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THE 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES: A VIEW FROM A “SWING STATE”

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Predicting the outcomes of elections is an exciting pastime among scholars, journalists, and politicians in the United States. The 2026 Midterm Elections are no exception. Over the years, we have developed a set of indicators that seem to predict general outcomes, even at a time when public opinion polls have not been as predictive as in the past. This essay will provide a guide to the general picture and what to pay attention to, as well as some commentary about the elections in the state of Nevada, a “swing state” that tends to support both the Democratic and Republican Parties in the American West.

The big picture and relatively safe prediction is that the Democratic Party will retake control of the US House of Representatives (one of the two houses of the United States Congress). While we can never be absolutely sure of the outcome in advance, all of our well-known indicators point to this outcome today (less than two months before the election). First, it is practically a tradition that the President’s party loses seats in the midterm elections. Because Republicans currently only have a majority of seats by fewer than 5 seats, this pattern alone could see control flip to the Democratic Party. This effect is typically amplified if the president’s approval rating is low, meaning that the people do not approve of the job the president is doing. As of the time of writing, the rolling average approval [rating](#) is -19.6, and roughly 58% of Americans do not approve of the job that President Trump is doing. In such circumstances, Americans are more likely to vote for the opposition party to “punish” the president and select an alternative. Taken together, this indicates that it is likely that the Democrats will regain control of the House of Representatives.

However, the United States has a bicameral legislature, and the Senate is far harder to predict. Unlike the House of Representatives, where all seats are up for election, only 1/3 of the Senate is. And while the same indicators as discussed in the previous paragraph still apply, the particular 1/3 of seats that are up for election represent states that will be harder for Democrats to win. Public opinion polls on the various Senate races show that many of the races are very close and it is currently impossible to predict those outcomes. For example, for many years the state of Texas has been a Republican stronghold, but the Senate race is surprising: the Republican Senate candidate, Paxton, is quite unpopular and allegedly corrupt, while the Democratic candidate, Talarico, is popular and running a shrewd campaign. The current rolling average of public opinion polls shows Talarico [ahead](#) by 2.7%, which is encouraging for Democrats, but too close to be confident of the results, especially when Republicans usually win statewide elections easily. Another surprising element is that a Democratic Senator, Fetterman of Pennsylvania, has become more aligned with the Republican party—can the Democrats count on him if they win a small majority of the Senate?



This surprise means that the Democrats may need to keep all the seats currently held by Democrats and “pick up” five that are currently held by Republicans (as opposed to four) in order to truly gain control of the Senate. This is all very exciting for observers, but makes predicting the outcome impossible.

What is at stake? If the Republicans are able to retain control of both houses of Congress, then we expect the continuation of the status quo, where the Republicans control all three branches of the US federal government. However, even if the Democrats regain control of one or both branches of the legislature, many of President Trump’s policies will continue because much of the funding for them was accomplished through 2028 in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, and President Trump is using existing laws and executive orders to pursue other objectives. At this point, you may be thinking: then what would change? Why is this such an exciting time? And, why do Democrats think it is so important to win the Midterm Elections? In short, President Trump’s behavior in this term has been very different from past presidents (even his own first term, 2017-2021). There have been allegations of corruption, a decline in the rule of law, repression of citizens, and the instigation of an illegal war. Because of this, the Democrats would likely begin a strategy of investigating these allegations, and potentially removing people from their positions, if the investigations prove the allegations true. They may also attempt to pass legislation that is popular among Democrats and Americans more generally. The president would surely veto such legislation, but it could be a signal of an alternative future that could be attractive for the 2028 elections. Similarly, the Congress would also be able to block any new legislation supported by the Republicans and the executive branch.

It may also be instructive to “zoom in” on elections in a swing state to illustrate the dynamics discussed above and elections for state-level governmental bodies. As I am from such a state, Nevada, I will briefly use it as an example. Nevada’s seats for the US House of Representatives (there are four) are all potentially competitive, but three of the four are relatively reliably held by Democrats and the most northern district (where I live) is heavily Republican. This district has been made competitive by a series of remarkable events: first, the Republican incumbent Amodei is retiring and not running; second, the Republican candidate that is running (Flippo) is considered a “carpet bagger” (this is a pejorative term for a candidate running in an election where they lack local connections, usually having just moved to the district to run in that election) and even Congressman Amodei is not endorsing him; and third, the Democratic candidate (Benitez-Thompson) is running a strong and serious campaign.



While a Democrat has never represented this Congressional district (NV CD2), and it is unlikely that Benitez-Thompson will actually win, some polls show her as more popular than her opponent, making this a [more competitive election](#) than it typically is. This year, neither of Nevada's US Senators are up for reelection, but many important state-level elected positions are. In particular, the Nevada Governor's race is important because this is the top executive branch position and it is a more powerful branch than the Nevada state legislature. As a swing state, these elections tend to be competitive, and with an incumbent Republican Governor, Lombardo, and the national-level trends discussed above, it is logical to expect that Governor Lombardo could lose in an election year where Democrats are favored. But, this could be a mistaken conclusion. As a personal observation, I have been surprised to see the Democratic candidate, Ford, who is currently Nevada's Attorney General, hardly campaigning at all. When I left the United States, Ford's campaign seemed to be "waking up", and a recent public opinion poll [shows](#) him ahead of Lombardo (44% to 41%), though that is within the poll's margin of error and the average of other [polls](#) show this race is a toss-up. All of this illustrates Nevada's status as a swing state. For instance, it is possible that voters that live in Northern Nevada's CD 2 could narrowly elect Democrat Benitez-Thompson to the US House of Representatives, but still overwhelmingly support Republican Governor Lombardo.

In short, Americans and, indeed, observers around the world, are paying attention to the 2026 Midterm Elections. As public opinion polling shows, many Americans hope the United States will change course in its domestic and foreign policies, particularly concerning those policies that have made everyday life increasingly expensive. However, many of the races are very close, making my task of predicting the results impossible. Nevertheless, at this time, it is likely that the Democrats will win the majority of seats in the House of Representatives, and, I would say, it is equally likely that Republicans will retain control of the Senate or Democrats will win a very small majority of it.



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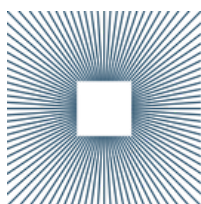
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