VOICES FOR PROGRESS

POLITICAL ROUNDTABLE
Candidate Profile

Rep. Emilia Sykes (OH-13)

Pronunciation:

- E-mee-lee-ah Sikes

Term:

- Rep. Sykes was first elected in 2022 by 5 points

Running for Re-Election in OH in 2024

Rep. Sykes's Membership in Under-Represented Communities:

- Black, Woman

Electoral History:

- **2022 U.S. House, OH-13 General Election:**
  - Emilia Sykes (D): 53% (149,816)
  - Madison Gesiotto Gilbert (R): 47% (134,593)
- **2022 U.S. House, OH-13 Primary Election:**
  - Emilia Sykes (D): 100% (36,251)

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ABOUT REP. SYKES

Born and raised in Akron, Ohio, Rep. Emilia Strong Sykes grew up on the city's west side and has dedicated her career to strengthening her community. For 8 years, Emilia served as the State Representative for Ohio House District 34. During that time, she served four years in Democratic leadership, including three years as the House Minority Leader. In her first year as the leader of the House Democratic caucus, despite serving in the minority, the percentage of bipartisan bills passed in the Ohio House was nearly double each of the previous four years combined.

In 2022, Rep. Sykes became the first Black person elected to represent OH-13, where she has committed to fighting for economic opportunity, safer communities, and affordable health care for Northeast Ohioans, bringing along a spirit of bipartisan cooperation to get things done for those she serves.

Rep. Sykes has received numerous awards for her advocacy, including the EMILY's List national Rising Star award, Legislator of the Year from the Ohio Minority Business Enterprise, the Champion for Children award from Summit County Children's Services, and 30 for the Future award from the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce.

OH-13 DEMOGRAPHICS:

Party Registration in OH-13 (2022):

- Democrat: 44,817
- Republican: 41,493
- Independent/Other: 111,577

Demographics in Ohio-13:

- Non-Hispanic White: 75.7%
- Hispanic or Latinx: 2.7%
- Black or African American: 15.4%
- Asian American: 3.9%
- Native American: 2.1%

OH-13 Media Markets:

- Cleveland, OH

Outside of elected office, she engages her community as a lifelong member of her church, a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and a life member of the NAACP. Rep. Sykes graduated with high honors from Kent State University with a B.A. in Psychology and later went on to the University of Florida, where she earned a Juris Doctor with a Certificate in Family Law and a Master of Public Health.

**Biography sourced from Rep. Emilia Sykes' House website*

THE DISTRICT: OH-13

Ohio's 13th Congressional District is located in the northeast region of Ohio and includes the cities of Akron, Twinsburg, Hudson, Stow, Cuyahoga Falls, Tallmadge, Norton, Baberton, New Franklin, Green, Canal Fulton, North Canton, and portions of Canton and Massillon cities. Through redistricting ahead of the 2022 race, portions of the old 11th, 13th, 14th, and 16th districts were renumbered as the 13th. While a Democrat has represented the seat since the late 1970s, redistricting added a conservative county and some towns to the district, presenting Republicans with a competitive opportunity. If this seat existed in 2020, President Biden would have won by less than 3 points (11,456 votes).

Following the 2020 Census, Ohio's highest court decided on the fairness of the newly drawn Congressional and State House maps. Before the 2022 elections, Ohio's Supreme Court ruled that the maps were unconstitutional and favored the Republican party. However, due to Ohio Republicans choosing to run out the clock on the deadline to redraw the maps, the newly drawn district was still used in the 2022 election. The suit against the redistricted maps lasted about 2 years and ended with the ACLU of Ohio and the League of Women Voters dismissing their case, stating they are "willing to live" with the newly drawn districts as they stand.

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CAMPAIGN

Growing up in Akron, Ohio Rep. Emilia Sykes saw firsthand what it was like for everyday people to work hard and not receive the same advantages and benefits as people with different socio-economic backgrounds. It's fair to say that Rep. Sykes' early experiences shaped how she has fought for the people of her community as the Representative for Ohio's 13th Congressional District.

Rep. Sykes was first elected in 2014 to serve as the State Representative for Ohio's 34th legislative district and was re-elected 4 times. She held several chamber leadership positions during her tenure, including Assistant Whip, Minority Whip, and Minority Leader. While in the State House, Sykes helped double the percentage of bipartisan bills passed through the state assembly, demonstrating her commitment to working across the aisle to get the job done. When Sykes was first elected to Congress in 2022, she became the first Black woman to represent this congressional district. In her first term as a Representative, Sykes has prioritized policies addressing some of our country's most crucial issues like domestic violence awareness, worker's rights and protections, and access to quality health care. Rep. Emilia Sykes is running for reelection to continue to fight for the working and middle class and is the clear choice for Ohio's 13th Congressional district.

