S2]
- **Earlier electoral experience.** Tennessee Firefly records her 2020 state House race at roughly 46% against Republican Mark White in District 83. [S11]

Candidate-image strengths supported by the record

- **Tennessee geographic story.** Her biography connects Memphis upbringing, UT Knoxville education and Nashville legal work, giving the campaign a factual basis to claim familiarity with all three Grand Divisions. [S1]
- **Public-service credentials.** Public defense, nonprofit legal services, county executive work and local office create a service-oriented biography distinct from a purely federal resume. [S1][S2]
- **Working-family narrative.** The official campaign brand "One Tough Mother" and its emphasis on affordability, schools and childcare align biography with economic themes. [S5]
- **Issue credibility on justice/violence.** Her public-defender and local-government record gives her direct experience on criminal justice and public safety, although Republicans can frame the same background differently. [S1][S2]

Electability liabilities visible in the record

- **Limited statewide electoral record.** Green has not previously won statewide office; her highest elected office is a Memphis City Council seat. [S2][S11]
- **Memphis polarization risk.** Memphis is Tennessee's largest Democratic stronghold, but statewide Republicans have repeatedly used Memphis as a partisan symbol. Blackburn herself has highlighted redistricting that targeted the heavily Democratic Ninth District. [S16]
- **Policy exposure on social/immigration issues.** Green's official platform includes repealing the near-total abortion ban, stronger gun rules, legal marijuana and a day-one order ending state/local law-enforcement cooperation with ICE. These are clear policy positions but create obvious contrast material for Blackburn. [S4][S16][S18]

2. What Green Actually Did in the Democratic Primary

VERIFIED FACT / CAMPAIGN RECORD. Green was the only Democrat in the field with both current elected office and a comparatively developed statewide campaign apparatus according to Tennessee Firefly. Her campaign website maintained an extensive events calendar covering Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville-area communities, Clarksville, Jackson, Chattanooga, the Tri-Cities, Middle Tennessee suburbs and rural stops. [S6][S11]

Message

Green's launch and first advertising centered on a biography-and-affordability frame: a Memphis-raised working mother, lawyer and local public servant focused on grocery costs, healthcare, schools and childcare. Her first 2026 campaign ad used the line "They say we can't win. Watch me," and reporting around the ad described more than 70 statewide stops by March. [S7]

Organization and voter contact

TREF-derived spending data show a diversified operation rather than a single-channel campaign: roughly \$154,000 on consulting, \$131,000 on advertising/media, \$81,000 on printing/mail, about \$40,000 on field/voter contact, and nearly \$25,000 paid directly to Facebook among listed vendors. Vendors tied to texting/phone tools also appear in the disclosure data. [S9]

Fundraising and donors

The pre-primary filing-period aggregate shows 8,435 individual donors, a \$76 average gift and \$25 median gift; 93% of the money came from individuals and about 6% from organizations/PACs. About 94% of located itemized dollars were from Tennessee. The Progress Fund gave \$15,400 on July 17, 2026. [S9][S10]

Why the primary was a landslide - evidence-based explanation

- **Organization gap.** Green had far more money, staff/vendor activity, endorsements and travel than the other Democratic candidates documented by the state race tracker. [S9][S11]
- **Endorsement consolidation.** Her campaign lists U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris, multiple Democratic state senators and legislators, and former Republican House Speaker Kent Williams among supporters. [S5]
- **Metro breadth.** She won large majorities in Davidson, Williamson, Knox, Hamilton and Rutherford as well as Shelby, indicating the campaign was not merely a Shelby-only primary operation. [S12]
- **Primary electorate size caveat.** The Democratic gubernatorial primary drew 353,660 votes versus 714,810 in the Republican primary; Green's landslide therefore demonstrates intraparty dominance, not statewide parity. [S12][S13]

Is the Memphis/Shelby identity an asset or a limitation?

Both. It is an asset for base mobilization because Shelby is the state's largest reservoir of Democratic votes and Green has an existing local network. It is a limitation because a statewide win requires large gains in East and Middle Tennessee, and Blackburn can attach Green to nationalized Republican narratives about Memphis, crime, immigration and progressive urban governance. Daily Memphian reporting after the primary quoted Green emphasizing a map based on turnout and "purple suburbs," underscoring that her own campaign does not treat Memphis turnout alone as sufficient. [S8]

3. Green's Policy Platform: Electoral Opportunities and Attack Surfaces

The table below distinguishes what the campaign actually says from electoral interpretation. "Opportunity" and "risk" are descriptive campaign dynamics, not recommendations or endorsements. Most positions come directly from Green's official platform. [S4]

Issue	Green official position	Potential general-election resonance	Likely Republican attack surface
Cost of living / grocery tax	End state grocery tax; close corporate loopholes to replace revenue.	Concrete kitchen-table issue; easy to explain.	Republicans can challenge revenue assumptions.
Working families / wages	Living-wage framing; collective-bargaining rights; paid family/medical leave.	Fits economic-populist brand.	Business groups can frame as higher labor costs; no single statewide minimum-wage figure located on official page.
Childcare / paid leave	\$50M TANF plan to clear childcare waitlist; broader childcare support; paid leave.	Direct family-cost frame.	Fiscal design/eligibility details can be challenged.
Medicaid / rural hospitals	Expand Medicaid; protect TennCare; invest in rural access.	Potential cross-regional healthcare appeal.	Standard GOP objection: federal dependency/cost.
Healthcare / medical debt	\$10M TANF plan to buy/erase medical debt; lower prescription costs and PBM transparency.	Affordability and debt relief.	Implementation and scale questions.
Public schools / teacher pay	Fully fund K-12; oppose vouchers; raise teacher pay; add counselors/nurses.	Strong contrast with Blackburn's school-choice support.	Voucher supporters frame as limiting parental choice.
Housing	\$10M TANF-based security-deposit relief; affordable-housing funding.	Direct cost issue in cities/suburbs.	Scale relative to statewide need.
Abortion / reproductive rights	Repeal near-total abortion ban; protect contraception, IVF and miscarriage care; day-one doctor-protection order.	Clear party contrast; mobilizes abortion-rights voters.	High-salience conservative attack in Tennessee.
Gun regulation	Universal background checks, red-flag law, domestic-violence protections, gun locks, carry training/testing.	Public-safety frame possible.	Blackburn can mobilize Second Amendment voters.
Marijuana	Legalize medical and recreational marijuana; campaign cites potential state revenue.	May appeal to younger/libertarian voters.	Republican law-and-order attack; revenue estimate is a campaign claim.
Environment / energy	Protect water/land; renewables; climate resilience; keep TVA public; data-center moratorium.	Local water/utility-cost frame where development is contentious.	Can be framed as anti-growth/regulatory.
Agriculture	Fair trade, family-farm relief, drought/market protection, rural infrastructure.	Lets campaign speak directly to rural economy.	Needs policy detail and credibility against GOP rural brand.
Infrastructure / transportation	Passenger rail among major metros; rural roads, broadband and water.	Regional economic-development frame.	Cost/feasibility questions.
Criminal justice	Public-defender background; end private-prison renewals; prior local justice reforms.	Experience-based reform narrative.	Republicans can attack as too lenient.
Immigration / ICE	Day-one end to state/local law-enforcement cooperation with ICE; bar ICE from state buildings; fund immigration legal representation.	Strong civil-liberties/immigrant-rights position.	One of the clearest vulnerabilities in a state where Blackburn campaigns heavily on deportation.

