Inside Elections

With Nathan L. Gonzales

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NAIFA Political Action Committees

2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (4)	
Sullivan (R-Ak.)#	Husted (R-Ohio)
Collins (R-Maine)	NH Open (Shaheen, D)
Tilt Democratic (1)	**Tilt Republican (2)**
MI Open (Peters, D)#	IA Open (Ernst, R)
	TX Open (Cornyn, R)#
Lean Democratic (3)	**Lean Republican (1)**
MN Open (Smith, DFL)*	Ricketts (R-Neb.)#
NC Open (Tillis, R)#	
Ossoff (D-Ga.)#	
Likely Democratic	**Likely Republican (2)**
	Graham (R-S.C.)
	Marshall (R-Kan.)
Solid Democratic (9)	**Solid Republican (13)**
IL Open (Durbin, D)	OK Open (Armstrong, R)
Booker (D-N.J.)	LA Open (Cassidy, R)
Coons (D-Del.)	MT Open (Daines, R)
Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)	WY Open (Lummis, R)
Lujan (D-N.M.)	KY Open (McConnell, R)
Markey (D-Mass.)	AL Open (Tuberville, R)
Merkley (D-Ore.)	Capito (R-W.V.)
Reed (D-R.I.)	Cotton (R-Ark.)
Warner (D-Va.)	Hagerty (R-Tenn.)
	Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)
	Moody (R-Fl.)
	Risch (R-Idaho)
	Rounds (R-S.D.)

*Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans*

CALENDAR

Oct. 5	Early voting begins in California, Montana, Nebraska
Oct. 13	Early voting begins in Georgia
Oct. 14	Early voting begins in Iowa, Kansas, Tennessee
Oct. 19	Early voting begins in Texas, Alaska, South Carolina, Colorado
Oct. 20	NBA Season begins
Oct. 23	World Series begins
Nov. 3	Election Day
Nov. 21	National Women's Soccer League Championship Final

2026 Election Overview: Majorities or Mirage?

By Nathan L. Gonzales, Jacob Rubashkin and Inshara Ali

Democrats are on pace to make gains on Capitol Hill. The only question is whether it's a good or great cycle for the party.

With an unpopular Republican president, an unpopular war in the Middle East, and high gas prices, 2026 is starting to look like 2006, when Democrats rode widespread voter frustration into control of the House and Senate.

Considering polls have underestimated GOP support in the past and Republicans have a spending advantage in the final weeks, expectations of a blue wave have been muted. But Republicans are still waiting for their base voters to wake up, and believe more spending will change the trajectory of races where voters have already seen millions of dollars of ads.

As Election Day creeps closer and continues to look like a traditional midterm, we are adjusting our projections in favor of Democrats. Democrats are most likely to gain between 7 and 15 House seats (they need to gain three for control) and 3 to 5 Senate seats (they need to gain four), with greater Democratic gains possible in either chamber.

Those projections might look modest. That is because the micro-level, race-specific data is lagging behind the macro-level national data. Republican and Democratic candidates are within a few points of each other in dozens of House and Senate races around the country, giving the GOP a glimmer of hope.

But it's likely that the race-by-race polling will catch up with national trends in the final weeks, Democratic candidates could start to put some distance between themselves and their GOP opponents, and our ratings will follow suit. Republicans are defending in too many places, including some deep red territory, to stave off significant losses.

While a systematic polling bias against Republicans is possible, it's also possible that surveys are underestimating Democratic support. If pollsters are overcompensating for previous "misses," then the polls could be missing the widespread voter frustration with the economy and direction of the country. Or pollsters could be assuming a level of GOP turnout that never materializes.

Even though there's the perception that President Donald Trump is impervious to normal political dynamics, sometimes it's best not to overthink analysis. When Trump was unpopular in 2018, Republicans lost dozens of House seats. He's even less popular now, and there just isn't significant evidence the GOP will be able to withstand that burden on the midterm ballot.

House Report Shorts

Alaska's At-Large. Nick Begich, R, elected 51%. Trump 55%. While Democrats could win statewide races for Senate and governor, Begich is still in good shape for re-election. Even though voters aren't in love with the two major parties, Bill Hill's independent candidacy might be complicating his effort in the state's ranked choice process given the presence of a perennial Democratic candidate on the ballot. Likely Republican.

Fabrizio Ward (R)/Impact Research (D) for AARP, Sept. 8-11 (800 LV) (live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Begich 45%, Hill 31%, Eric Hafner (D) 9%, James McDermott (L) 3%. After ranked choice vote reallocations: Begich over Hill, 57% - 43%.

