

Lauren Boebert Can Change Districts, but She Can't Outrun Her Past

CARPETBAGGIN' BOEBERT

The Colorado Republican has switched to the 4th District after an unexpectedly tough re-election bid. But securing the nomination in her new district is no given.



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Photo Illustration by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/Getty

At risk of losing her re-election bid, MAGA superstar Lauren Boebert is packing up her political baggage and moving it across Colorado, where she hopes a GOP-friendly district will give her rocky congressional career the cushy landing it desperately needs.

There's just one problem: She still might not win.

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After Boebert decided not to run in her current district—where she narrowly won in 2022—she's now running in a more conservative area a good distance from her current home. She's up against a crowded field of local Republicans, where her name ID could play a pivotal role as other candidates potentially split the vote.

But with her opponents all seeming to recognize her star power, Boebert is already facing the challenge of her opponents uniting behind a common message—that she's a carpetbagger more focused on national media attention than local issues.



Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO) departs during a break in a House Republican Conference meeting on Capitol Hill.

Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

That narrative is further complicated by voters being well-versed in Boebert's personal dramas, like Beetlejuicagate—where she and a date were thrown out of a

play for groping each other—and her personal tiffs with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA).

Boebert's book of chaos got another chapter over the weekend, when her ex-husband, Jayson Boebert, accused her of punching him in the face at a restaurant on Saturday night.

(Boebert's office disputed her ex-husband's account, claiming it was Jayson who got physical with the congresswoman.)

ADVERTISING

Regardless of who got physical with whom, it's yet another story about Boebert's personal life, serving as a distraction from issues affecting voters and instead magnifying Boebert's messy family problems.

All of these narratives—Boebert running to represent a district where she doesn't live, the intense media attention she brings, and her complicated personal life—are making for a potentially interesting GOP primary.

As University of Denver political science professor Seth Masket told The Daily Beast, Boebert jumping into the race adds a “wild card” factor to the primary.

Up against a crowded Republican field, she carries valuable name recognition and fundraising capabilities. But on the other hand, “she comes in with some scandal that could actually hurt her in this district where Republicans will actually care about that sort of thing,” Masket said.

Until last week, Boebert faced a grueling re-election bid in Colorado's 3rd District. She has represented the western swath of Colorado since 2020. But she almost lost her seat last cycle to Aspen City Councilman Adam Frisch—a Democrat in a decently red district.

Boebert eked out a win by 546 votes. But Frisch has leveraged the momentum to mount an impressive second try, already outraising her by millions of dollars. Boebert also stared down a serious primary challenge from Republican Jeff Hurd that was further endangering her run.

As the odds stacked against Boebert successfully clinging to one of the most flippable seats in the country, she cut bait, seeking refuge where Rep. Ken Buck (R-CO) is retiring in Colorado's 4th District. It's another massive district,

spanning the state's Eastern Plains and south Denver suburbs. The advantage for Boebert is that the district has a R+13 rating, per the Cook Partisan Voting Index. (Another metric by the Colorado Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission [pegs the district](#) at R+26.)

"It is the right decision for me personally, and it is the right decision for those who support our conservative movement. This is the right decision for Colorado, for us," Boebert said in a [video launching her campaign](#).

But even before Boebert got into the race, the competition to replace Buck had already been dubbed a "Wild West primary" in [local media](#). There are now 11 Republicans—and counting—running in the primary.

Conservative Colorado Rep. Richard Holtorf, who's running for the seat, did not mince words about Boebert's surprise entry to the field. He called Boebert's decision a "huge, huge mistake," and he added that her experience in Colorado's Western Slope does not qualify her to represent the Eastern Plains because "she doesn't have that knowledge."

"We're not gonna be fooled by the chicanery," he told The Daily Beast.

"If she's a fighter—and she purports to be a fighter—why isn't she fighting for the 3rd Congressional District? She's worried about standing up and fighting the Democrat machine. Well, why don't you do it in your own backyard?" he said.

Other Republican contenders are also [sounding off](#) on Boebert. Colorado House Minority Leader Mike Lynch [told Colorado Public Media](#) that he's worried Boebert's bid will turn the race into "political theater [rather] than us focusing on the issues."

"It's an unfortunate turn of the field, to be honest with you, because that distraction really takes away from the issues we should be focusing on," he said.

Boebert has given her Republican opponents plenty of fodder to deploy in the deep-red district. Last January, she got into a [bathroom shouting match](#) with Greene. And in September, cameras caught Boebert [vaping and getting handsy](#) with her date at a performance of the musical *Beetlejuice*.