Important verification note: Green's campaign funding page makes several revenue claims, including very large estimates associated with corporate tax changes. Those figures are not treated as verified in this report because the campaign page itself is not an independent fiscal score. [S4]

4. Green's Political Brand and the "Memphis Liberal" Problem

GREEN POSITION. The campaign's own brand is "One Tough Mother" and repeatedly frames government through grocery bills, healthcare, public schools, childcare, wages and local delivery. [S5]

THIRD-PARTY CONTEXT. Blackburn's official issue page emphasizes Trump's America First agenda, illegal immigration, conservative cultural issues, parental rights, opposition to "woke" curriculum, gun rights, abortion opposition, tax cuts and public safety. Her ads before the primary included a deportation-focused spot and a cell-phone-free-classroom spot. [S16][S18][S19]

MODEL / MESSAGE CONFLICT. This creates a straightforward general-election frame competition: Green seeks to make the election about household economics and state services; Blackburn has incentives to nationalize it around Trump, immigration, crime, guns, abortion and cultural identity. The key strategic question is not whether either set of issues disappears, but which set dominates the agenda.

Evidence-based rebranding elements already present in Green's campaign

Element	Existing evidence	Why it matters in a statewide race
Affordability	Grocery-tax repeal, housing, medical debt, childcare. [S4]	Moves the argument toward material costs rather than party identity.
Working-family economics	Paid leave, labor rights, living-wage language. [S4]	Can connect urban and nonurban economic concerns, though business opposition is predictable.
Healthcare / rural hospitals	Medicaid expansion, TennCare protection, rural care. [S4]	One of the few Democratic issues with an explicitly rural policy rationale.
Public schools	Opposes vouchers, higher teacher pay, full funding. [S4]	Creates a state-policy contrast with Blackburn's school-choice emphasis. [S16]
Local-government pragmatism	City council/county government biography. [S1][S2]	Counters a purely national-partisan identity, but only if voters see local record as positive.

Blackburn also has a counter-story: her campaign presents her as an experienced conservative who will keep Tennessee aligned with Trump, cut taxes and regulation, stop illegal immigration, protect gun rights and parental rights, and maintain economic growth. [S16][S17]

5. Tennessee Electoral Arithmetic: What a Democratic Win Would Require

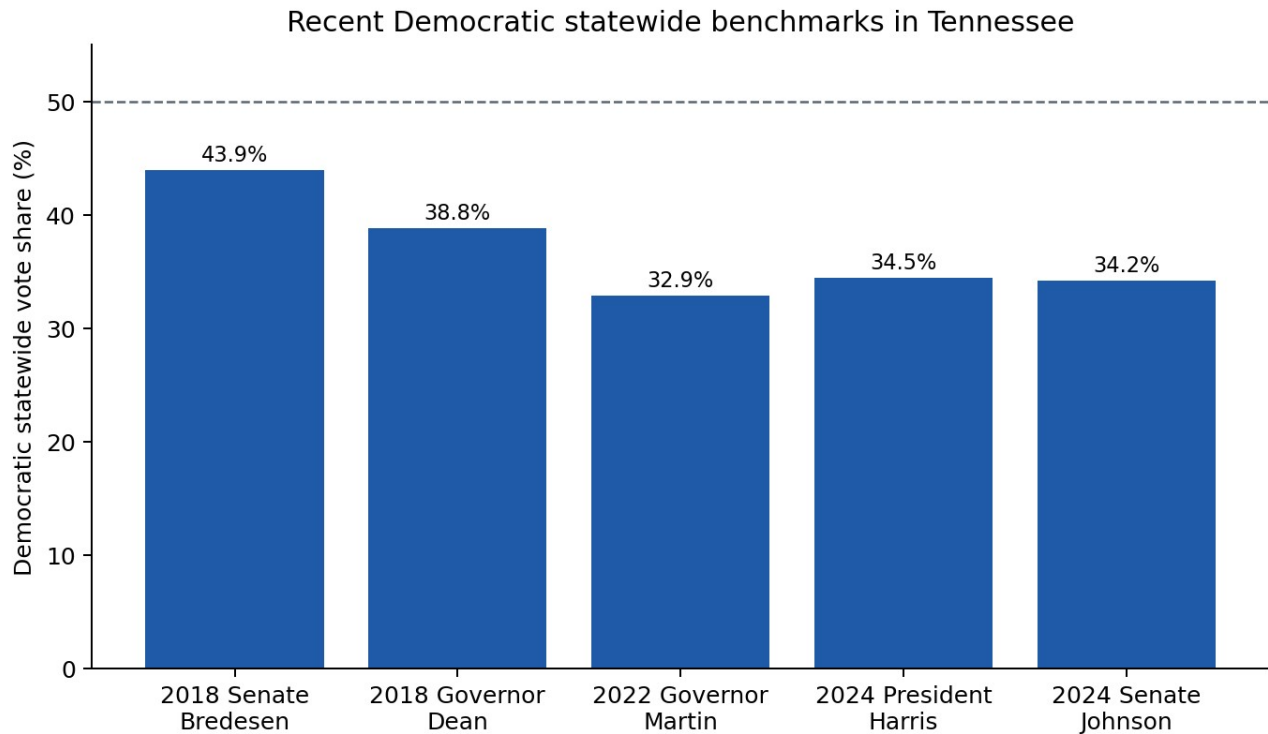


Figure 3. Recent statewide Democratic benchmarks. 2018 Senate: 43.92% Bredesen; 2018 governor: 38.8% Dean; 2022 governor: 32.9% Martin; 2024 president: 34.47% Harris; 2024 Senate: 34.2% Johnson. [S25][S27][S28]