California's 22nd District. (Southern Central Valley and eastern Bakersfield area) David Valadao, R. Trump 50%. The congressman has consistently won difficult races and this region is notoriously difficult to poll and will likely have low turnout, but Valadao lost in President Trump's first midterm, Democratic candidates received more votes in the all-party primary, and party strategists are encouraged by nominee Randy Villegas' campaign after he defeated the establishment favorite. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

California's 45th District. (Western Orange County) Derek Tran, D. Harris 51%. On paper, the district is competitive, but there's no Republican buzz about the race as the party shifts attention and resources to defending seats elsewhere on the battleground. Move from Lean Democratic to Likely Democratic.

Florida's 13th District. (Part of St. Petersburg and suburbs) Anna Paulina Luna, R, re-elected 55%. Trump 56%. The parties disagree about whether this district is highly competitive. Democrats have indicated a significant investment in helping retired Brigadier General Leela Gray defeat Luna. Between Gray and House Majority PAC, Democrats have $4.4 million in TV ads reserved over the next month compared to just $600,000 for Luna. A Trump-backed super PAC has a small reservation in place for the fall, but some GOP strategists are skeptical that Luna is in much danger after she outperformed polling in her last two races. But Luna did send a cease-and-desist letter to Gray over a recent TV ad, which could show she's worried about the attacks coming her direction. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Iowa's 1st District. (Southeastern Iowa) Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R, re-elected 50%. Trump 54%. The congresswoman might be running her best campaign, but the political environment in Iowa is brutal for Republicans. Democrats are threatening to win the two biggest statewide races and seriously challenging in three out of four congressional seats. The race isn't over, but Miller-Meeks is struggling to keep pace with Democrat Christina Bohannan. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.



Courtesy Miller-Meeks Campaign

Mariannette Miller-Meeks

Iowa's 3rd District. (Des Moines and southwestern Iowa) Zach Nunn, R, re-elected 52%. Trump 52%. Somewhat similar to his colleague Miller-Meeks, Nunn appears to be running a good campaign but is in a very competitive district in a difficult political environment. Democrat Sarah Trone Garriott has had a narrow but consistent lead. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

Kentucky's 6th District. (Greater Lexington area) Open; Andy Barr, R, running for Senate. Trump 57%. This seat was not expected to be on the House battleground at the beginning of the cycle, but the combination of Trump's mediocre job rating and Republican Ralph Alvarado's connection to former GOP Gov. Matt Bevin is making this race competitive and giving Democrat Zach Dembo a chance. At least some Republicans acknowledge the race is competitive since one of the MAGA Inc. super PACs is spending money. It is just one example of open seats being problematic for Republicans in this environment. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Michigan's 4th District. (Southwestern Michigan) Bill Huizenga, R, re-elected 55%. Trump 52%. Republican strategists acknowledge that the race between Huizenga and state Sen. Sean McCann has gotten tight and MAGA Inc. is spending almost $4 million

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to defend the seat. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

GBAO (D) for McCann, Sept. 13-16 (500 LV)(SMS/live caller)— General election ballot: McCann over Huizenga, 47% - 46%.

Montana's 1st District. (Western Montana) Open; Ryan Zinke, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 54%. Private polling from both sides of the aisle shows a very close race between talk radio host Aaron Flint, the GOP nominee, and smokejumper Sam Forstag, the Democratic nominee. Trump's super PAC has begun hitting Forstag on his work as a lobbyist for the ACLU, and is set to spend $2.7 million in the district through Election Day. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

American Pulse Research and Polling for NonStop Local Montana, Sept. 19-24 (314 LV)(live caller/text message)— General election ballot: Flint 46%, Forstag 45%, Nick Sheedy (L) 5%.

Impact Research (D) for Sam Forstag, Sept. 20-23 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Forstag over Flint, 47% - 44%, Sheedy (L) 2%.

Nebraska's 2nd District. (Greater Omaha Area) Open; Don Bacon, R, not seeking re-election. Harris 52%. This seat was going to be difficult for the congressman to hold had he run for re-election. Without him, Republicans are fighting against decades of history when it comes to open seats won by the other party's last presidential nominee. If Democrat Denise Powell, who has a healthy polling lead, isn't winning on Nov. 3, the party is in a world of hurt. Move from Tilt Democratic to Lean Democratic.

Nevada's 2nd District. (Reno area and northern Nevada) Open; Mark Amodei, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 56%. Open seats look like a particular problem for Republicans. Even though the district is Republican by the numbers, GOP nominees, in this case David Flippo, don't have enough name I.D. and infrastructure to combat the political environment. In this race, it doesn't help that the outgoing congressman has disparaged Flippo and Republicans on the ground are still unsure why President Trump endorsed him in the primary. The Club for Growth has invested at least $600,000 in the race. And Democrat Teresa Benitez-Thompson is trying to take advantage of the opportunity. Likely Republican.



