CLASS #5
THE MOTHER OF ALL MIDTERMS:
THE GAME-CHANGING AMERICAN ELECTIONS OF 2026

OLLI + POLS 484, Fall 2026

Sonoma State

ELECTION DAY!! 03 November 2026

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

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Our Sessions & Schedule

- **~~Week #1, 06 OCT 2026:~~**

~~Overview of class, topics, & how Midterms "work;"~~

~~Key ideas & measures in Midterms – the case of polling & assessment of what We "know;"~~

- **~~Week #2, 13 OCT 2026:~~**

~~The case of down ballot races and non-candidate campaigns;~~

~~How ballot measure campaigns work – and the curious case of CA as "The Great Exception"~~

- **~~Week #3, 20 OCT 2026:~~**

~~The Battlefield of Elections: The VRA, VBM, & CF, CFR (Voting Rights Act; Vote-by-Mail; & Campaign Finance / Campaign Finance Reform~~

- **~~Week #4, 27 OCT 2026:~~**

~~Presidential Ads,; How information works in Elections?~~

~~Mis-, Dis-, and Mal-Information in Today's Environment~~

- **Week #5, 03 NOV 2026:**

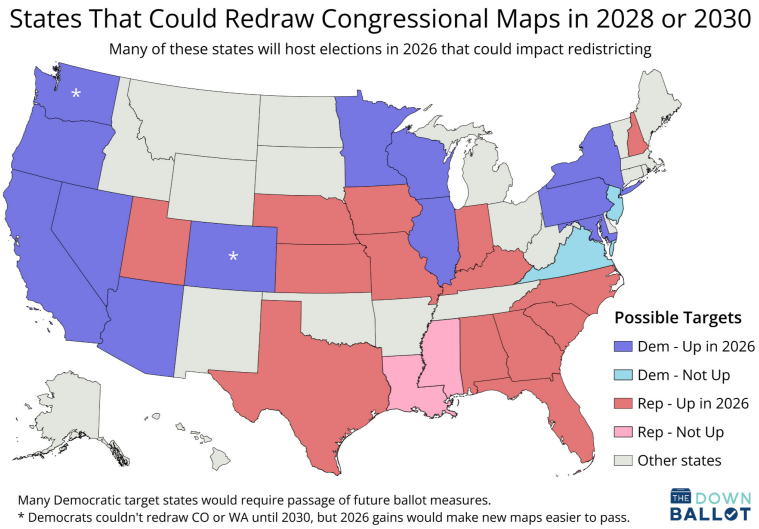
How information works in Elections? Mis-, Dis-, and Mal-Information in Today's Environment - HANDOUT
Election Day – What to expect?
What to watch for?
Where to get information & have your *own* analysis?

- **Week #6, 10 NOV 2026**

Post-Midterm Elections analysis;
What did We expect? What did We learn?
What comes next – the "Lame Duck" & DEC 11th

2

Before We Get Started…How These Midterms Matter…



3

The Ruling Facts About These 2026 Midterms….

- This will be **THE MOST EXPENSIVE MIDTERM** ever… ≅ $15.4 BILLION (est'd);
- This also will be ***THE MOST DIVERSE MIDTERM*** ever…;
- Buying NATIONAL TV Advertising has become less expensive than buying time in some media markets (like CA, TX, and NY);
- The timeline / dates /events – and consequences of what happens from The Day After (04 NOV) to the start of the 120th Congress (03 JAN 2027, a Sunday) – let's go over these…

4

Some General Midterm Election Trends – Over Time

- **First**: the President's party almost ***always loses ground*** in midterm House elections, as has happened in 20 of the past 22 midterm elections stretching back to 1938, and both exceptions reflected unusual circumstances (1998; 2002).

- **Second**: the President's **SECOND MIDTERM** election usually has the steepest loses, going back to the Civil War era;

- **Third: Who votes** in Midterm elections is really, really distinct from General Elections for President.

5

How Do We Explain U.S. Midterm Election Outcomes?

- **Referendum on the president vs. "Backlash" on the president?**

- Reversion to Party ID (PID) and/or ideology
- Response to economy & job approval
- Response to other issues (war/peace, etc.) / "October Surprise"
- Action of strategic politicians (such as "strategic retirements")
- Money and / or turnout races

- Reliable pattern of the 19th AND 20th centuries save 4 elections

- *What is "average" midterm presidential seat loss?*
- What "variables" determine the depth of seat loss?

6

The Big Picture – Why the Stakes Are High?

Today's politics are marked by –

Extreme polarization – the political parties are far apart, at both the leadership and mass levels;

Extreme competitiveness—the parties are very closely matched, with power hanging on the balance with each election.

7

7

Pay Attention to These Elements Today – Next Week or so…

- Late $$$ -where are the $$$ coming from and dollars going?
- Late Polling Trends / the "Break" (*NYT* / Siena College, for example)
- Early Vote ---> Trend Line ---> What are the FUNDAMENTALS this Election?
- Key Early Race Indicators on E-Night – what to watch?
- What the Elites are Saying, The Blame Game…

8

Reading the Tea Leaves…







9

What Do Our Models Show *UPDATED TODAY?*

- House Likelihood:

93% – 95%
of a Δ
From GOP to Dem

(Dems need +3 seats)

- Senate Likelihood:

72% – 74%
of a Δ
From GOP to Dem

(Dems need +4 seats)

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What Do Our Models Show *UPDATED TODAY?*

- House Seats: Lowest Limit

223 DEM seats
198 GOP seats

15 seats straight "toss-ups"

(Dems need +3 seats)

- Senate Seats: Lowest Limit

48 DEM seats
45 GOP seats

7 seats straight "toss-ups"

(Dems need +4 seats)

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What to Watch *DOWN BALLOT?* Governorships

- 36 Governorships are UP:

18 DEM
18 GOP

*GOP Overall controls 26 overall;
Dems control 24

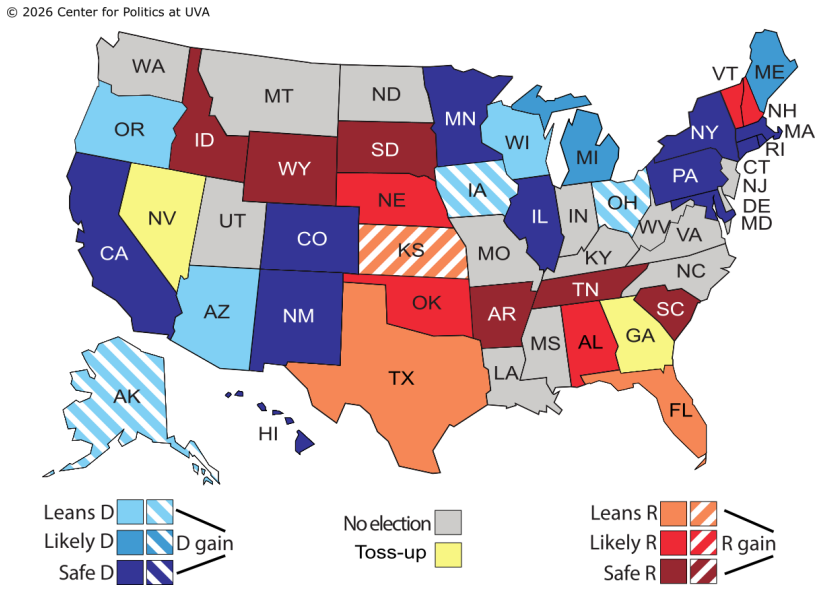
- Current Model(s):

24 states lean DEM
12 states lean GOP

Possible Dems pickups range from 21 to 24 Governorships

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How Larry Sees it… Governorships



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What Does Our UPDATED "Time for Change" (TfC) Model Predict?:

Republican generic ballot margin	Predicted number of GOP seats	Predicted change in GOP seats
0	213	-7
-2	208	-12
-4	202	-18
-6	197	-23
-8	192	-28
-10	187	-33

THIS TRANSLATES TO:
Conservative, Lower Limit DEM SEATS: +28 (99% Confidence Interval; and Upper Limit DEM SEATS: +38 (95% Confidence Interval) – IF the GENERIC BALLOT GOES to -9 (-10)? NUMBERS JUMP!!

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FiftyPlusOne

General election averages

61.5% DISAPPROVE 35.4% APPROVE

Presidential Approval

Donald Trump's approval rating for his second term.

See: https://fiftyplusone.news/polls/approval/president and more at: https://fiftyplusone.news/

52.7% DEMOCRATS 44.1% REPUBLICANS

Generic Ballot

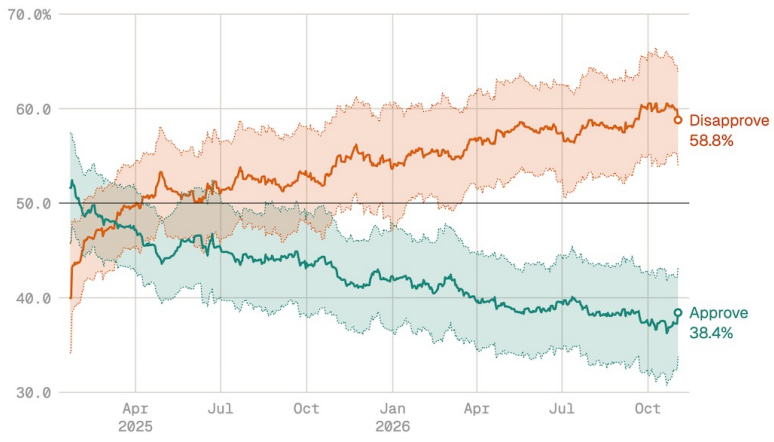
Will the Republicans or Democrats win the U.S. House popular vote this November?

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Do Americans approve or disapprove of Donald Trump?