The best recent Democratic statewide performance was Phil Bredesen's 43.92% in the 2018 U.S. Senate race against Blackburn. He carried only three counties, including Davidson and Shelby, despite being a former governor with a moderate statewide brand. That is a critical benchmark: even a relatively strong Tennessee Democrat ran about six points short of 50%. [S27]

2024 county baselines and illustrative upset thresholds

County	2024 Harris share	Illustrative upset threshold	Movement
Shelby	61.8%	75%	+13.2 pts
Davidson	62.7%	75%	+12.3 pts
Hamilton	42.7%	52%	+9.3 pts
Knox	39.5%	50%	+10.5 pts
Rutherford	38.4%	50%	+11.6 pts
Williamson	33.0%	45%	+12.0 pts
Montgomery	40.0%	50%	+10.0 pts
Wilson	29.4%	42%	+12.6 pts
Sumner	28.5%	40%	+11.5 pts
Maury	27.2%	40%	+12.8 pts

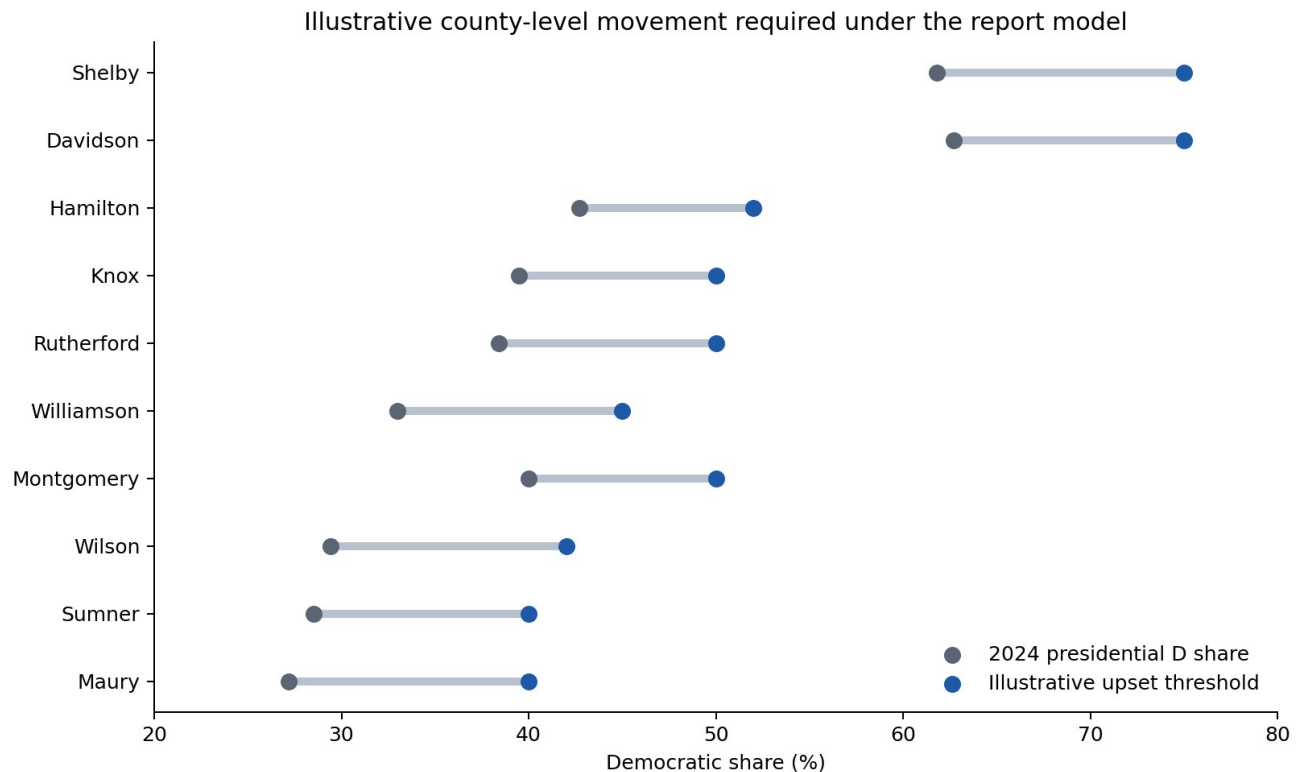


Figure 4. The right-hand markers are hypothetical threshold shares used in the report model, not polling. 2024 baseline from certified presidential returns. [S25][S26]

Why Memphis and Nashville alone cannot be enough

In 2024, Harris won Shelby 61.8% and Davidson 62.7% but lost Tennessee by about 30 points. Even pushing both counties into the low-to-mid 70s leaves too many Republican votes elsewhere. The mathematical bottleneck is the combined size of Knox, Hamilton and the fast-growing Nashville suburban/exurban counties, plus the overwhelming Republican margin across dozens of smaller counties. [S25][S26]

The 2018 Bredesen benchmark illustrates the same problem. He won Davidson 70.65% and Shelby 65.56%, and reached 46.10% in Rutherford and 40.44% in Williamson, yet still lost statewide 54.7%-43.9%. [S27]

6. Minimum Winning Coalition: Demography, Geography, and Turnout

This section describes the coalition arithmetic required for a Democratic majority. It is not a recommendation to target people on the basis of protected characteristics. The demographic variables are used to explain county-level voting structure, not to tailor persuasive messages to individuals.

