

America's Midterms: A Fight for Power

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On November 3, Americans will elect all 435 members of the House of Representatives and roughly one-third of the Senate's 100 members. With fewer than 30 days to go before Election Day, American politics has gone into overdrive.

The countdown to the midterm elections is now well and truly underway. In the United States, the final primaries ended in mid-September, candidates have been selected in all 50 states, and mail-in and early voting—before November 3—have begun wherever they are already available. Every day, candidates vying for seats in Congress take part in debates, podcasts, television programs, and roundtable discussions.

Voters are bombarded with a constant stream of emails, text messages, and press releases asking them for money, urging them to get involved, and calling on them to “save the country”—on both the Democratic and Republican sides. Campaign signs line the roadsides. The country has been gripped by the familiar political frenzy that accompanies elections every two years. This year, however, the chaos is particularly intense, compounded by unprecedented maneuvers on the part of the sitting president.

A few weeks ago, Donald Trump promised to give \$5,000 to “all adult Americans” if—and only if—Republicans retain control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. On Sunday, the president once again took to social media to declare that American elections were “corrupt.” Finally, in an interview with *Time* magazine last week, he refused to rule out the possibility of declaring a state of emergency before November 3.

With their poll numbers near rock bottom, Republicans are throwing everything they have into the fight, pouring enormous sums of money into certain swing states. On the surface, the campaign appears to be proceeding normally. But the political world is holding its breath, waiting to see what Trump will do before and after November 3. He has never accepted the outcome of the 2020 election.

The Republican Senate Candidate Has No Control Over His Own Campaign.

“To be honest with you, since we held that rally, everybody's numbers have gone down.” Republican Senate candidate Ken Paxton of Texas was less than pleased with the “help” the president provided a few weeks ago in Dallas, *The New York Times* recently reported. Donald Trump, who keeps urging American conservatives to “pretend that he's on the ballot,” sees things differently, however: he is returning to Texas this Wednesday, this time to San Antonio.

Once again, the purpose of the visit is to “support” Ken Paxton, whom the American press reported on Monday as having admitted that he does not “control” his own campaign. Republicans have invested approximately \$600 million in the state to retain a Senate seat they have held for decades.

The president's rallies, however, are drawing ever-smaller crowds. And with gasoline prices at historically high levels, Republicans in some of the country's reddest states appear to be questioning whether Trump can still make much of a difference.

In Texas, against all odds, Democratic candidate James Talarico is leading the race. In Kansas, which has not elected a Democratic senator in more than a century, the two candidates are running neck and neck, and the Republican contender is doing everything he can to distance himself from the president.

And for good reason: the state's agriculture-dependent economy is being battered by high gasoline prices, an influx of imported meat sought by the Trump administration, labor shortages caused by mass deportations of immigrants, tariffs that have sent soybean sales plunging, and a drought.

The Economy Could Decide the Outcome
Beyond the increasingly bitter campaign rhetoric, voters' judgments of the economy could prove decisive. High gasoline prices, the cost of everyday necessities, and uncertainty over the effects of tariffs may weaken Republican support even in traditionally conservative states. For the administration, the challenge is not simply to persuade voters that its policies are working, but to convince them that their own financial circumstances are improving.

Campaign appearances and promises of financial rewards may struggle to overcome a persistent

gap between the president's economic message and voters lived experience. The central question is whether Republican candidates can persuade voters to distinguish their own records from the broader discontent surrounding the White House.

"The Polls Are Wrong," says Donald Trump
In North Carolina, the Republican effort to retain the Senate seat held by Senator Thom Tillis has become so precarious—with the Republican candidate trailing by 10 points—that one of the largest conservative political fundraising committees has decided to suspend its funding there and redirect the money to other states.

Meanwhile, Democrats are also leading the race to reclaim Republican-held Senate seats in Alaska, Iowa, and Ohio.

Republicans currently hold a narrow 53-to-47 majority in the Senate. With Vice President J. D. Vance casting the deciding vote in the event of a tie, conservatives can afford to lose no more than three seats if they want to retain control of the upper chamber.

The Senate now appears to be within Democrats' reach. They are also well ahead in the polls in their bid to retake the House of Representatives – Muslim communities have put a lot of money, where they hope to elect more than 100 women to their ranks for the first time in their history.

In late September, the *Cook Political Report*, a highly respected, nonpartisan American political analysis organization, estimated that numerous conservative strongholds could now be within reach for Democrats in rural parts of Nevada and Oklahoma. It also suggested that several congressional districts in Florida, Tennessee, and Texas could flip to the Democrats—even though those districts had recently been redrawn to favor Republicans.

A Democratic Victory Could Reshape Washington

Winning control of one or both chambers of Congress would give Democrats greater power to investigate the administration, scrutinize federal spending, challenge executive decisions, and block parts of the president's legislative agenda. Control of the House would be particularly consequential, giving Democrats authority over committee leadership and congressional investigations. A change in the Senate majority

would also affect the confirmation of presidential nominees and the passage of legislation.

The midterms are therefore more than a referendum on Trump's presidency. They could determine how effectively the administration can govern during the remainder of his term—and how much room Congress has to hold the White House accountable.

"The polls are wrong. They don't consider the fact that Trump is campaigning," Trump declared last week. The president has announced his intention to travel across the country to support Republicans who would just as soon he stayed away.

The Aftermath Could Matter as Much as Election Day

Trump's repeated claims that American elections are corrupt raise a further question: how would he respond if Republicans suffered substantial losses? A disputed result, allegations of irregularities, or pressure on election officials could intensify political tensions and undermine public confidence in the electoral process.

Yet challenging an outcome rhetorically is not the same as overturning a certified result. Any attempt to do so would encounter legal, institutional, and political constraints. The crucial test would be whether political leaders accept the outcome established through the relevant election procedures—or seek to cast doubt on it without credible evidence.

In that sense, the midterms could test not only the balance of power in Washington, but also the resilience of American democratic institutions.

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