An updating polling average of Donald Trump's approval rating and disapproval rating in his second term, accounting for each poll's quality, recency, sample size, and partisan lean

Approval/disapproval | Net approval



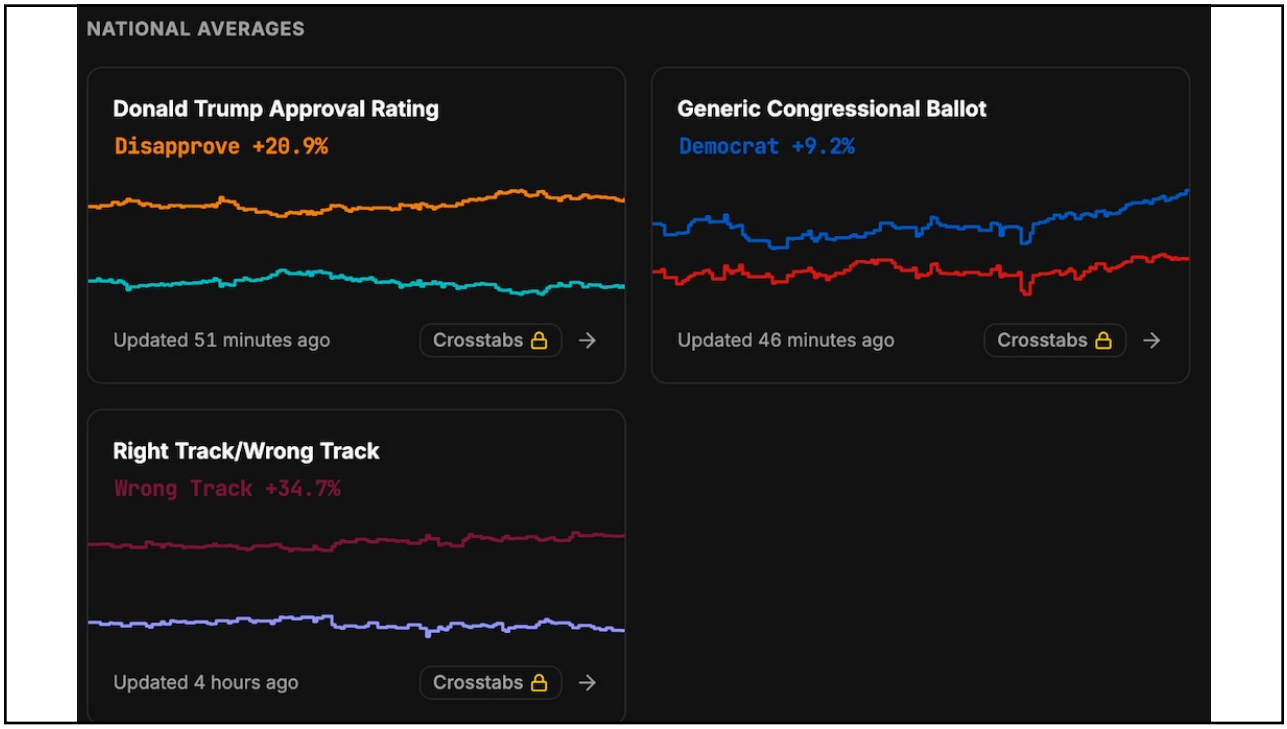
Note: 90% of polls are projected to fall within the shaded regions.

58.8
+
38.4
=
97.2%

DJT *up* .12 pts from last week

STILL At a – 20.4 point diff

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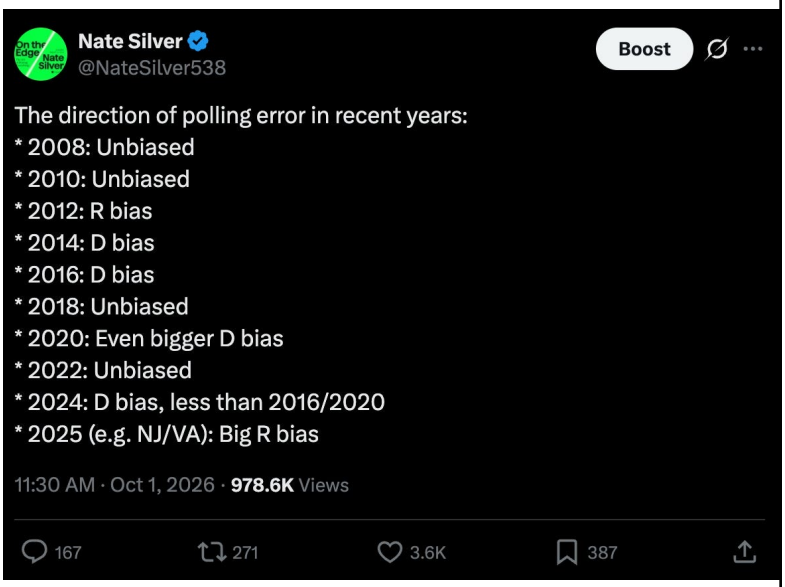

NATIONAL AVERAGES
Donald Trump Approval Rating
Disapprove +20.9%
Updated 51 minutes ago
Crosstabs
Generic Congressional Ballot
Democrat +9.2%
Updated 46 minutes ago
Crosstabs
Right Track/Wrong Track
Wrong Track +34.7%
Updated 4 hours ago
Crosstabs

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VOTES
Home
Elections
Vault PRO
Polling
Markets PRO
Forecast
Precinct Map
Decision View PRO
Find a ra
Generic Congressional Ballot
If the election for Congress were being held today, who would Americans vote for?
LV/RV/Adults
CANDIDATE
Democrat
51.60%
CANDIDATE
Republican
42.40%
60%
55%
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%

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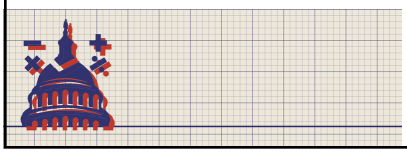
Polling Bias Ahead?



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Here is the Broader Polling Bias Concern for 2026…

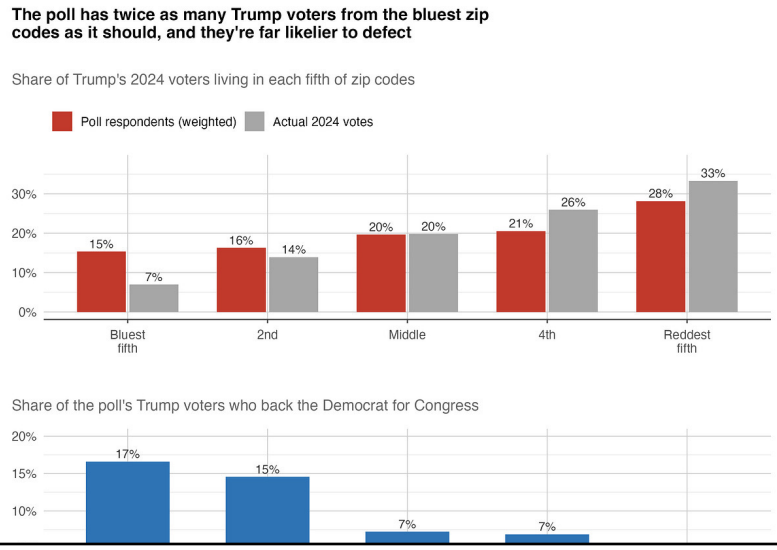
- **WEIGHTING: Most reputable pollsters "weight" about 15% of 2024 Trump voters into polls in the bluest zip codes, which are home to a fifth of American adults.**
- **YET ONLY about 7% of Trump's actual votes were cast there.**
- These urban Republicans are far more likely than other Trump voters to back Democrats for Congress, so there is a concern this bias may end up artificially inflating support for Democrats on the House generic ballot.



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Broader Polling Bias Concern for 2026…, cont'd

- **HERE'S THAT WEIGHTING in Practice – a Case Study in Polling:**



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What to Consider With All of These Polls?

Polling Questions - for General Elections:

1. Who conducted the poll?
2. Where, how, and when was the poll conducted? ***REGION MATTERS!!***
3. This close (+/- 7 days out to E-Day), ***LVs*** or RVs?
4. ***Outlier poll?*** Or consistent results with others?;
5. National polling sample? ***Or state-level poll?;***
6. ***Track-record operation?*** Or candidate – or campaign operation conducting the poll?
7. Leading questions? ***Can You actually see / find / examine the questions asked?***

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Which way could the polls miss?

Possible sources of error in 2026 midterm polls, by the party they would overstate

Polls may be too favorable to Democrats	Polls may be too favorable to Republicans
Too few rural Trump voters Our poll has twice as many Trump voters from the bluest zip codes as it should, and they're likelier to back Democrats	**Trump voters who stop admitting it** Soured Trump voters stop saying they voted for him, so weighting to 2024 inflates his loyalists
Discouraged Republicans skip polls Bad news for the GOP may make Republicans less willing to answer surveys, tilting samples toward Democrats	**Weights frozen at 2024** Past-vote weights and stale party-ID targets miss the electorate's shift toward Democrats
Low-effort respondents lean Republican If people who skip polls resemble the people who rush through them, polls overstate Democrats	**Missing disengaged voters** Low-knowledge Trump voters have swung toward Democrats almost three times as far as high-knowledge ones
Undecideds "coming home" Among undecided voters, Trump voters outnumber Harris voters nearly 2 to 1	**Undecideds break against incumbent party** In 2022, voters who were undecided before the election broke 55-45 against the president's party
Polls underestimated Republicans in 2016, 2020 and 2024 Final Senate polls overstated Democrats by 3.4, 5.4 and 2.5 points	**GOP-aligned pollsters flooding the zone** In 2022 they were over a third of late Senate polls and overstated Republicans by 3.5 points
	Polls underestimated Democrats in 2022 and 2025 Final polls overstated Republicans by 2.1 points in 2022 Senate races, and by 8.7 and 5.3 in the 2025 New Jersey and Virginia governor races