Geography / voter bloc	Role in a mathematically viable coalition	Public-data context
Shelby County / Memphis	Large Democratic margin plus high turnout is necessary.	2024: Harris 61.8%; county is majority-Black. Census QuickFacts: Black alone 51.7%, BA+ 34.3%, median household income \$63,767 (2020-24). [S25][S29]
Davidson / Nashville	Must remain a second large Democratic anchor.	2024: Harris 62.7%. 2018 Bredesen reached 70.65%. [S25][S27]
Hamilton / Chattanooga	A competitive or near-even result would materially reduce GOP statewide margin.	2024 Harris 42.7%; 2024 Senate Johnson 41.7%. [S25]
Knox / Knoxville	Large red metro where a Democrat needs substantial improvement.	2024 Harris 39.5%; county total about 222k presidential votes. [S25][S26]
Rutherford / Murfreesboro	Fast-growth suburban county; 2018 Bredesen reached 46.1%, a useful crossover benchmark.	2024 Harris 38.4%; 2024 population about 377k. [S25][S30]
Williamson	High-income/college-educated suburban test of anti-nationalization crossover.	2024 Harris 33.0%; Bredesen 40.44% in 2018; 2025 population estimate ~272k. [S25][S27][S30]
Montgomery / Clarksville	Younger/military-influenced county where Dems have run around 40%.	2024 Harris 40.0%. [S25]
Wilson / Sumner / Maury	Republican Nashville-ring counties; a Democrat needs to cut margins dramatically.	2024 Harris shares about 29.4%, 28.5%, 27.2%. [S26]
Rural / small-county Tennessee	The decisive statewide constraint.	Outside the ten modeled counties, Harris's share was only about 21% in the report's reconstructed 2024 vote template. [S26]

Voter-group implications

- **Black voters.** High participation in Shelby and Davidson is mathematically indispensable because those counties supply the largest Democratic net-vote margins.
- **College-educated suburban voters and women.** The 2018 Bredesen performance in Rutherford and Williamson shows that Democratic improvement in high-growth suburbs can occur even in a Republican state, although it was insufficient to win. [S27]
- **Younger voters.** Green's platform on housing, childcare, marijuana and abortion potentially overlaps issues that are salient among younger voters, but no current Tennessee cross-tab polling was found to quantify the effect.
- **Working-class and rural-health voters.** Medicaid expansion, rural hospitals, wages and grocery costs provide a policy basis for competing outside the urban core; whether they override partisan identity is unproven.
- **Trump-friendly but Blackburn-less-loyal Republicans.** The Republican primary provides evidence that 56.4% of GOP primary voters chose Rose or Fritts, but primary preference is not equivalent to general-election defection. Any crossover estimate should therefore be treated as speculative. [S13]

7. Blackburn: Structural Strengths, Vulnerabilities, and the Contrast Battlefield

Strengths verified in the public record

- **Statewide name recognition.** Blackburn has won two statewide U.S. Senate elections and previously served 16 years in the U.S. House. Reuters described her as the clear favorite after the primary. [S22]
- **Trump/MAGA support.** Her campaign prominently features Donald Trump's endorsement and explicitly backs the America First agenda. [S17]
- **Fundraising and outside infrastructure.** Her campaign had roughly \$2.69M cash on hand at the pre-primary filing cutoff; aligned PACs had raised about \$12M during the cycle. [S20][S21]
- **Issue alignment with Republican Tennessee.** Immigration, guns, abortion opposition, school choice, tax cuts and conservative cultural issues are central to her official platform. [S16]

- **Advertising capacity.** Her campaign spent roughly \$5.62M on advertising/media through the latest pre-primary filing aggregate; Smart Media Group alone received about \$4.38M. [S20]

Potential vulnerabilities documented by the campaign environment

- **Washington insider frame.** Blackburn is a long-serving federal politician. Green can factually contrast local government with Washington tenure, though whether voters see that as a negative is uncertain.
- **Primary opposition.** Rose and Fritts combined for 56.4% of the GOP primary vote, and Rose beat Blackburn in several counties including Davidson, Wilson and Sumner. This shows intraparty resistance but not automatic general-election crossover. [S13]
- **Nationalization risk in a bad GOP year.** Reuters/Ipsos put Trump approval at 33% nationally on Aug. 24 amid the Iran war and inflation concerns. A national anti-administration wave could reduce the normal Republican advantage, though Tennessee may remain more Republican than the country. [S33]
- **Donor/interest-group attacks.** Tennessee Lookout reported scrutiny of large donations to Blackburn-aligned PACs from School Freedom Fund, Jeff Yass, Advance Financial, Anthropic and others, alongside earlier dark-money attacks in the GOP primary. [S21]

Likely Blackburn attack lines already supported by her platform and advertising

The most obvious contrasts are immigration/ICE, gun regulation, abortion, marijuana, private prisons, school vouchers and Green's Memphis base. Blackburn has already run hard-line deportation advertising and makes illegal immigration, gun rights, right-to-life and conservative cultural issues central to her official issue page. [S16][S18]

A neutral assessment of the optimal Green response cannot be issued as campaign advice. The factual communications choice visible in Green's own platform, however, is to connect controversial positions back to state-level governance themes - public safety, family costs, healthcare, schools and local control - rather than contesting every national partisan frame on its own terms. [S4][S5]