"She's done some things to unfortunately embarrass herself, to not be the most upstanding representative she should have been," Holtorf said. "And you can use whatever excuse you want, that's still relevant."

Boebert campaign manager Drew Sexton told The Daily Beast that "nobody has fought harder" to secure the border and stop the flow of fentanyl. He also pointed to her more state-specific efforts stopping "anti-oil and gas land grabs" that span into Colorado's 4th District, providing clean water, fighting for ranchers and farmers, and reducing wildfire threats like the devastating Hayman wildfire.

“Congresswoman Lauren Boebert has fiercely defended the freedoms of all Coloradans and consistently stood up to the Biden Regime since taking office, which is what Republicans from every part of the state want to see from their Representative,” Sexton said in a statement to The Daily Beast.

Boebert also has a powerful backer in her corner—Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) endorsed her last week.

Whether or not voters care about Johnson’s endorsement on its face, Masket said that Johnson getting involved sends a powerful message about where the rest of the national GOP stands.

“The National Party is very much with her,” Masket said. “She’ll continue to have access to money. She’ll have access to a lot of her ties in national politics. This definitely helps her in the primary.”

But even if the national GOP appears ready to back Boebert, the state party is less thrilled about her district swap. Colorado GOP Chairman Dave Williamson told CNN, “We certainly don’t think it was the best move.”

Opposition from the state party—or even just a lack of support—could prove to be yet another pivotal problem for Boebert.

Still, the controversial congresswoman isn’t without advantages. Boebert is a fierce defender of former President Donald Trump and will almost certainly court his support. If he gives it to her, it would be an undeniable boost in the GOP primary.

Douglas County Commissioner Lora Thomas—a Republican who is not endorsing any candidate—said she thought Boebert’s district switch was “a brilliant move” that gives Republicans a better shot at hanging onto her old district.

Plus, Thomas said, Boebert’s Trump bona fides may be enough to woo Republican voters in her new district.

Thomas told The Daily Beast that she was “struck by the number of Trump 2024 flags and posters and banners that I saw as I drove through eastern Colorado.”

“And we all know that Lauren Boebert is a strong Trump supporter,” she said.

Another tick in Boebert’s plus column is that she has a staunchly conservative voting record to run on. The conservative group Heritage Action for America reported that 91 percent of Boebert’s votes have aligned with the organization’s “key vote” recommendations during her time in office.

“I think our voters in [the district] want to know how people vote and I think people who have been in elected office who have a record of how they vote will have a leg-up,” Thomas said.

Sexton also highlighted Boebert’s track record.

“Unlike her opponents, the Congresswoman will be able to share with [district] Republicans a proven track record of conservative wins and governance in Congress,” Sexton said.

But unlike several of her opponents, Boebert doesn’t have experience directly representing the district.

Troy McCue, the executive director of the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation told The Daily Beast he’s interested in supporting Jerry Sonnenberg who represented his region in the state legislature for over 15 years.

“I’m more interested to see who would represent the interests of rural Colorado instead of just keeping a Democrat-versus-Republican thinker in Congress,” McCue said.

In the case of a competitive GOP primary, Colorado’s unaffiliated voting bloc—which made up 45 percent of eligible voters in 2022—could prove critical since they can vote in either the Democratic or GOP primary.

One such voter, technology consultant Jenn Spykerman of Highlands Ranch—who is heavily involved in her local school board—is not eager to jump on the Boebert bandwagon.

“When Lauren Boebert mentioned that she was going to throw her name into the race then I thought, ‘Oh, this is now going to become a huge flashpoint,’” Spykerman said.

“We don’t want her here,” she later told The Daily Beast. “At least I don’t.”

Between Buck’s retirement in Colorado’s 4th District, Boebert’s move out of Colorado’s 3rd District, and Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) announcing plans to retire from Colorado’s 5th District, all three Republican congressional seats are up for grabs this cycle.

The open field in Colorado’s 4th gives Democrats hope they can recreate some of the Frisch fundraising magic. Frisch capitalized on an anti-Boebert blue wave to raise small-dollar donations, as well as soliciting money from deep-pocketed outside donors like Barbra Streisand and Ryan Reynolds.

A handful of Democrats are running long-shot races, including former Marine Ike McKorkle who lost to Buck twice. Lisa Chollet, chair of the 4th Congressional District for the Colorado Democratic Party, said she hopes Boebert’s entry into the race, at the very least, puts attention on Democratic candidates and issues that have been shut out in past cycles.

“I don’t think it changes the strategy or the messaging from the Democrats, but what it has done is put a spotlight on a district that has desperately needed some attention,” Chollet told The Daily Beast. “Everybody has written it off for years and years.”



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