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Let's Examine Turnout (T.O.) so far…

CNN Politics

POLITICS · 5 MIN READ

Early voting data shows emerging signs of a Democratic advantage in the midterms

UPDATED OCT 1, 2026

By Ethan Cohen, Edward Wu

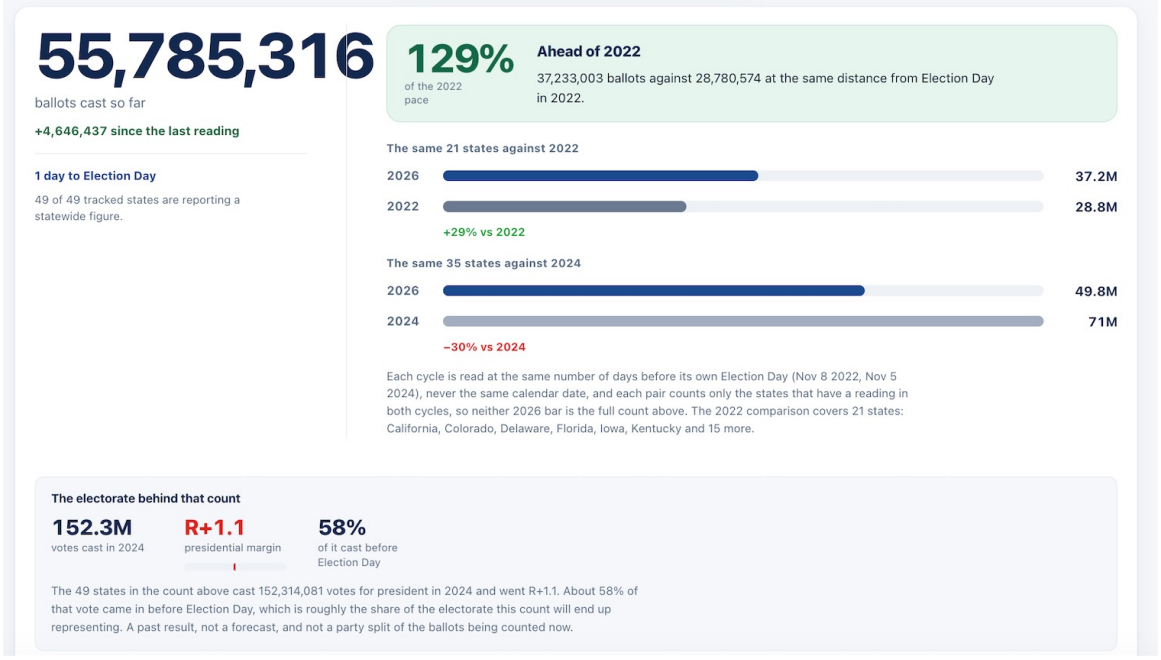


https://election.lab.ufl.edu/early-vote/2026-early-voting/

- ANOTHER EARLY VOTE WEBSITE:

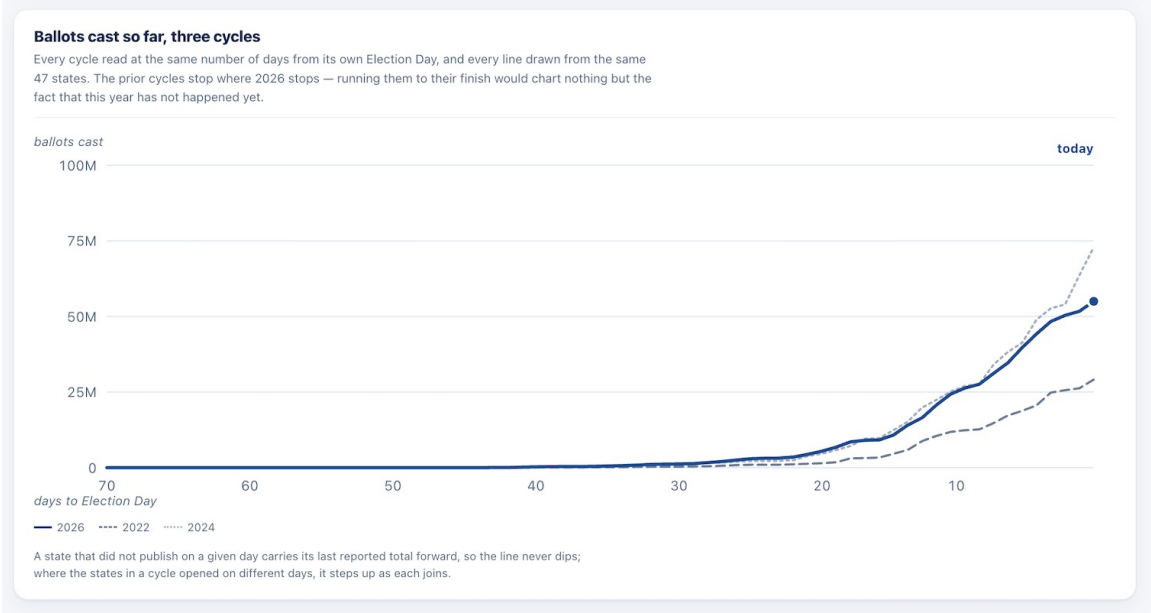
https://electindex.com/early-vote/

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https://electindex.com/early-vote/

25



https://electindex.com/early-vote/

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National Statistics

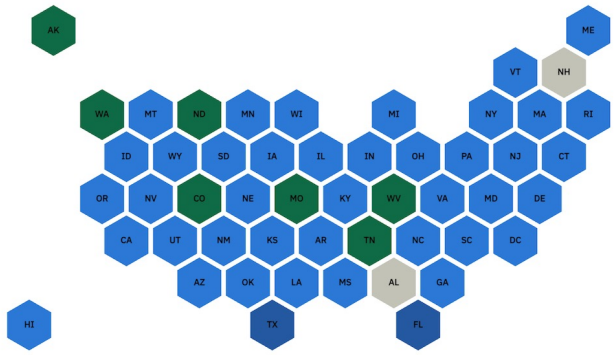
Total early votes	In-person early votes	Mail ballots returned	Mail ballots requested
57,537,172	31,872,117	25,665,055	61,331,911

Last updated: Nov 2, 2026 @ 8:47pm Eastern Time

Click on a state to display state statistics

Reporting Status

No data yet · Votes reported earlier · Votes reported today · Updated again



Where is the Early Vote?

Navigate here:

https://election.lab.ufl.edu/early-vote/2026-early-voting/

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Early Vote, Synopsis, Last Night, 02 NOV 2026

Detailed Statistics

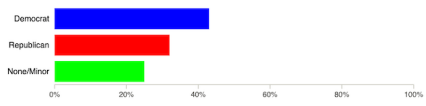
Total Voted | In-Person Early | Mail Ballots | Fast Stats

Total Voted by Party Registration

Reporting states with party registration data: AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, ID, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, NE, NV, NJ, NM, NC, OK, OR, PA, RI, SD, UT, WV, WY

Party	Total Voted	Percent
Democrat	11,723,865	42.9 %
Republican	8,669,992	31.7 %
None/Minor	6,924,660	25.3 %
TOTAL	27,318,517	100 %

Voter's party registration, as recorded on the voter file

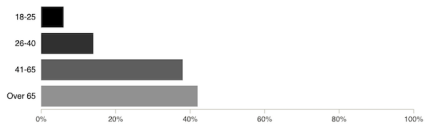


Note: Party registration statistics are for states that have party registration. These statistics are not actual votes. By federal law, election officials do not begin counting ballots until Election Day, although they may start the process of preparing ballots for counting in advance.

Total Voted by Age

Reporting states with age data: CO, CT, DE, GA, ID, IA, KS, MI, NV, NC, OK, PA, RI, VT

Age	Total Voted	Percent
18-25	803,526	6.2 %
26-40	1,751,906	13.6 %
41-65	4,892,441	37.9 %
Over 65	5,446,668	42.2 %
TOTAL	12,894,541	100 %



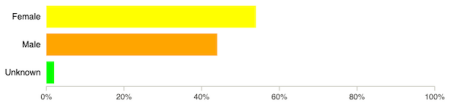
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Early Vote, Synopsis, Last Night, 02 NOV 2026

Total Voted by Gender

Reporting states with gender data: CO, GA, ID, KS, LA, MI, NC, WA

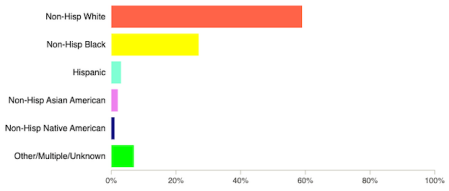
Gender	Total Voted	Percent
Female	6,682,597	54.2 %
Male	5,410,311	43.9 %
Unknown	235,110	1.9 %
TOTAL	12,328,018	100 %



Total Voted by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

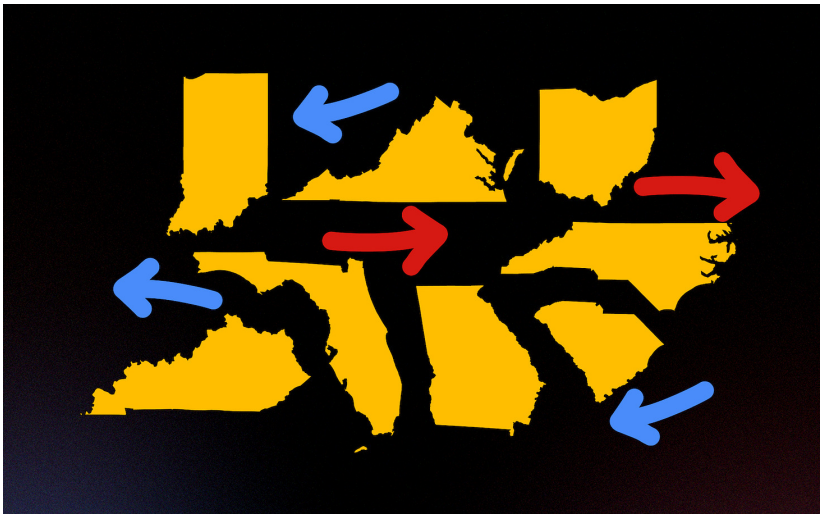
Reporting states with race and Hispanic ethnicity data: GA, LA, NC, SC