8. Money, Donors, PACs, and Organizational Capacity

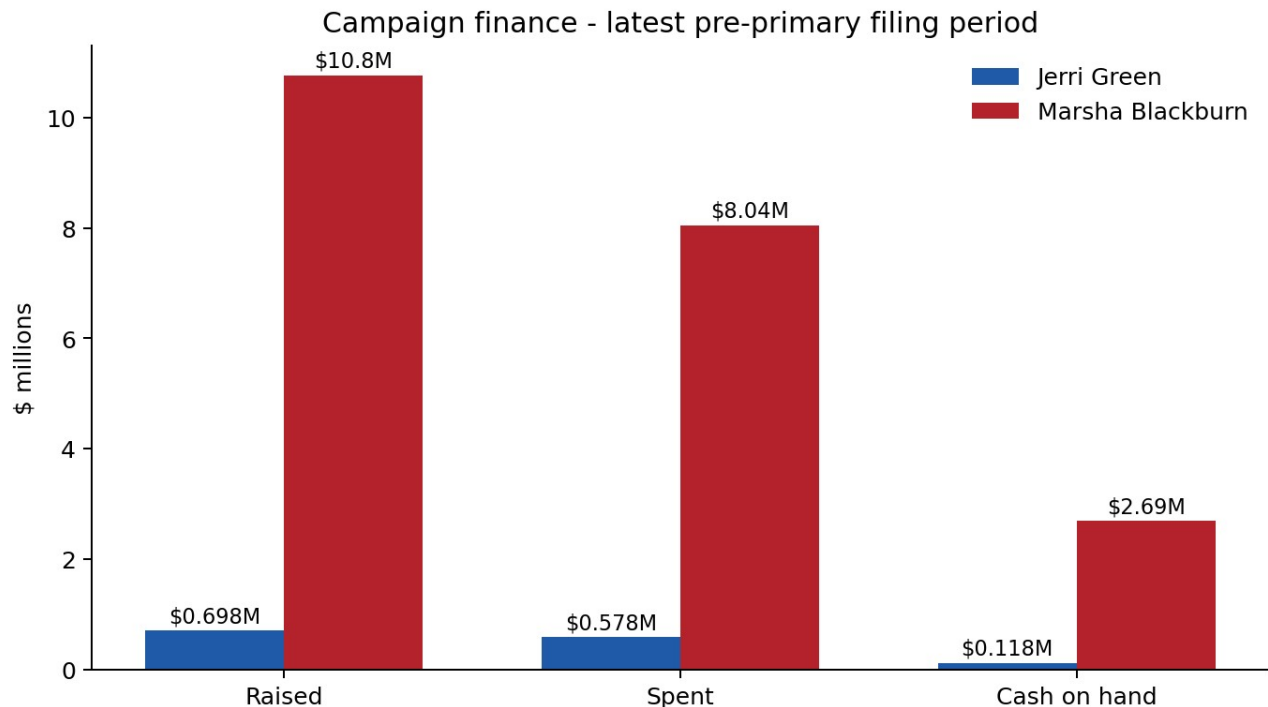


Figure 5. Latest pre-primary filing-period aggregates. Amounts are not synchronized real-time balances after August 6. [S9][S20]

Metric	Green	Blackburn	Interpretation
Raised (filing aggregate)	\$698,293	\$10,766,081	Blackburn campaign about 15x Green by this measure. [S9][S20]
Spent	\$578,428	\$8,045,472	Blackburn entered general election after far heavier primary media spending. [S9][S20]
Cash on hand	\$118,002	\$2,691,224	Large immediate resource gap.

			[S9][S20]
Individual donors	8,435	20,386	Green has broader small-dollar profile relative to her total; Blackburn has much larger network. [S9][S20]
Median individual gift	\$25	\$37	Both show meaningful small-dollar participation; Blackburn also attracts large checks. [S9][S20]
Out-of-state located dollars	~6%	~28%	Green's itemized location profile was more Tennessee-heavy at filing cutoff. [S9][S20]

Outside groups

Blackburn. Tennessee Lookout reported that Tennessee Freedom Fund and Team Tennessee PACs supporting Blackburn consolidated after raising roughly \$12 million in the cycle. Reported major donors included School Freedom Fund (\$4.81M), Jeff Yass (\$1M), Advance Financial (\$800k), Tamara Stephens (\$279k), Spencer Patton (\$250k) and Anthropic (\$250k). [S21]

Green. The Progress Fund gave \$15,400 to Green. Her campaign has endorsements from labor/education figures and organizations, but the financial record reviewed does not show anything remotely comparable to Blackburn's outside-PAC scale. [S10]

DGA and national Democratic support. The DGA publicly lists Tennessee as an open Republican-held governorship and has said it intends to go on offense in red and swing states, but this research found no DGA announcement, as of Aug. 24, committing a specific dollar amount or independent expenditure to Green. Any large DGA investment should therefore be treated as possible, not verified. [S34]

Tennessee Democratic Party. TNDP is organizing for the 2026 cycle and publicly emphasizes affordability and working-family economics, but no source reviewed establishes a general-election spending commitment comparable to Blackburn's aligned PACs. [S35]

9. Polling: What Exists, What Does Not

Poll / field date	Sample	Blackburn	Green	Other / undecided	Caveat
Targoz / Beacon, Apr. 20-27, 2026	1,157-1,200 RV	51%	27%	22%	Pre-primary; sample count differs slightly by aggregator presentation. [S23][S24]
Quantus Insights, Aug. 5-7, 2025	600 RV	49%	28%	23% combined categories	Very early; Republican-associated pollster. [S23][S24]

No reliable post-August 6 public general-election poll was located in the sources reviewed as of August 24. The existing polls are therefore directional baselines, not current snapshots. [S23][S24]

Cross-tabs

The publicly indexed summaries reviewed did not provide a sufficiently complete set of Green-Blackburn cross-tabs by party, region, gender, race, education and age. This report therefore does not invent such subgroup numbers. Where demographic effects are discussed, they are based on election returns, Census/ACS context and historical patterns rather than a current poll.

Race ratings

Forecaster	Rating	Date shown by TN Firefly
Inside Elections	Solid R	Aug. 28, 2025
Race to the WH	Safe R	June 19, 2026
RealClearPolitics	Solid R	June 5, 2026
Sabato's Crystal Ball	Safe R	Sept. 4, 2025
Cook Political Report	Safe R	Sept. 11, 2025

These ratings are third-party assessments, not this report's own ranking. [S23]

10. Advertising, Digital, Field, and Regional Differentiation

VERIFIED PRIMARY RECORD. Green's spending already shows a mixed-media operation: advertising/media, direct mail/printing, Facebook, consulting, field contact and texting/phone vendors. [S9]

EXPECTED GENERAL-ELECTION CHANNELS. Based on standard statewide campaigns and Green's existing vendor mix, a continued blend of TV/CTV/streaming, social video, YouTube, Meta platforms, direct mail, earned local news, radio, volunteer canvassing, phone/text contact, churches and community organizations is plausible. This is a descriptive projection, not a recommendation.