Courtesy Powell Campaign

Denise Powell

GBAO for Nevada Alliance (D), Aug. 31-Sept. 3 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Benitez-Thompson over Flippo 38% - 37%, Lynn Chapman (Independent American Party) 14%.

New York's 3rd District. (Northern Nassau County) Tom Suozzi, D, re-elected 52%. Trump 51%. Republicans are pouring money into the 3rd District in an effort to help former state Assemblyman Mike LiPetri improve on his 2-point loss to Suozzi in 2024. The Trump-backed No Going Back PAC and the NRCC spent $5.5 million over the past month, and GOP groups are slated to spend another $5 million in October. Democratic groups have largely avoided spending here. That's indicative of the vast difference of opinion between the two parties. Republicans believe they have a real shot, especially with Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman running for governor at the top of the ticket. Democrats believe Suozzi is secure. Lean Democratic.

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (4D, 12R)

AZ 1 (Open; Schweikert, R)
AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)
CA 22 (Valadao, R)#
CO 8 (Evans, R)
FL 14 (Castor, D)
FL25 (Moskowitz, D)
MI 7 (Barrett, R)
NY 17 (Lawler, R)
OH 7 (Miller, R)
PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)
PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
VA 2 (Kiggans, R)
WA 3 (Perez, D)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Tilt Democratic (5D, 5R)

CA 13 (Gray, D)
CA 48 (Open; Issa, R)
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)#
IA 3 (Nunn, R)#
NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
NY 4 (Gillen, D)
OH 1 (Landsman, D)
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)

Tilt Republican (3D, 5R)

CO 5 (Crank, R)
FL 22 (Open; Frankel, D)
IA 2 (Open; Hinson, R)
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)#
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
NC 1 (Davis, D)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)
TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)

Lean Democratic (4D, 1I)

CA 6 (Open; Bera, D/Kiley, I)
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)
NV 1 (Titus, D)
NV 3 (Lee, D)
NY 3 (Suozzi, D)

Lean Republican (1D, 8R)

FL 13 (Luna, R)#
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
KY 6 (Open; Barr, R)#
MN 1 (Finstad, R)
NC 11 (Open; Edwards, R)
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
TX 35 (Open; Casar, D)
VA 1 (Wittman, R)
MT 1 (Open; Zinke, R)#

Likely Democratic (9D)

CA 45 (Tran, D)#
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)
NJ 9 (Pou, D)
NY 19 (Riley, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)
NV 4 (Horsford, D)
VA 7 (Vindman, D)

Likely Republican (4D, 12R)

AK AL (Begich, R)
AL 2 (Figures, D)
AZ 2 (Crane, R)
CO 3 (Hurd, R)
FL 7 (Mills, R)
FL 9 (Soto, D)
FL 16 (Open; Buchanan, R)
ME 2 (Open; Golden, D)
NV 2 (Open; Amodei, R)
NY 21 (Open; Stefanik, R)#
OH 15 (Carey, R)#
SC 1 (Open; Mace, R)
TX 9 (Open; Green, D)
TX 23 (Vacant; Gonzales, R)
VA 5 (McGuire, R)#
WI 1 (Steil, R)

	GOP	DEM
Solid	177	185
Likely/Lean/Tilt	33	24
Total	210	209
Toss-up	16	
Needed for majority	218	

*Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans*

New York's 21st District. (North Country and part of Albany area) Open; Elise Stefanik, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 62%. On paper, this district should be an easy hold for Republicans, given the overall partisan lean. But rising gas prices have put the squeeze on the sprawling district's farmers, and a trade war with Canada isn't helpful in a district that does more than $1 billion in trade with its neighbor to the north. Dairy farmer Blake Gendebien is an earnest and well-funded Democratic nominee who faces long odds but may

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House Open Seats

Redistricting, retirements and primary losses for incumbents have created 73 open seats this November.