Race	Total Voted	Percent
Non-Hisp White	3,684,773	59.3 %
Non-Hisp Black	1,703,299	27.4 %
Hispanic	201,910	3.2 %
Non-Hisp Asian American	130,195	2.1 %
Non-Hisp Native American	32,024	0.5 %
Other/Multiple/Unknown	465,098	7.5 %
TOTAL	6,217,299	100 %



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What to Watch Tonight, Into Tomorrow & This Week…



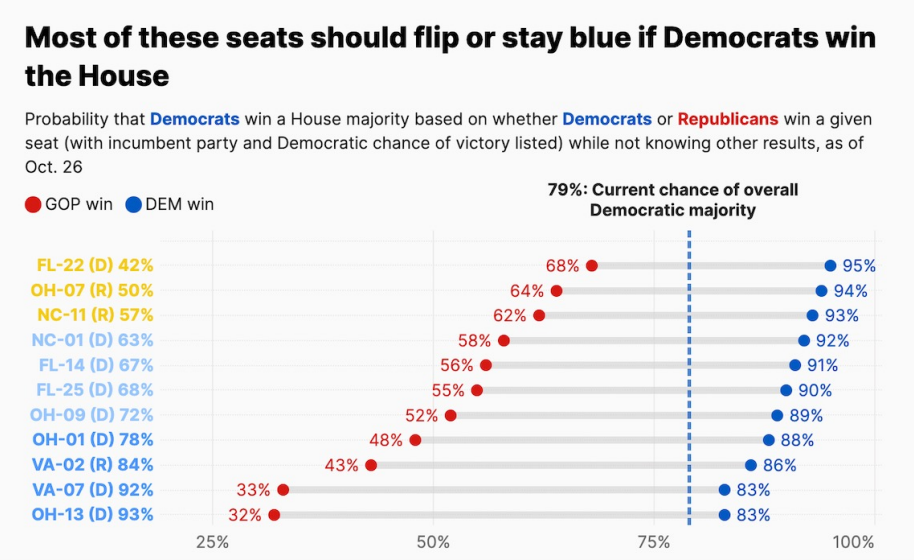
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The Early, Early Vote Results – Early Signs of Direction?

- Eight states with potentially interesting House races will have mostly or entirely finished voting by 7:30 p.m EST. Eastern: Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia.
- Early results in those states will tell us something about the trajectory of midterm elections in the House relative to the baseline set by our forecasting model which gives Democrats a 91% chance of capturing the House.
- The first group will signal if the likely Democratic majority is panning out.
- The second cohort will help indicate if a clearer blue "wave" is actually developing. And the third group includes seats that Democrats generally should not win, but could if things are going especially poorly for the GOP.

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These Seats Should Flip or Stay Blue, if Democrats Win the House



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Key Races to Watch – Then at *What TIME??*

- NC CD-1 vs. NC CD-11
- CO-08
- **New Jersey** and **Alabama** that both report early - will reveal more about swings in purple districts (i.e., New Jersey's 7th District) and turnout among Black voters (Alabama's 2nd District).
- The PA Races:

  PA-1; PA-10; then..PA-7; PA-8
- FL Races:

  FL-9 and FL-22
- TX Races:

  TX-34 & TX-35

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10 Most Competitive U.S. Senate Races:

- **Alaska (Sullivan, R)**
- **Florida (Moody, R)**
- **Kansas (Marshall, R)**
- **Iowa (OPEN R)**
- **Maine (Collins, R)**
- **Michigan (OPEN D)**
- **Nebraska (Ricketts, R)**
- **Ohio (Husted, R)**
- **South Carolina (Graham, R)**
- **Texas (OPEN R)**

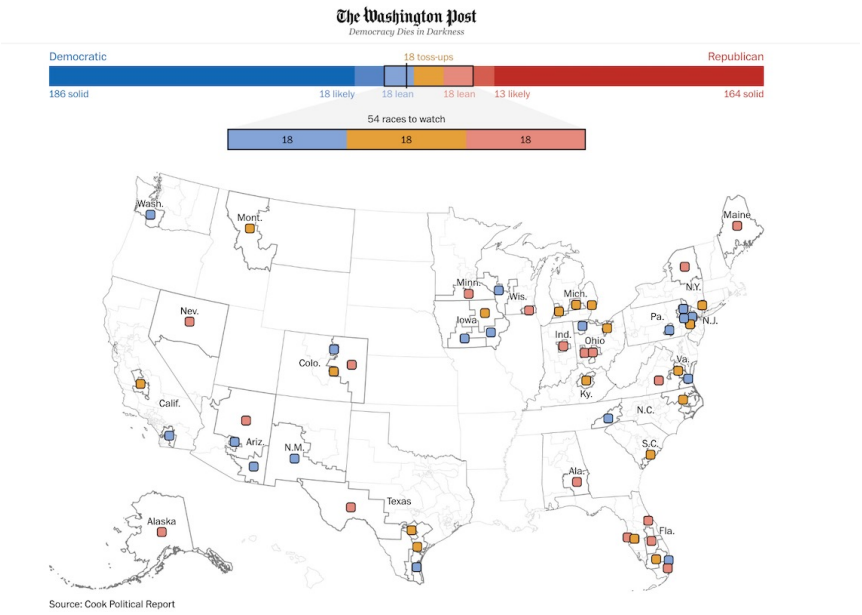
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10 Most Competitive U.S. House Races:

- CO-03 (Hurd, R)
- FL-09 (OPEN D)
- FL-22 (OPEN D)
- IA-02 (OPEN R)
- ME-02 (OPEN D)
- MT-01 (OPEN R)
- OH-07 (Miller, R)
- PA-01 (Fitzpatrick, R)
- TX-15 (De La Cruz, R)
- TX-35 (OPEN D)

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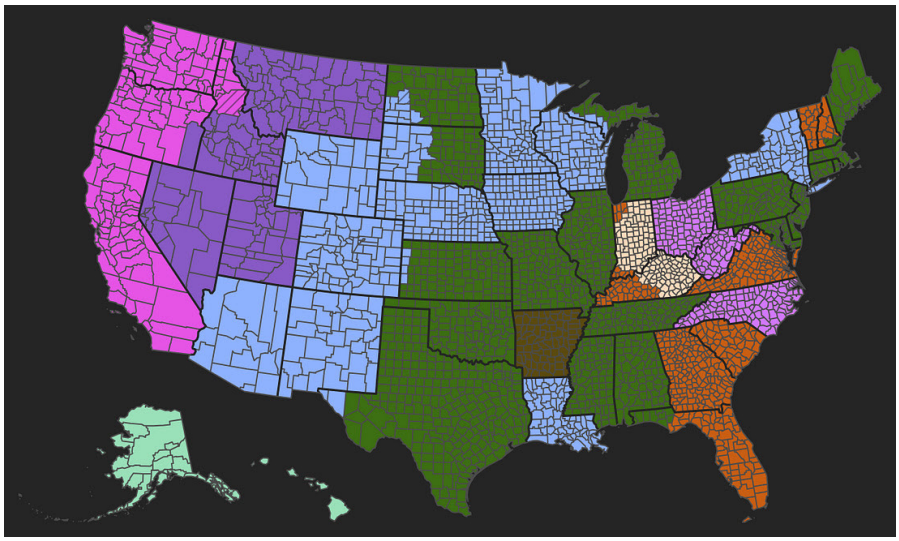
Washington Post, "House Races to Watch," courtesy CPR



Based on: https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings/house-race-ratings

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The Where and When For Tonight…for All 3100 Counties!

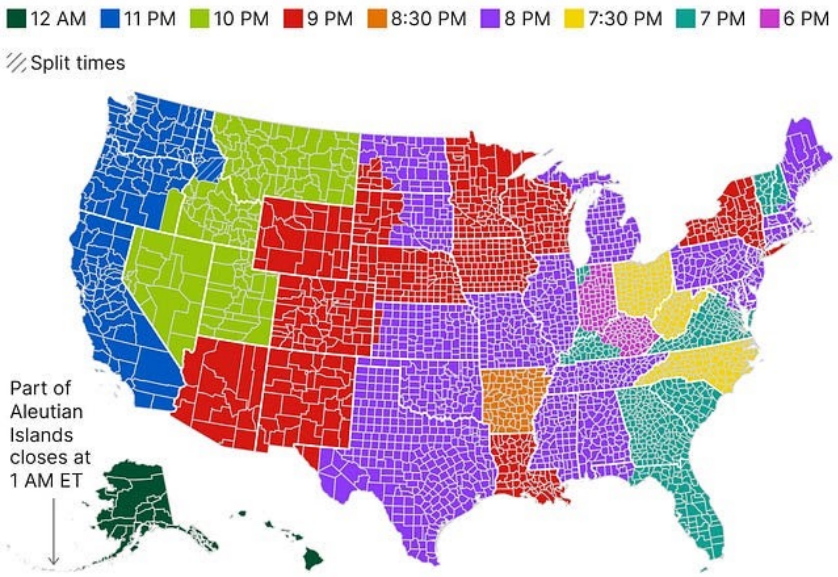


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The Playground for Coverage Tomorrow Night

- Election Night in America spans six time zones, 10 different poll closing times, and a gap of seven hours between the first poll closings and the last.
- Each national election features a slow start at 6 p.m. Eastern, when polls close in parts of Indiana and Kentucky.
- This is then followed by bursts of half-hourly and hourly closings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. that cover much of the country.
- From there, the western states wrap up from 10 p.m. on, with the westernmost part of the Aleutian Islands ending the night at 1 a.m.