Region	Existing political structure	Likely message emphasis implied by public platforms
Memphis / Shelby	Largest Democratic base; Green home region.	Turnout, biography, public schools, local public safety, affordability.
Nashville / Davidson	Second Democratic anchor; high-growth metro.	Affordability, housing, childcare, schools, state-vs-local governance.
Knoxville / Knox	Large Republican metro with university/educated voters.	Healthcare, education, local economy, pragmatic governance.
Chattanooga / Hamilton	More competitive metro than most East Tennessee.	Healthcare, jobs, education, infrastructure.
Tri-Cities / Upper East TN	Very Republican region, older/rural mix.	Rural hospitals, healthcare, roads, agriculture, cost of living.
Rural Middle/West/East	Republican margins often overwhelming.	Grocery tax, healthcare access, farm/rural infrastructure, wages; social-issue conflicts remain.

Blackburn has far more capacity to saturate statewide television and digital inventory. Green therefore faces a basic communications asymmetry: earned media and candidate travel have higher relative value for her than for a campaign able to buy sustained statewide reach. This is an inference from the finance data, not a prescriptive instruction. [S9][S20]

11. Issue Agenda: Kitchen-Table Economics vs. National Culture War

The strongest evidence for an affordability-centered campaign comes from the candidates themselves and the current environment. Green's platform repeatedly leads with groceries, housing, childcare, healthcare and wages. TNDP uses similar language. National CPI was still 3.4% year-over-year in July, with food up 3.0% and energy up 14.7%. [S4][S31][S35]

Tennessee's labor market, however, is not in obvious recession: the July 2026 state unemployment rate was 3.4%, below the 4.1% U.S. rate, and Tennessee payrolls were up year-over-year. That weakens any simple "economic collapse" narrative and shifts the economic argument toward prices, household costs and distribution rather than joblessness. [S32]

Issue family	Green platform salience	General-election dynamic
Groceries / household costs	Very high	Low-complexity economic contrast; current inflation data keeps affordability salient.
Healthcare / Medicaid / rural hospitals	Very high	Can be localized outside cities; clear policy difference.
Public schools / vouchers / teacher pay	Very high	State-level governing issue with organized constituencies on both sides.
Housing / childcare / wages	High	Especially relevant in growth metros and working-family budgets.
Abortion rights	High	Potentially mobilizing, but Tennessee partisan polarization creates counter-mobilization.
Gun safety	High in Green biography/platform	Public-safety case competes with strong GOP gun-rights identity.
Immigration / ICE	High conflict	Blackburn is likely to make this a defining nationalized contrast. [S18]

The report does not rank which issue Green "should" emphasize. The factual strategic tension is that abortion and gun policy may motivate parts of the Democratic coalition, while affordability, healthcare and schools offer a broader state-governance frame. How the campaign allocates attention among them will affect whether the race is perceived as a referendum on Tennessee services or on national partisan identity.

12. The 2026 National Midterm Environment

Selected national/state environment indicators as of August 24, 2026

33%

Trump approval
Reuters/Ipsos

3.4%

US CPI y/y
July 2026

3.4%

TN unemployment
July 2026

Figure 6. Reuters/Ipsos Trump approval and official BLS/Tennessee labor and inflation indicators. [S31][S32][S33]

As of August 24, Reuters/Ipsos reported President Trump at 33% approval nationally, matching the low point of his presidency, with war fatigue and economic concerns prominent. Reuters also reported independents leaning more Democratic ahead of the midterms. [S33]

At the same time, Tennessee's state unemployment rate was just 3.4% in July. National inflation remained above the Federal Reserve's long-run target, with headline CPI up 3.4% year-over-year, food up 3.0%, energy up 14.7% and gasoline up 24.6%. [S31][S32]

Two neutral national-environment scenarios

Scenario	National conditions	Tennessee gubernatorial implication
Democratic-wave environment	Trump approval remains very low; inflation/energy costs stay salient; anti-administration turnout rises; national GOP message becomes defensive.	Could narrow the normal Republican margin and make suburban/rural-health crossover more plausible, but Tennessee would still start from a strongly Republican baseline.
No-wave / normalized environment	Trump approval recovers or Tennessee voters separate state race from national dissatisfaction; economy remains stable; GOP base stays unified.	Blackburn's structural advantage, money and party identification remain dominant; Green's required crossover becomes much larger.

13. Campaign Strategy Framework and Timeline

The following is a neutral decomposition of the campaign tasks implied by the electoral arithmetic and the campaigns' public behavior. It describes categories that campaigns typically execute; it is not individualized persuasion advice.

Workstream	Concrete meaning in this race
Base Mobilization	Turnout operations in Shelby and Davidson; ensure primary supporters convert to general-election voters.
Persuasion	Compete for voters who supported Bredesen-like Democrats, independents and less-committed Republicans without assuming primary defections automatically transfer.
Geographic Expansion	Improve Hamilton/Knox and Nashville-ring counties while preventing collapse in rural Tennessee.
Candidate Rebranding	Increase statewide familiarity with Green's lawyer/mother/local-government biography.
Contrast / Negative Campaigning	Define differences on federal-vs-local focus, healthcare, vouchers, grocery costs, immigration, guns and abortion.
Fundraising	Close enough of the resource gap to maintain statewide communications and field presence.
Field Organization	Volunteer/contact network across metros, suburbs and selected rural hubs; early-vote/GOTV capacity.
Digital Strategy	Scale small-dollar fundraising, social video, email/SMS and low-cost targeted reach.
Earned Media	Use statewide travel, debates and local news to compensate for paid-

	media disadvantage.
Debate Strategy	Demonstrate statewide command of policy and contrast governing style; avoid being defined only by Memphis or national Democratic identity.
GOTV	Convert base and persuadable supporters during Oct. 14-29 early voting and Nov. 3 Election Day.

Phased timeline: late August to November 3

Period	Observed / expected campaign phase
Late Aug. - mid Sept.	Post-primary consolidation; staffing, fundraising, statewide reintroduction, earned media, independent-opposition research.
Mid Sept. - early Oct.	Paid-media expansion where resources permit; debates/forums; issue contrasts become sharper; regional travel continues.
Oct. 1-13	Third-quarter finance disclosures due Oct. 13 create a public test of whether Green closed the resource gap. [S15]
Oct. 14-29	Early voting; field operations and turnout become more important than persuasion in later stages.
Oct. 27	Pre-general campaign-finance report due, covering Oct. 1-24. [S15]
Oct. 30 - Nov. 3	Final GOTV, earned media, late advertising, legal/ballot operations, Election Day.