Electoral Prospects/Polling

The Cook Political Report rates the 2024 Ohio 13th House race as a Toss Up race.

In previous cycles, Ohio Republicans have heavily targeted this seat with a competitive recruitment operation and a war chest of financial resources. In 2022, the Ohio GOP had a newly drawn congressional map and with the news that incumbent, Rep. Tim Ryan wasn't running for reelection, Republicans felt good about their chances to flip this seat. The Republican nominee for this seat was Madison Gesiotto Gilbert, a former Trump campaign staffer and television commentator. She won the Republican primary with almost 29% of the vote in a crowded contest.

Democrats in Ohio were consistent in their messaging around the dangers of Gilbert's agenda and drew a clear distinction between Gilbert and Sykes. Gilbert was known for her far-right, extremist views and was unable to land a victory in the general election after running a "lackluster" campaign, particularly compared to Sykes. Millions of dollars of outside money was poured into this race opposing Sykes's campaign, and yet she still outperformed expectations and surprised Democratic party leaders by winning by a +5 margin in a district that was +3 Biden in 2020.

Ohio is a known battleground state and national leaders in each party pay close attention to the voting trends in the state. The 2022 Senate race featuring former Rep. Tim Ryan (D) and Senator J.D. Vance (R) was one of the most competitive races in the country. The fundraising and spending in this Senate race broke records across the country with how much outside money was poured into this race. There are remarkable similarities in this year's election compared to previous cycles. In another competitive Ohio Senate race, Senator Sherrod Brown (D) is facing Bernie Moreno who was recently endorsed by Trump. This is one of the key races to watch this November, and it is expected to be another record-breaking race financially. The implications of the Ohio Senate race will undoubtedly have a trickle-down effect on the rest of the ticket.

Rep. Sykes ran uncontested in her primary this cycle and going into November she is facing yet another far-right candidate in Kevin Coughlin. Coughlin served in the Ohio State Legislature from 1997- 2010. Coughlin is endorsed by a long list of local elected officials, and most notably Rep. Jim Jordan.

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During his time in the state legislature and his work in the private sector, Coughlin has been a staunch advocate for anti-choice policies. He has crafted an agenda that would set back worker's rights and economic stability for seniors. Coughlin defeated City Councilperson Chris Banweng in the March primary. Sykes has more than proven her ability to run and win, but mobilizing and motivating voters this cycle is going to be crucial for Democrats given that roughly 12,000 more Republicans voted in this primary than Democrats.

Amid all the competitive races this cycle, this race has seemingly "flown under the radar" but according to The Cook Political Report, this race has all of the "ingredients" to be one of the most competitive House races in the country.

Fundraising Fight

Sykes has kicked off fundraising this year in a strong position as she currently holds an impressive and sizable fundraising advantage over Coughlin. Sykes has raised just over $2.4 million in her reelection campaign and ended Q1 with over $1.6 million cash on hand compared to Coughlin's over $460,000 total raised and almost $77,000 cash on hand. Sykes' lead in fundraising this cycle can be attributed to her popularity as an incumbent and her clear and connected message

Like in so many races in Ohio, this race drew in a ton of outside money during the 2022 cycle. Roughly $1 million was spent in support of Rep. Sykes and over $7.6 million was spent opposing her campaign compared to over $1.1 million spent in support of Madison Gesiotto Gilbert (R) and over $6.3 million spent opposing her campaign. While there were millions of dollars spent in outside money on each side, Republicans outspent Democrats.

Campaign Plan

In Sykes's first bid for OH-13, she motivated and mobilized voters into a solid victory for Democrats. While this district remains Democratic-leaning, Republicans have gained traction in districts with this makeup in recent cycles and in the state of Ohio overall.

Fundraising:

Rep. Emilia Sykes' Fundraising:

- 2024 Q1 Raised: $486,885
- 2024 Q1 Spent: $123,296
- 2024 Total Cycle Raised: $2.3 million
- 2024 Total Cycle Spent: $861,733
- Cash on Hand: $1,649,815

Kevin Coughlin (R) Fundraising:

- 2024 Q1 Raised: $90,764
- 2024 Q1 Spent:$ 65,782
- 2024 Total Cycle Raised: $263,516
- 2024 Total Cycle Spent: $202,150
- Cash on Hand: $72,132

2022 Total Raised and Spent:

- Emilia Sykes (D)
- Raise: $2,498,412
- Spent: $2,447,735
- Madison Gesiotto Gilbert (R)
- Raise: $2,172,575
- Spent: $2,169,311

2022 Outside Money Spent

Emilia Sykes (D)

- Supported: $979,721
- Opposed: $7,626,341

Madison Gesiotto Gilbert (R)

- Supported: $1,189,805
- Opposed: $6,359,519

Like last cycle, Sykes' opponent has an agenda that threatens the advancements and freedoms of so many voters in her state. Sykes will need to yet again draw a clear line of distinction between herself and her out-of-touch opponent. "Come November, voters will reject his extremism and reelect Emilia Sykes, who has long been a tireless advocate for Ohio's working families," said DCCC Chair Suzan DelBene.