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State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
Indiana	6:00 PM		82%
Kentucky	6:00 PM		77%

- **6 p.m. ET: Early Portents**

- Most polling places in **Indiana** and **Kentucky** close at 6 p.m. Eastern. In 2024, this included areas that cast around 4 in 5 of the total votes in each state. Neither of these states have high-profile statewide races, but returns from some locales could provide an early indication of how the country may broadly shift in this election.

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First Closing States / Areas

- **Place to watch: Hamilton County, Indiana**: Hamilton includes the affluent suburbs and exurbs north of Indianapolis. Traditionally rock-ribbed Republican, highly-educated and affluent Hamilton has trended left in recent years in part because of education polarization in the electorate.
- President Donald Trump carried Hamilton 52%-46% in 2024, a smaller edge than he enjoyed in 2016 or 2020.
- Keep an eye on how Republican Rep. Victoria Spartz performs in Hamilton County, which is part of **Indiana's 5th District**. Spartz is likely to win, yet how much ground she loses (or doesn't lose) from her 11-point edge in Hamilton in 2024 will be an early "tell."

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7 p.m. ET: First big poll closings:

- At 7 p.m. Eastern, we get our first poll closings in states that have major statewide races. The rest of **Indiana** and **Kentucky** conclude voting at that hour, while four other states — **Georgia**, **South Carolina**, **Vermont**, and **Virginia** — all finish. Most polls in **Florida** and **New Hampshire** also close at that time.

- **8 states partly or fully close at 7 p.m. Eastern**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
Kentucky	7:00 PM	✅	23%
Indiana	7:00 PM	✅	18%
Georgia	7:00 PM	✅	100%
South Carolina	7:00 PM	✅	100%
Vermont	7:00 PM	✅	100%
Virginia	7:00 PM	✅	100%
Florida	7:00 PM		95%
New Hampshire	7:00 PM		77%

Four of these states have high-profile U.S. Senate races that could significantly influence majority control. The most competitive appears to be South Carolina, where appointed Republican Sen. Darline Graham is only a slight favorite over Democrat Annie Andrews. Democrats are more clearly favored in Georgia and New Hampshire, while Republicans look to have the upper hand in Florida.

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- **Place to watch: Osceola County, Florida**. In Central Florida south of Orlando, Osceola County will provide a signal for how much Latino voters are swinging toward Democrats.
- By population, Osceola is the 12th-largest majority-Latino county in the U.S. And unlike Cuban-heavy South Florida, Puerto Ricans are the largest Hispanic community in Osceola, which makes it potentially more useful at anticipating potential swings in later-closing states like Texas.
- Osceola used to be clearly Democratic-leaning, but Trump went from losing it 56%-43% in 2020 to carrying it 50%-48% in 2024.
- In 2024, Osceola, FL had the biggest rightward (red swing from Biden to Trump. Trump won the County by 13 points)

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7:30 p.m. ET: North Carolina and Ohio headline:

- **7:30 p.m. ET:** Polls close in three states. **North Carolina** and **Ohio** are the big ones, with each hosting a major Senate race plus a top-tier gubernatorial contest in Ohio.

Additionally, **West Virginia** finishes voting at that time.

- **3 states fully close at 7:30 p.m. Eastern**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
North Carolina	7:30 PM	✅	100%
Ohio	7:30 PM	✅	100%
West Virginia	7:30 PM	✅	100%

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- Besides the Senate races, we'll be closely following House races in both North Carolina and Ohio.
- For instance, Democratic Rep. Don Davis is somewhat favored to win reelection in North Carolina's 1st District even though Republicans redrew the seat to be redder.
- Similarly, Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur is favored to win reelection in Ohio's 9th District despite new lines that made her constituency a bit more GOP-leaning.
- **Place to watch: Cabarrus County, North Carolina**. Sitting next door to Charlotte, Cabarrus County is another suburban-exurban county to monitor.
- Yet unlike Hamilton County in Indiana, Cabarrus is not especially affluent or highly-educated, hewing closer to the nation's overall income and college-educated percentages.
- Trump carried the county 53%-45%, yet if it's roughly 50-50 or Democrat Roy Cooper is winning it in the Senate race, that'll be a ***tell*** about how the night is going in the Tar Heel State — and potentially in other suburban-exurban places.

45

8 p.m. ET: Things get really busy:

- At 8 p.m. Eastern, the evening ramps up exponentially as 21 states and the District of Columbia fully or partially close. **Florida** (the Panhandle) and **New Hampshire** (some municipalities in the Boston metro area) conclude voting, making it possible to project important statewide races in those states.
- **Maine** wraps up its voting at that hour, though you shouldn't get too excited — it's just about the slowest-counting state outside of those that mostly use vote-by-mail.
- Meanwhile, almost all voting locations shut their doors in **Kansas** (except a small area along the Colorado border), **Michigan** (except part of the Upper Peninsula) and **Texas** (except around El Paso).
- **21 states and D.C. partly/fully close at 8 p.m. Eastern, including Florida, Michigan, Texas**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
New Hampshire	8:00 PM	✅	23%
Florida	8:00 PM	✅	5%
Alabama	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Connecticut	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Delaware	8:00 PM	✅	100%
District of Columbia	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Illinois	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Maine	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Maryland	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Massachusetts	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Mississippi	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Missouri	8:00 PM	✅	100%
New Jersey	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Oklahoma	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Pennsylvania	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Rhode Island	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Tennessee	8:00 PM	✅	100%
Kansas	8:00 PM		>99%
Michigan	8:00 PM		99%
Texas	8:00 PM		98%
North Dakota	8:00 PM		93%
South Dakota	8:00 PM		73%

46

- **Place to watch: Collin County, Texas.** For people from outside California or Texas, it can be difficult to appreciate just how many people live in those states.
- Collin County, part of the Dallas-Forth Worth metro area, is tellingly huge. The county now has an estimated 1.3 million residents, making it one of the 35 most populous counties in the country.
- Diverse and highly-educated, Collin is somewhat GOP-leaning — yet how that ***does or doesn't*** change in 2026 is pivotal for Democrats' chances of breaking through in Texas's much-watched Senate and gubernatorial races.
- Collin trended left in 2020 (Trump only won 51%-47%) but then swung back to the right in 2024 (Trump won 54%-43%).
- **Considering its makeup, a 50-50 (or bluer) Collin County is probably a necessary condition for a Democrat to carry Texas.**

47

9 p.m. ET: Turn it up to 11:



- The second-busiest poll closing time is 9 p.m. Eastern, when 15 states finish. This includes five states that mostly have poll closings at 8 p.m., most notably **Kansas**, **Michigan**, and **Texas**.
- Additionally, 10 states entirely finish up at 9 p.m., including states with high-profile gubernatorial and House races, such as **Arizona**, **Iowa**, **Minnesota**, **New York**, and **Wisconsin**.
- **15 states partly or fully close at 9 p.m. Eastern, including final polls in Michigan and Texas**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
South Dakota	9:00 PM	✅	27%
North Dakota	9:00 PM	✅	7%
Texas	9:00 PM	✅	2%
Michigan	9:00 PM	✅	1%
Kansas	9:00 PM	✅	<1%
Arizona	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Colorado	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Iowa	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Louisiana	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Minnesota	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Nebraska	9:00 PM	✅	100%
New Mexico	9:00 PM	✅	100%
New York	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Wisconsin	9:00 PM	✅	100%
Wyoming	9:00 PM	✅	100%

48

- **Place to watch: Dubuque County, Iowa.** Once upon a time, eastern Iowa leaned Democratic and helped Barack Obama carry the state in 2008 and 2012.
- Yet in the Trump Era, much of the region has shifted sharply to the right. This includes Dubuque County, home to the eponymous city, right along the Mississippi River near Illinois and Wisconsin.
- Historically a manufacturing center, the county of 100,000 people is nearly 90% white and more working class. Trump carried Dubuque County about 53%-45% in 2024, up from 51%-48% in 2020.
- Whether Democrats can also make gains in places with large numbers of white working-class voters like Dubuque will be important to whether they can win Senate seats in states such as Iowa and Kansas.

49

10 p.m. ET: Moving out west:

- Five states partly or fully close at 10 p.m. Eastern, with three finishing at that hour. This includes perennial swing state **Nevada**, plus **Montana** and **Utah**. Most of Idaho also concludes its balloting, while one county in eastern Oregon closes. But none of these places have races that are especially pivotal to control of the Senate or House.
- **5 states partly or fully close at 10 p.m. Eastern**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
Montana	10:00 PM	✅	100%
Nevada	10:00 PM	✅	100%
Utah	10:00 PM	✅	100%
Idaho	10:00 PM		78%
Oregon	10:00 PM		<1%

50

- **Place to watch: Clark County, Nevada**.
- The county that contains Las Vegas is the most influential electoral locale within this smaller group of states, making up close to 70% of the vote cast in the Silver State.
- About one-third white and one-third Latino, Clark is a very diverse county with many working-class voters. Trump made gains in 2024 to lose Clark only 50%-48 after trailing 54%-44% in 2020, which helped him flip Nevada into the GOP column.
- Yet economic conditions may especially move voters in a place that's more vulnerable to downturns in tourism, and the current state of the economy may be a particularly big drag on the GOP.