14. Four Numerical Scenarios

Model method. The report uses 2024 presidential county vote totals as a turnout template, then applies illustrative 2026 turnout-retention assumptions: 70% of 2024 turnout in Shelby/Davidson, 65% in the eight named metro/suburban counties, and 55% across the remaining 85 counties. Candidate vote shares are then changed to show what different outcomes would mathematically require. These are not forecasts.

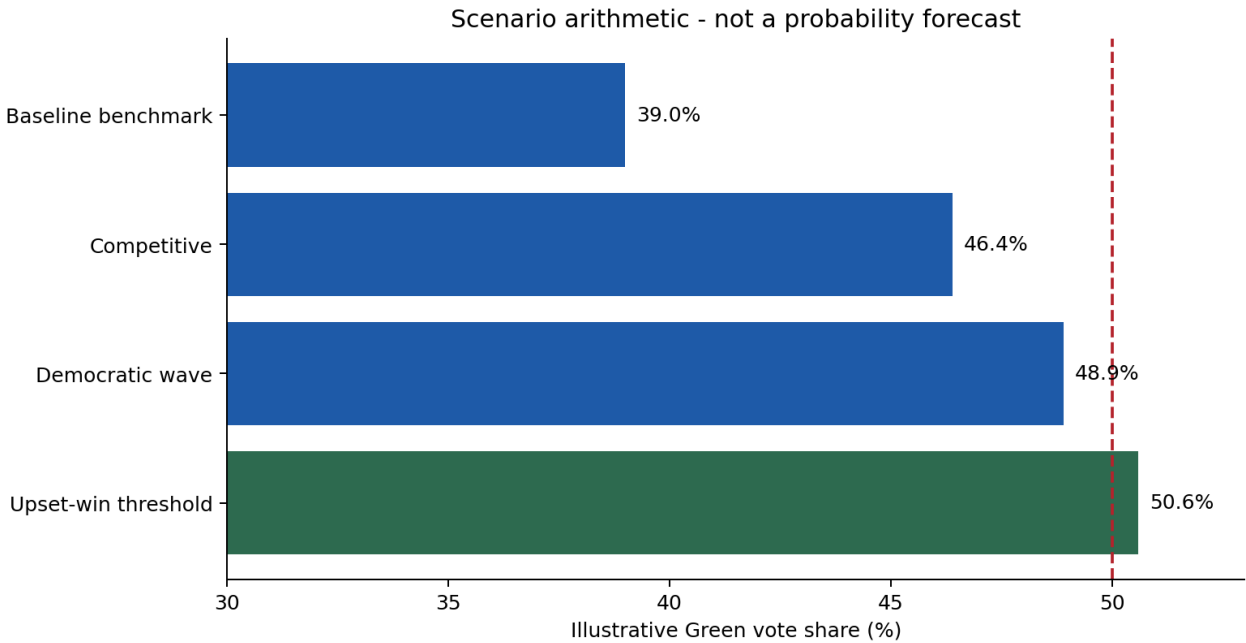


Figure 7. Four deterministic scenario outputs under stated turnout/share assumptions. Not polling and not probabilities.

Scenario	Assumptions	Model Green share	Meaning
Baseline Scenario	65% Shelby/Davidson; 42-45% Hamilton/Knox; 30-42% named suburbs; 25% other 85.	39.0%	Republican win under a modest Democratic improvement over 2024.
Competitive Scenario	72% Shelby/Davidson; 46-49% Hamilton/Knox; 35-46% named suburbs; 35% other 85.	46.4%	Race narrows materially but remains short of majority.
Democratic Wave Scenario	74% Shelby/Davidson; 48-51% Hamilton/Knox; 38-48% named suburbs; 38% other 85.	48.9%	A major national/state swing produces a close race.

Upset-Win Scenario	75% Shelby/Davidson; 50% Knox, 52% Hamilton; Rutherford/Montgomery 50%; Williamson 45%; Wilson 42%; Sumner/Maury 40%; other 85 average 40%.	50.6%	Narrow Democratic majority under extremely demanding crossover and turnout conditions.
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The hardest number in the upset scenario

It is not Shelby or Davidson. The most difficult assumption is roughly 40% Democratic support across the remaining 85 counties in the model, compared with about 21% for Harris in the reconstructed 2024 template. Even Bredesen's strong 2018 performance was only 43.9% statewide. That means a Green upset would require not just suburban improvement but an unusually large rural/small-city shift or turnout differential. [S26][S27]

County arithmetic summary

County	Upset share used	Why it matters
Shelby	75%	Needs a much larger net Democratic margin than 2024.
Davidson	75%	Needs Bredesen-level-plus performance and strong turnout.
Hamilton	52%	Would convert a 2024 R-leaning metro into a narrow Democratic county.
Knox	50%	Would erase a roughly 20-point 2024 presidential deficit.
Rutherford	50%	Would outperform even Bredesen's 2018 46.1%.
Williamson	45%	Still loses county but sharply narrows GOP margin.
Montgomery	50%	Requires near-even military/young-growth county.
Wilson	42%	Cuts a 2024 deficit by about 13 points.
Sumner	40%	Cuts a 2024 deficit by about 11.5 points.
Maury	40%	Cuts a 2024 deficit by about 12.8 points.

15. Victory Probability: What Can Be Said Neutrally

This report does not assign its own 0-100% win probability or endorse a candidate. It reports third-party public assessments instead.

Source	Assessment	Date / caveat
Cook Political Report	Safe R	Rating date shown by TN Firefly: Sept. 11, 2025. [S23]
Inside Elections	Solid R	Aug. 28, 2025. [S23]
Sabato's Crystal Ball	Safe R	Sept. 4, 2025. [S23]
Race to the WH	Safe R	June 19, 2026. [S23]
RealClearPolitics	Solid R	June 5, 2026. [S23]
ElectionProbabilities.com	Blackburn 99% / Green about 1% implied	Model-driven site, updated Aug. 24, 2026; not polling. [S36]
Smarter.Vote	Blackburn 95% / Green about 5% implied	Automated model generated June 25, 2026; not polling and less established. [S37]

Taken only as third-party context, the numerical-model range is therefore roughly 1-5% for Green, while established handicappers use Safe/Solid Republican categories. The decisive evidence behind that consensus is Tennessee's recent 30-point presidential/Senate Republican margins, Blackburn's resource advantage, and the lack of post-primary polling showing a material tightening. [S23][S25]

Developments that could materially improve Green's external outlook

- A strong national Democratic wave that clearly reaches Tennessee.
- A large post-primary fundraising surge and verified DGA/major outside investment.
- Credible post-primary polls showing Green closing into single digits.
- Suburban movement toward 2018 Bredesen levels or better, especially Rutherford/Williamson/Hamilton/Knox.
- Evidence of unusually high Democratic turnout retention in Shelby/Davidson combined with lower rural GOP turnout.

