

# STATE of FIRSTS



*A portrait of Sarah McBride's historic run to become the first trans Member of Congress, the backlash that ensues, and her fight for change amidst intensifying political extremism.*

**IMAGES:** [HERE](#)

Director:	Chase Joynt
Producers:	Jenna M. Kelly, Justin Lacob
In Association with:	XTR, Optimist, Level Ground Productions
Editor:	Chris McNabb
Cinematographer:	Melissa Langer
Composer:	Becky Gebhardt
Executive Producers:	Bill Harnisch, Ruth Ann Harnisch, Chase Joynt, Chris Panizzon, Zackary Drucker, Shannon Hunt Scott, David Steinglass, Patty Quillin, Bryn Mooser, Matthew Cherchio, Zach Ingrasci, Chris Temple
Co-Producer:	Dani Eddy
Co-Executive Producers:	Samantha Curley, Joanna Kim
Subject:	Congresswoman Sarah McBride (Delaware)
Run Time:	93 Minutes

**MEDIA CONTACT:** JSPR / Justin Solar / [justin@justinsolarpr.com](mailto:justin@justinsolarpr.com)

**LOGLINE:**

A portrait of Sarah McBride's historic run to become the first trans Member of Congress, the backlash that ensues, and her fight for change amidst intensifying political extremism.

**SYNOPSIS:**

**STATE of FIRSTS** is an all-access documentary following Sarah McBride's historic run to become the first transgender member of Congress. Throughout her campaign, she navigates the complex terrain between activist and electoral strategies for change, confronting mounting pressure from her constituents. On the night that Sarah wins, so too does Trump, underscoring a nation intensely divided and sending Sarah to an increasingly hostile new workplace.

Immediately after her victory, Sarah becomes the target of MAGA Republicans who ban her from using the restrooms in the Capitol, sparking national outrage and drawing attention to the escalating threats on trans people and trans rights. She is sworn in with a swell of optimism and support from her family.

As Sarah embraces her power in office, she must navigate transphobic attacks: on the day of her first floor speech, Sarah is misgendered and chooses not to react, but the second time this happens, she snaps back and goes viral. The film leaves her on the doorstep of her new job, facing high-stakes decisions under the pressure of the national spotlight.

**DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:**

Trans people have long been at the center of US culture wars, positioned as both red herrings and scapegoats for broader socio-political anxieties and debates. I approached this film understanding that Sarah McBride's run for Congress would reveal the pressures and contradictions of working within systems destined to – and designed to – fail minoritized communities. **STATE of FIRSTS** is a reckoning with the tensions between establishment and activist strategies of social change, and a summons to consider the possibilities and pitfalls of identity-based organizing. We could not have anticipated the force with which Sarah herself would become the central target of transphobic assaults in the rise of Trump's second presidency. It is from this intimate position within her campaign that we consider the enduring impact of the personal and political contexts shaping the future of trans life.

**ABOUT THE DIRECTOR:**

**Chase Joynt** is a non-fiction filmmaker and writer who works at the edges of genre. His documentary feature **FRAMING AGNES** was named a Best Movie of the Year by The New Yorker after premiering at Sundance where it won two awards. Chase co-directed **NO ORDINARY MAN**, which was presented at Cannes Docs-in-Progress before premiering at TIFF, and most recently **THE NEST** which premiered at Hot Docs 2025.

**ABOUT XTR:**

XTR is an Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning global nonfiction entertainment studio bringing the best stories to life. We work with outstanding creators to produce, distribute, and develop films, series, shorts, and podcasts across platforms. With a focus on audience appeal and a commitment to artistry, the award-winning studio also leverages a data-driven intelligence to guide the filmmaking process.

Since its inception in 2019, XTR has produced and financed over 80 documentary projects including *They Call Me Magic*, an Emmy-nominated series about Magic Johnson (AppleTV+); the Oscar-nominated feature *Ascension* (Paramount+); the BAFTA and Emmy-nominated, Peabody

Award-winning *Daughters* (Netflix); the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning film *The Territory* (National Geographic/Disney+); the two-time Emmy-winning *Lakota Nation vs. the United States* (IFC Films/AMC+); and the Oscar-nominated animated short *Ninety-Five Senses* (Documentary+).

XTR — Based on a true story.

**ABOUT Optimist:**

Optimist is a queer-owned production studio that works to nurture optimism through its films and impact campaigns. Over the past decade, their documentaries have been released on Netflix, Amazon, HBO, PBS, National Geographic, Rolling Stone, and The Atlantic. Optimist has screened their films in over 4,500 schools and community centers and helped raise over \$114 million for causes related to refugees, immigration, food access, education, and more.

**ABOUT Level Ground Productions:**

Level Ground Productions is an award-winning documentary production company exploring the edges of genre and story. Notable films include *UNION* (2024) which won a Special Jury award for the Art of Change at the Sundance Film Festival and was shortlisted for the Oscars, and *FRAMING AGNES* (2022) which won the NEXT Innovator Award and Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival and the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Documentary.