51

11 p.m. ET: California closes:

- Four more states close up shop at 11 p.m. Eastern, most notably **California**, the nation's most populous state.
- After partly closing at 10 p.m., **Oregon** and **Idaho** finish at this time, while **Washington** also ends its voting period.
- **4 states fully close at 11 p.m. Eastern**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
Oregon	11:00 PM	✅	>99%
Idaho	11:00 PM	✅	22%
California	11:00 PM	✅	100%
Washington	11:00 PM	✅	100%

52

- **Place to watch: Deschutes County, Oregon**. Home to the city of Bend, Deschutes County is one of Oregon's fastest-growing counties.
- More than 80% white and highly-educated, Deschutes has moved toward Democrats in recent years. Trump lost it 54%-43% in 2024, slightly worse than his 53%-45% loss there in 2020.
- Yet if Candidate Drazan (GOP) is going to flip the governorship in the Beaver State, she probably needs to win Deschutes.
- Drazan actually did carry the county in 2022, yet only 46%-43% with a sizable vote for an independent candidate.
- She will need to do that again with more votes going to the two major-party nominees.

53

12 a.m. ET and beyond: Alaska & Hawaii:

- Polls close at 12 a.m. Eastern in all of **Hawaii** and nearly all of **Alaska**, with a small part of the western Aleutian Islands finishing off at 1 a.m.
- Alaska is the main draw at this hour, with highly-contested Senate and gubernatorial races. Hawaii is solidly Democratic and lacks any competitive race of note.
- **Alaska and Hawaii finish off Election Night**

State	Time (Eastern)	Last polls	Share of 2024 state vote
Hawaii	12:00 AM	✅	100%
Alaska†	12:00 AM		>99%

54

- **Place to watch: Alaska State House District 6.** Alaska does not regularly report election data by its county equivalents, yet rather by its state House districts.
- For the Senate and gubernatorial races, keep an eye on District 6 on the Kennai Peninsula.
- This is a red-leaning constituency, but one that Democrat Mary Peltola carried when she won the 2022 race for Alaska's At-large U.S. House District.
- She lost the first-choice votes in that seat about 51%-44% in her narrow 2024 reelection defeat.
- So if Peltola's able to actually beat Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan, this is a district where she is probably running about even or ahead.

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The Latest Ruffini Take…02 NOV 2026

SENATE BATTLEGROUNDS: POLLS, MODELS AND MARKETS, OCT. 30

Democrats lead polls and forecasts for 52 seats

		POLL AVG., MARGIN			MODELS, GOP WIN %				MARKETS, GOP %	
Race	2024	DDHQ	RCP	270toWin	VoteHub	Split Ticket	DDHQ	50+1	Kalshi	Polymarket
NC Cooper v. Whatley	T+3	D+9.7	D+10.7	D+11.6	3	5	16	8	3	2
GA Ossoff v. Collins	T+2	D+10.0	D+8.2	D+9.8	4	3	11	3	3	3
NH Pappas v. Sununu	H+3	D+7.0	D+6.7	D+7.3	11	9	15	9	8	7
MN Flanagan v. Tafoya	H+4	D+6.8	D+5.1	D+6.0	12	8	15	9	10	8
MI El-Sayed v. Rogers	T+1	D+4.7	D+3.5	D+5.8	24	26	28	27	26	23
AK Peltola v. Sullivan	T+13	D+1.6	D+1.2	D+2.2	34	35	40	35	32	31
TX Talarico v. Paxton	T+14	D+3.7	D+1.8	D+3.2	34	28	40	40	29	29
OH Brown v. Husted	T+11	D+3.2	D+2.6	D+3.5	35	31	46	39	30	30
ME Jackson v. Collins	H+7	D+3.5	D+1.4	D+2.6	36	36	43	29	32	31
IA Turek v. Hinson	T+13	R+1.0	R+0.5	R+0.6	55	51	53	46	56	55
KS Hamilton v. Marshall	T+16	D+2.9	D+2.6	D+3.8	65	62	58	43	48	46
NE Osborn v. Ricketts	T+20	R+0.7	—	R+2.0	71	63	73	74	66	68
SC Andrews v. Graham	T+18	R+1.7	R+2.7	R+2.4	77	72	65	63	73	73
FL Nixon v. Moody	T+13	R+5.8	R+6.1	R+6.0	90	90	78	79	90	90

The Intersection

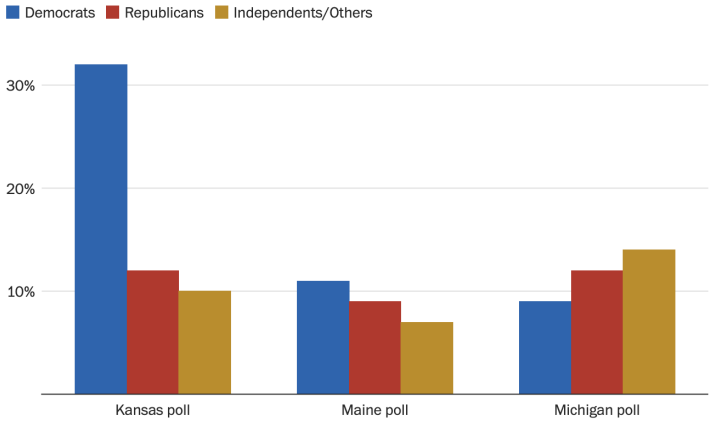
Blue edge: Democrat leads both the DDHQ poll average and every model. 34 Democratic seats not up + 9 safe + 9 such races = 52. KS (D leads polls, most models favor R) and IA (R leads polls) not counted. AK: four-way 270toWin average.

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More Ruffini, Yesterday (02 NOV 2026)

Cooperation rates by party in three Post-Schar School state polls

Percentage completing the survey among voters who were reached by a live operator.



Note: Partisanship defined by registration in Kansas and Maine; Michigan party is inferred based on primary turnout and other indicators.

Source: Fall 2026 Washington Post-Schar School polls of registered voters in each state.

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Ruffini's Take on the Early Vote...02 NOV 2026

Early voters favor Democrats by 21 points, and within most party and primary groups, those yet to vote lean more Republican

Generic congressional ballot (with leaners) by whether respondent has already voted, by party ID and number of 2018–2024 primaries voted

R – voted | R – not yet | Unsure | D – not yet | D – voted | All respondents: voted D+21 (37–58) · not yet R+2 (47–46)

Republican · by primaries voted				Independent · by primaries voted				Democrat · by primaries voted			
Total	91%	7%	R+84	**Total**	25%	62%	D+37	**Total**	1%	98%	D+97
30% voted	93%	4%	R+89	34% voted	32%	48%	D+16	39% voted	2%	96%	D+94
4 of 4	91%	6%	R+85	4 of 4	37%	53%	D+16	4 of 4	1%	98%	D+97
50% voted	89%	9%	R+80	53% voted	33%	56%	D+23	68% voted	3%	92%	D+89
3 of 4	90%	9%	R+81	3 of 4	19%	64%	D+45	3 of 4	1%	99%	D+98
45% voted	91%	5%	R+86	53% voted	27%	52%	D+25	57% voted	0%	98%	D+98
2 of 4	88%	10%	R+78	2 of 4	24%	66%	D+42	2 of 4	0%	98%	D+98
36% voted	93%	3%	R+90	43% voted	24%	55%	D+31	40% voted	2%	95%	D+93
1 of 4	95%	3%	R+92	1 of 4	22%	63%	D+41	1 of 4	0%	100%	D+100
28% voted	94%	4%	R+90	36% voted	35%	41%	D+6	35% voted	2%	97%	D+95
0 of 4	90%	9%	R+81	0 of 4	22%	63%	D+41	0 of 4	1%	98%	D+97
18% voted	95%	4%	R+91	22% voted	34%	47%	D+13	23% voted	2%	96%	D+94

ECHELON INSIGHTS

Note: Top bar in each pair = already voted; bottom = not yet voted. Party ID is first-stage self-ID (no leaners); Independent includes other party and unsure. Vote status from state ballot return files as of Oct. 28, 2026; AL, HI, KY, MO, MS, NY, SC excluded.
Q. If the election for Congress were held today, for whom would you vote? (Unsure pushed with leaner; respondents who had already voted asked their House vote.)
Echelon Insights Verified Voter Omnibus, January–October 2026 pooled, N=8,895 likely voters.

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A FUNDAMENTAL REMINDER!!

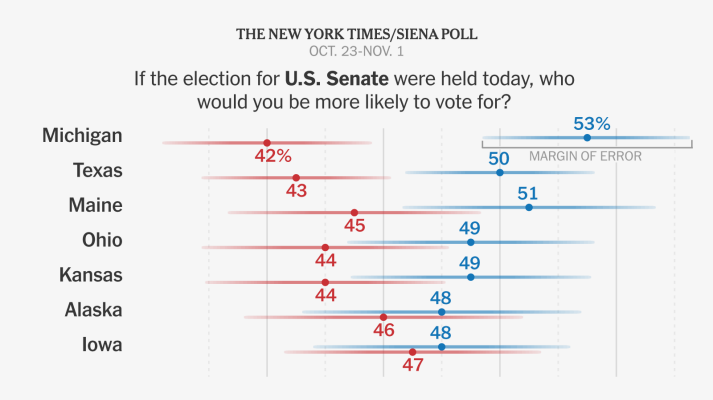
- House seats:
- Number of "Marginals?" vs. "Swing Seats?"
- Expanding vs. Contracting maps?
- Waves are smaller than in the past (: redistricting)
- Blue wave confined to Red states?

- Senate "fundamentals:"
- Party base + "types of independents / leaners"
- Candidate Quality & Ability to self-fund?
- Challengers NEED to be +5 by Halloween
- Blue wave confined to Red states?

KEY QUESTION: Where do competitive Senate seat races have to be by Halloween weekend?