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With strong name recognition and the roots Sykes has laid for herself, Democrats are hoping that Sykes' journey to leadership is far from over. She has transitioned from an exciting newcomer to a respected incumbent making her case to her constituents again that she is the right candidate to serve OH-13 in Congress.

CONGRESSIONAL CAREER

V4P Candidate Policy Categories:

- **Strengthening Our Democracy:** CHAMPION
- **Climate:** DEFENDER
- **Environmental Justice**: DEFENDER
- **Healthcare:** DEFENDER
- **Reproductive Rights:** CHAMPION
- **Workplace Protections:** DEFENDER
- **Poverty and Economic Inequality:** DEFENDER
- **Racial Justice:** DEFENDER
- **LGBTQIA+/Gender Justice:** DEFENDER

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT AND CAUCUSES

- House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
  - Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Vice-Ranking Member
  - Highways and Transit Subcommittee
- House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
  - Research and Technology Subcommittee

- Congressional Black Caucus
- Bipartisan Women's Caucus, Vice-Chair
- New Democrat Coalition, Vice-Chair of the Affordable Housing Taskforce
- Congressional Asian-Pacific American Caucus
- Bipartisan Congressional Tire Caucus, Democratic Lead
- Democratic Women's Caucus
- Equality Caucus
- The Congressional Ohio River Basin Caucus
- New Democrat Coalition, Vice-Chair of the Affordable Housing Taskforce
- Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls
- House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force
- Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition
- Problem Solvers Caucus, Working Group on Pharmaceutical Affordability and Access
- Congressional Voting Rights Caucus

POLICY BACKGROUND AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2022, Rep. Emilia Sykes identified her top campaign priorities as ensuring good-paying manufacturing jobs and a robust small business economy that allows for a good quality of life in her district; protecting access to quality, affordable health care for all; and investing in the safety and security of her constituents through public safety measure that allows people to feel safe at home and in their communities. These issues, as well as voting rights and ensuring all families have access to a quality education no matter where they live, are the priorities she has heard most from voters. Rep. Sykes has spent her first term in office working to deliver on those campaign promises.

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Rep Sykes believes health care is a human right and has made it a legislative priority. The first bill she introduced was the *Mental Health Improvement Ac*t (H.R. 4097), which would extend the authorization for the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program. The BHWET program provides tens of millions of dollars annually to increase the supply of behavioral health professionals and improve access to behavioral health services which would address the gaps in mental health care in Ohio's 13th District and across the country. The BHWET program would ensure communities have a robust mental and behavioral health workforce to support people struggling with addiction and save lives. The bill passed the House in December of 2023 as part of the *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act* (H.R. 4531).

She has often tied her prioritization of health to her climate and environmental justice work. Rep Sykes has a 100% score from the League of Conservation Voters environmental scorecard. She has repeatedly spoken on the House floor against Republican-led bills that jeopardize clean water and has voted against Republican efforts to undermine the electric vehicle (EV) industry. She has often touted the EV industry in her district which is expected to create more than 25,000 jobs in Ohio. Rep. Sykes is a cosponsor of the *Protecting Moms and Babies Against Climate Change Act* (H.R. 3302).

Rep. Sykes has followed through on her campaign promise of fighting for greater economic opportunity, most notably when she introduced the *Lower Your Taxes Act* (H.R. 5953). This legislation would make significant improvements to both the *Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)* and the *Child Tax Credit (CTC)* while also ensuring that corporations pay their fair share in taxes. She supported and voted for the bipartisan *Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024* (H.R. 7024*)*, which would expand the CTC. Rep. Sykes has also introduced legislation to establish a tax credit and grant program to stimulate investment and healthy nutrition options in food deserts.

Rep. Sykes is a proud defender of our democracy. She has cosponsored the *Freedom to Vote Act* (H.R. 11) and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* (H.R. 14) and supports the *Democracy for All Amendment* as well as the *We the People Amendment*. She is an original cosponsor of the *End Prison Gerrymandering Act* (H.R. 2905), which seeks to rectify the manipulation of voters' places of residence to produce maps that benefit the party in power, including through prison gerrymandering, by requiring the Census Bureau to count incarcerated people at their last place of residence rather than the prison in which they are held at the time of the Census.

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