Developments that could worsen it

- Republican consolidation after the competitive primary.
- Persistent 15-20+ point polling deficits into October.
- Failure to close the paid-media/field resource gap.
- Campaign agenda dominated by immigration/gun/abortion nationalization rather than state services, if that environment increases Republican turnout.
- Weak turnout in Memphis or Nashville.

Final Strategic Synthesis

Ten conditions Green's campaign would have to satisfy for a plausible upset

- Push Shelby and Davidson far above their 2024 Democratic shares while maintaining strong turnout.
- Improve Hamilton into the high-40s or better and Knox into the mid-to-high-40s at minimum.
- Approach or exceed Bredesen-style 2018 performance in Rutherford and Williamson.
- Cut Republican margins substantially in Montgomery, Wilson, Sumner and Maury.
- Raise Democratic performance across the remaining 85 counties far above the 2024 baseline.
- Build statewide familiarity with Green beyond the Memphis media market.
- Reduce the campaign-finance and advertising gap enough to sustain statewide communication.
- Keep a visible state-policy agenda on household costs, healthcare and schools while surviving nationalized attacks.
- Convert at least some of the Republican primary anti-Blackburn vote into abstention, independent votes or crossover - without assuming it happens automatically.
- Benefit from a national environment that depresses Republican margins or turnout relative to recent Tennessee norms.

Five especially damaging failure modes

- Treating Memphis and Nashville turnout as sufficient by itself.
- Allowing the race to become exclusively a referendum on national Democratic cultural issues.
- Assuming Rose/Fritts primary voters will defect from Blackburn in November.
- Failing to build any recognizable presence in East Tennessee and the Nashville suburban ring.
- Entering October with no major financial reinforcement and no evidence of polling movement.

Five message families already grounded in Green's public platform

- Cost of living: grocery tax, housing, childcare and medical debt.
- Healthcare: Medicaid expansion, rural hospitals and prescription costs.
- Public education: teacher pay, school funding and opposition to vouchers.
- Working-family economics: paid leave, wages, labor rights and small-business opportunity.
- Local-government competence: state services, infrastructure and practical delivery rather than Washington identity.

Counties and voter blocs where performance would have to improve

Counties: Shelby, Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, Rutherford, Williamson, Montgomery, Wilson, Sumner and Maury are the most consequential named counties in the report model. Beyond them, the remaining 85 counties collectively are the binding constraint. Voter blocs with numerical importance include Black voters in the urban base, younger voters, college-educated suburban voters, working-class voters, rural-health voters, independents/moderates and Republicans who are less attached to Blackburn personally than to the GOP ticket. No current public cross-tab poll quantifies the exact necessary shares, so the report avoids invented subgroup targets.

Five variables that could flip the race environment

- Trump's national approval and whether a Democratic midterm wave reaches Tennessee.
- Inflation, gasoline/energy prices and household affordability through October.
- Blackburn's ability to consolidate Republicans who supported Rose or Fritts.
- Whether national Democratic groups make Tennessee a serious investment target.
- Any major debate, scandal, crisis or policy event that changes candidate perceptions late in the race.

Conclusion: Is There a Narrow but Real Path?

Yes - but it is narrow in a mathematically meaningful sense, not merely rhetorically difficult. A Green win cannot be produced by Memphis and Nashville alone. The model requires three simultaneous breakthroughs: (1) urban Democratic margins materially larger than 2024; (2) near-parity in Chattanooga/Knoxville and major gains in the Nashville suburban ring; and (3) a rural/small-city performance dramatically better than recent Democratic presidential and Senate candidates, helped by turnout composition.

The current Green campaign is partially aligned with that path. Its statewide travel, small-donor base, affordability message, rural-hospital/Medicaid position and public-school emphasis are consistent with the geographic problem identified by the numbers. Her primary results also show organizational reach beyond Shelby. At the same time, the public record reveals two unresolved gaps: the enormous campaign-finance disparity and a set of immigration/gun/abortion positions that give Blackburn a ready-made nationalization strategy. Those are structural facts about the contest, not a judgment about the merits of the policies.

The strongest evidence still points to a Republican-favored race: every established public race rating located is Safe/Solid Republican, the only indexed general-election polls are old but show Blackburn ahead by more than 20 points, and recent statewide Tennessee results are much closer to 65-35 than to 50-50. The genuinely plausible upset path therefore depends on a rare combination of national wave, resource surge, suburban realignment, unusually strong urban turnout and rural margin compression. [S23][S24][S25]

That is the central conclusion of the report: Green has a definable arithmetic route to 50%+, but the route requires performance outside recent Tennessee Democratic norms in multiple regions at once. Her current issue mix and statewide activity address parts of that challenge; the available finance and polling evidence does not yet show that the necessary statewide shift has occurred.

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Methodology and Limitations

- The report uses publicly available sources indexed through August 24, 2026. Primary results were complete in the source tracker but still labeled unofficial pending county certification by the statutory deadline.
- Campaign positions are described from official campaign websites and are not independently validated unless separately sourced.
- Finance figures use filing-period data and can differ among trackers depending on whether late contribution notices, in-kind items and committee transfers are aggregated. Cash-on-hand figures are tied to the filing cutoff, not a real-time bank balance.
- County target numbers are transparent hypothetical arithmetic based on a 2024 turnout template; they are not polling, voter-file targeting, or a prediction.
- No post-primary public Green-Blackburn poll with full demographic cross-tabs was found. The report therefore avoids fabricated subgroup estimates.
- Third-party win probabilities are reproduced only as external model outputs and are explicitly not the report's own rating.