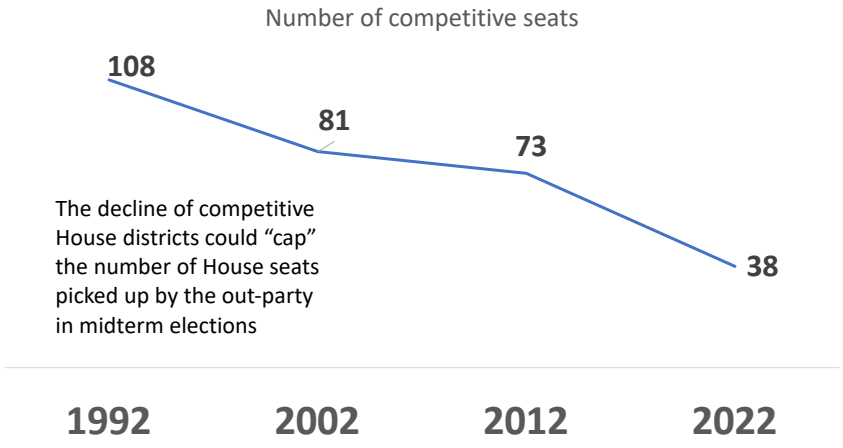
59

NYT / Siena Poll



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Reminder: Decline in "Competitive" House Seats



Source: *NY Times*, Feb 7, 2022 for 1992, 2002, and 2002. The 2002 number estimated by author from multiple sources. A competitive seat is defined as one in which the presidential candidates in prior election were within 5 percentage points of each other.

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Media Schedule, Happy Election Day, 03 NOV 2026

KTVU2-TV, 0600 AM
URL:
https://www.ktvu.com/live
KPIX5-TV, 0630 AM
URL:
https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/
KRON4-TV, 0730 AM
URL:
https://www.kron4.com/watch-kron4-news-online/
Class, 0800-0950; 1000-noon
KTTV-LA, 2:00-2:30 PM
URL:
https://www.foxla.com
KRON4-TV, 5:30-5:40 PM & 6:30-6:40 PM
URL:
https://www.kron4.com/watch-kron4-news-online/

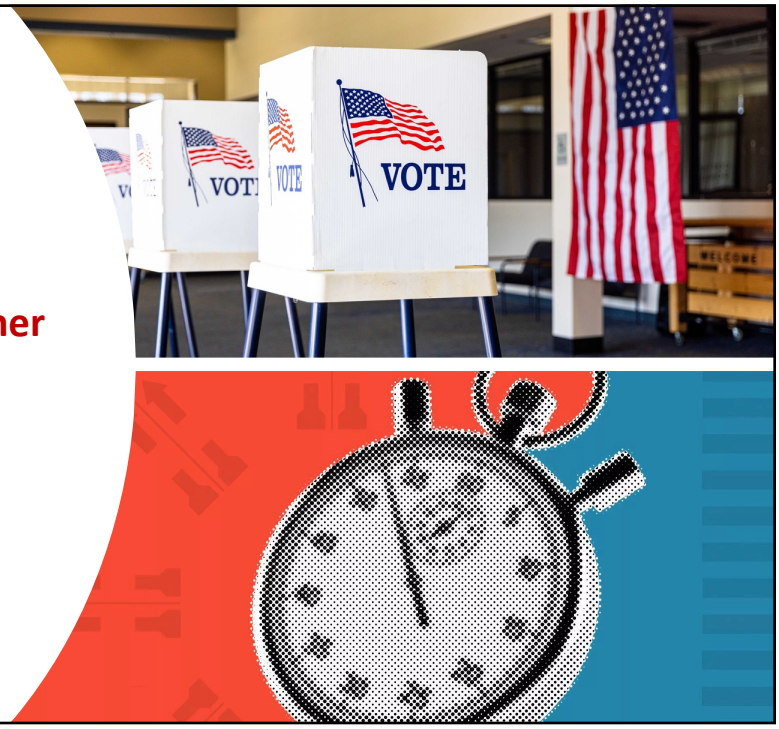
SPECTRUM1-LA, 6:10 PM & 9:45-9:55 PM
URL:
https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la/live-video/watch_spectrum_news_live

KTVU2-TV, with Greg Lee, 7:30; 8; 8:30; 9; 9:30; 10; 10:30; 11; 11:20 PM
URL:
https://www.ktvu.com/live

The Day AFTER, 04 NOV 2026
AM Schedule, so far:
KPIX5-TV, 0630 AM
URL:
https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/
KTVU2-TV, 0730; 0800; 0830; 0900; 0930
URL:
https://www.ktvu.com/live

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What to make of the AFTERMATH of **2026 "Mother of All Midterm Elections?**



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Let's TACKLE YOUR
Questions, Comments, & Concerns

Where to get Information on politics…

Resources on AMERICAN Politics - Looking to 2026 and beyond…

Links on the following pages

Anything further, please Contact me at:

david.mccuan@sonoma.edu

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Where to Find Info.: The Politics of the New Roaring '20s

Websites for General Elections Info.:

- www.thegreenpapers.com
- www.votesmart.org
- http://election.princeton.edu
- www.opensecrets.org (on $$$)
- http://funderscommittee.org/ (Dem. $$)
- www.politico.com
- www.centerforpolitics.org (UVA)
- www.electoralmaps.org
- www.uselectionatlas.org
- www.smartvoter.org
- www.factcheck.org
- www.vote.caltech.edu

- The Election Resource Hub @ MIT:
- https://electionlab.mit.edu/

Websites for Polling…Data…and DD:

- https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/latest-us-opinion-polls
- http://www.ppic.org/survey/
- https://igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll
- https://igs.berkeley.edu/library/california-ballot-measure-guides
- http://www.iandrinstitute.org/
- http://www.iandrinstitute.org/data.cfm

- https://gking.harvard.edu/electit/#ours_race_rcp_pace-history_err-hist_rp-expected

How to Read Polls, in general, some guidelines:

- https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/here-are-five-questions-ask-when-analyzing-political-polls-n1053401

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What to Consider With All of These Polls?

Polling Resources:

- https://fiftyplusone.news/latest-polls
- https://www.natesilver.net/p/trump-approval-ratings-nate-silver-bulletin
- https://morningconsult.com/articles/tag/political

- https://www.thegreenpapers.com/

- https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/latest-us-opinion-polls
- http://www.ppic.org/survey/
- https://igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll

- https://www.pewresearch.org/u-s-surveys/
- https://ssrs.com/ssrs-solutions/voter-poll/

How to Read Polls, in general, some guidelines:

- https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/here-are-five-questions-ask-when-analyzing-political-polls-n1053401

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What are "Midterm Elections?"
Tools to Arm Yourself for the 2026 Midterms:

On All Things Midterms of 2026:

- https://statesunited.org/resources/2026-midterm-elections-resource-hub/
- https://www.usvotefoundation.org/when-are-2026-midterm-elections-and-what-their-purpose
- Factcheck.org
- https://www.us.vote/how-to-vote
- https://www.usvotefoundation.org/

On All Things Redistricting:

- Moritz Law School, The Ohio State:
- http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/election-law/information-analysis/
- Loyola School of Law:
- http://redistricting.lls.edu/
- The Brennan Center, NYU School of Law:
- http://www.brennancenter.org/

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More Websites for Politics & Elections Info.

- elections.gmu.edu
- www.pollster.com
- www.gallup.com
- www.pollsandvotes.com
- www.cqpolitics.com
- www.rollcall.com ; www.thehill.com
- www.fivethirtyeight.com
- www.pewresearch.org
- http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cspg/smartpolitics/

Just on money / $$$ below:

- www.opensecrets.org
- www.maplight.org
- www.followthemoney.org
- www.campaignfinance.org

Top CA Elections Resources:

- CVF Online Guide:
- www.calvoter.org
- https://calvoter.org/covg
- Voter's Edge:
- http://votersedge.org/
- https://votersedge.org/ca/
- Official CA Voter's Guide:
- http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/
- California Choices Guide:
- http://www.californiachoices.org
- CA Dept. of Finance, Demographic Research Unit:
- http://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/

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Top CA Elections Resources: NOV 2026 CA Resources

- CVF Online Guide:

www.calvoter.org

https://calvoter.org/covg

- **Voter's Edge**: KEY, HELPFUL RESOURCE FOR ALL OF US!

http://votersedge.org/

https://votersedge.org/ca/

- Official CA Voter's Guide:

http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/

- California Choices Guide:

http://www.californiachoices.org

- CA Dept. of Finance, Demographic Research Unit:

http://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/

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Where to Monitor Social Media (SM) Trends on Campaigns, Elections, & Politics?

Observatory on Social Media, Indiana U.

OSoMe ("awe•some") highlights the results of a broad research project aimed to study information diffusion in social media. Site has tools to explore how people spread ideas through online social networks.

https://osome.iu.edu/

Center for an Informed Public (CIP), U. of Washington

The Center for an Informed Public is an interdisciplinary research initiative at the University of Washington that helps individuals, communities, and institutions navigate our complex information environments.

https://www.cip.uw.edu/research/

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On Polling & Polling ”Error” in 2024

- Pew Public Opinion Polling Basics:
  - https://www.pewresearch.org/course/public-opinion-polling-basics/

and

- Washington Post (WaPo) Polling Averages Methodology, Pres Elections:
  - https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/2024/06/26/presidential-polling-averages-methodology/

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Appendix – More *IF* We Have Time…

and / or as Questions Arise…

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The Tinderbox of Chaos Election That is Ahead–

What of the Aftermath of 03 November & Moving Forward?



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The Five Conditions for Chaos

1. A Potential Lame-Duck Donald Trump;
2. A Super-Close Election;
3. Battleground States, Legal Smackdown;
4. The Gun-Behind-the-Door Threat(s) of Violence; and
5. The Dis-, Mis, and Mal-Information Wars of Perception Post-Election

All of this = a play for exploiting our on-going, existing divisions within our Body Politic.

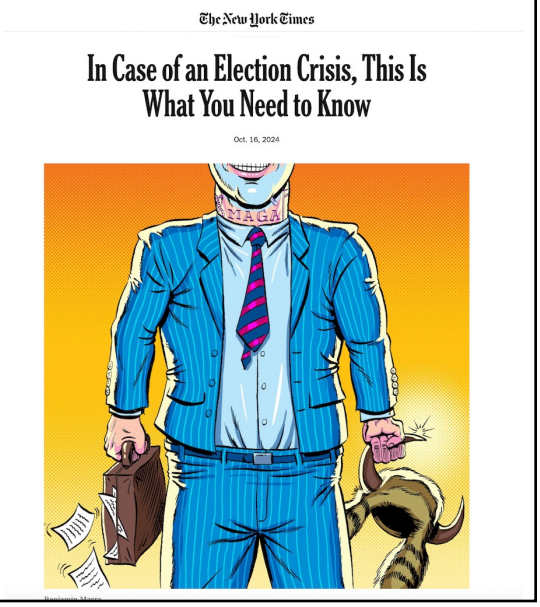
AI-Generated Image →



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Careful – This is NOT the Same as 2020





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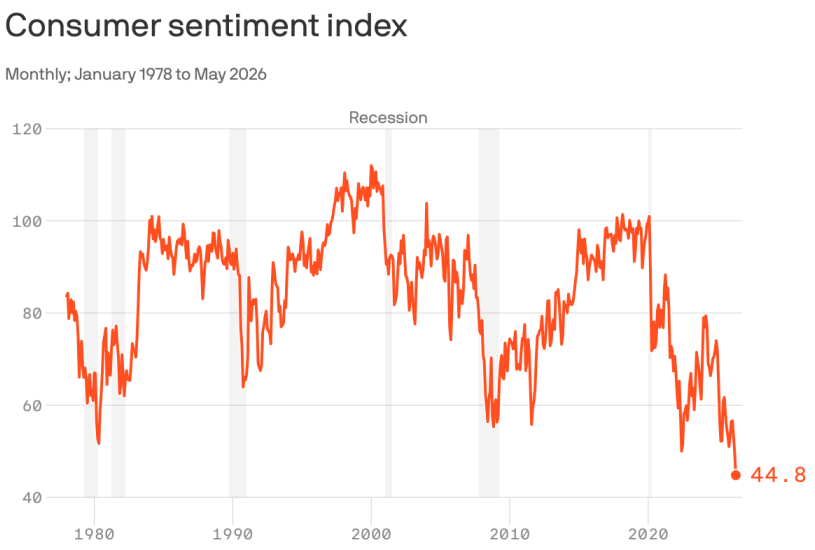
Changes & Effects on the Ground – THE *WILD CARDS* - Affecting the 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS:

How These Four Horsemen Can Affect an Electoral Apocalypse



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Wild Card #1 – U. of MI Consumer Surveys



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Wild Card #1 – U. of MI Consumer Surveys

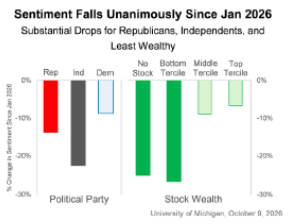
surveys of consumers
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

HOME TABLES CHARTS REPORTS CONTACT DATA SITE

Preliminary Results for October 2026

	Oct 2026	Sep 2026	Oct 2025	M-M Change	Y-Y Change
Index of Consumer Sentiment	46.3	48.1	53.6	-3.7%	-13.6%
Current Economic Conditions	44.7	50.9	58.6	-12.2%	-23.7%
Index of Consumer Expectations	47.3	46.3	50.3	+2.2%	-6.0%

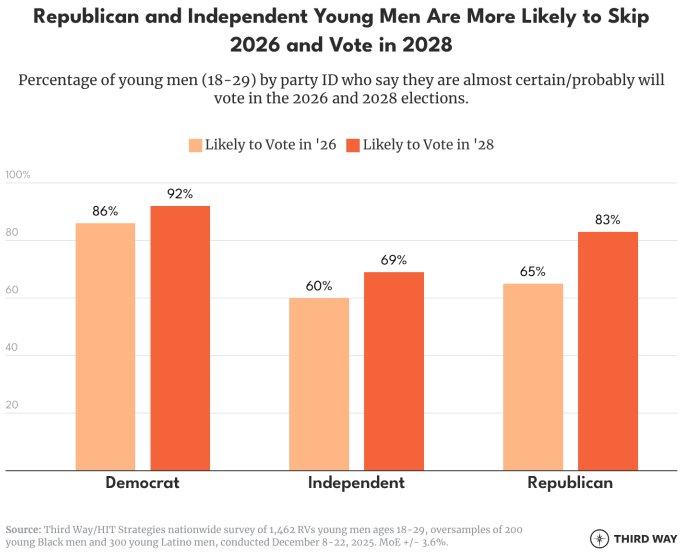
Featured Chart (Image | PDF | Excel)



https://www.sca.isr.umich.edu/

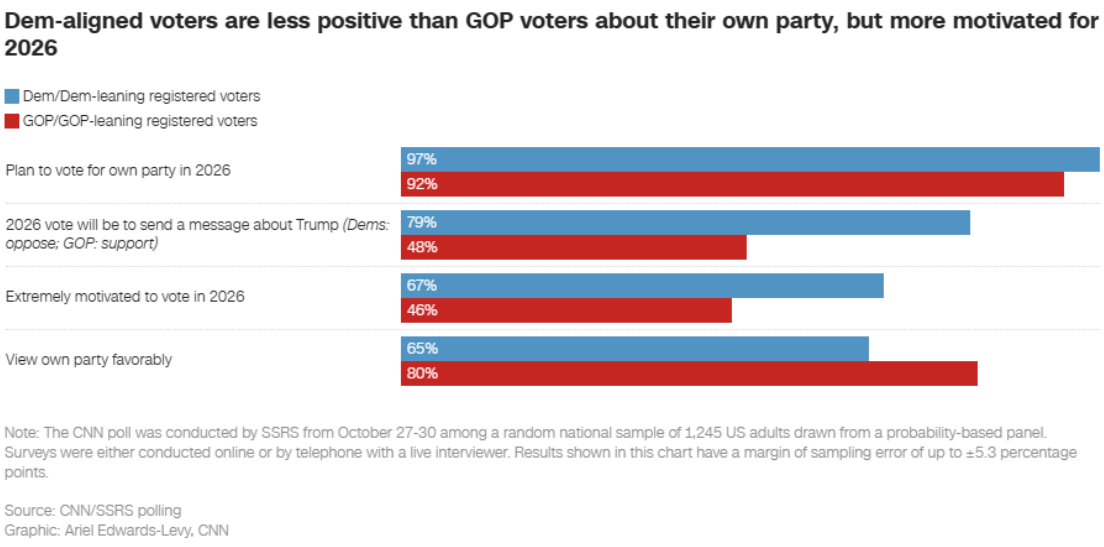
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Wild Card #2 –Turnout Factors



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Wild Card #3 – Both Parties Have Challenges



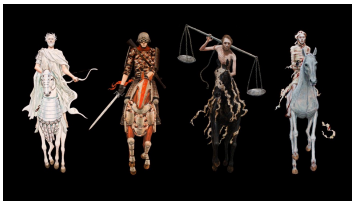
80

Wild Card #4 – The Nightmare Scenario









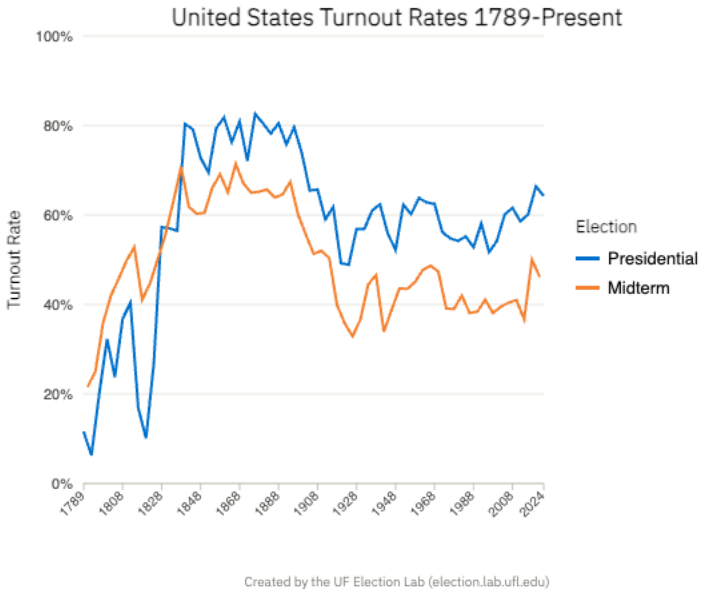


For more information? See [this link to 50 U.S.C. 1621](#) and [link](#). Also see:

https://www.brennancenter.org/voting-mail-and-using-drop-boxes-are-safe-and-trustworthy-ways-vote-thanks-numerous-security

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Presidential vs. Midterm Turnout (T.O.) Rates



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Who is the Midterm Electorate?

	MIDTERM ELECTORATE					PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORATE					MIDTERM - PREZ AVG.
White	2010	2014	2018	2022	Avg.	2008	2012	2016	2020	Avg.	Avg. diff.
	79%	79%	75%	76%	77%	77%	75%	74%	72%	75%	3%

Age	2010	2014	2018	2022	Avg.	2008	2012	2016	2020	Avg.	Avg. diff.
18-29	9%	8%	12%	10%	10%	16%	15%	15%	16%	16%	-6%
30-44	20%	18%	21%	20%	20%	24%	23%	22%	23%	23%	-3%
45-64	45%	43%	38%	36%	41%	39%	40%	38%	35%	38%	3%
65+	26%	31%	29%	33%	30%	20%	23%	25%	26%	24%	6%

College	2010	2014	2018	2022	Avg.	2008	2012	2016	2020	Avg.	Avg. diff.
grad	36%	39%	40%	41%	39%	32%	34%	37%	38%	35%	4%

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