District	Outgoing Member	2024 Result	2024 Presidential	Rating
AL-01	Barry Moore, R	New lines	Trump 67%	Solid Republican
AZ-01	David Schweikert, R	52%	Trump 51%	Toss-up
AZ-05	Andy Biggs, R	60%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
CA-11	Nancy Pelosi, D	New lines	Harris 82%	Solid Democratic
CA-26	Julia Brownley, D	New lines	Harris 56%	Solid Democratic
CA-38	Linda Sanchez, D	New lines	Harris 55%	Solid Democratic
CA-48	Darrell Issa, R	New lines	Harris 50%	Tilt Democratic
CO-01	Diana DeGette, D	77%	Harris 77%	Solid Democratic
CT-01	John Larson, D	63%	Harris 61%	Solid Democratic
FL-02	Neal Dunn, R	62%	Trump 59%	Solid Republican
FL-07	Cory Mills, R	57%	Trump 56%	Likely Republican
FL-11	Daniel Webster, R	New lines	Trump 57%	Solid Republican
FL-16	Vern Buchanan, R	New lines	Trump 56%	Likely Republican
FL-19	Byron Donalds, R	New lines	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
FL-22	Lois Frankel, D	New lines	Trump 55%	Tilt Republican
FL-24	Frederica Wilson, D	New lines	Harris 69%	Solid Democratic
GA-01	Buddy Carter, R	62%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
GA-10	Mike Collins, R	63%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
GA-11	Barry Loudermilk, R	67%	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
IA-02	Ashley Hinson, R	57%	Trump 54%	Tilt Republican
IA-04	Randy Feenstra, R	67%	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
IL-02	Robin Kelly, D	68%	Harris 66%	Solid Democratic
IL-04	Jesus Chuy Garcia, D	68%	Harris 73%	Solid Democratic
IL-07	Danny Davis, D	83%	Harris 81%	Solid Democratic
IL-08	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D	57%	Harris 53%	Solid Democratic
IL-09	Jan Schakowsky, D	68%	Harris 68%	Solid Democratic
KY-04	Thomas Massie, R	Unopposed	Trump 67%	Solid Republican
KY-06	Andy Barr, R	63%	Trump 57%	Lean Republican
LA-05	Julia Letlow, R	63%	Trump 67%	Solid Republican
LA-06	Cleo Fields, D	New lines	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
MA-06	Seth Moulton, D	Unopposed	Harris 59%	Solid Democratic
MD-05	Steny Hoyer, D	68%	Harris 66%	Solid Democratic
ME-02	Jared Golden, D	50%	Trump 54%	Likely Republican
MI-10	John James, R	51%	Trump 52%	Tilt Republican
MI-11	Haley Stevens, D	58%	Harris 57%	Solid Democratic
MI-13	Shri Thanedar, D	69%	Harris 69%	Solid Democratic
MN-02	Angie Craig, DFL	56%	Harris 51%	Likely Democratic
MO-06	Sam Graves, R	71%	Trump 69%	Solid Republican
MT-01	Ryan Zinke, R	52%	Trump 54%	Lean Republican
NE-02	Don Bacon, R	51%	Harris 52%	Lean Democratic
NH-01	Chris Pappas, D	54%	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic
NJ-12	Bonnie Watson Coleman, D	61%	Harris 61%	Solid Democratic
NV-02	Mark Amodei, R	55%	Trump 56%	Likely Republican
NY-07	Nydia Velazquez, D	78%	Harris 72%	Solid Democratic
NY-10	Dan Goldman, D	82%	Harris 79%	Solid Democratic
NY-12	Jerry Nadler, D	81%	Harris 81%	Solid Democratic
NY-13	Adriano Espaillat, D	84%	Harris 79%	Solid Democratic
NY-21	Elise Stefanik, R	62%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
NC-11	Chuck Edwards, R	57%	Trump 54%	Lean Republican
OK-01	Kevin Hern, R	60%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
PA-03	Dwight Evans, D	Unopposed	Harris 88%	Solid Democratic
SC-01	Nancy Mace, R	58%	Trump 56%	Likely Republican
SC-05	Ralph Norman, R	64%	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
SD-AL	Dusty Johnson, R	72%	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
TN-05	Andy Ogles, R	New lines	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
TN-06	John Rose, R	New lines	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
TN-09	Steve Cohen, D	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
TX-02	Dan Crenshaw, R	New lines	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
TX-08	Morgan Luttrell, R	New lines	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
TX-09	Al Green, D	New lines	Trump 59%	Likely Republican
TX-10	Michael McCaul, R	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
TX-19	Jodey Arrington, R	New lines	Trump 75%	Solid Republican
TX-21	Chip Roy, R	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
TX-22	Troy Nehls, R	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
TX-30	Jasmine Crockett, D	New lines	Harris 73%	Solid Democratic
TX-32	Julie Johnson, D	New lines	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
TX-33	Marc Veasey, D	New lines	Harris 65%	Solid Democratic
TX-35	Greg Casar, D	New lines	Harris 75%	Likely Republican
TX-38	Wesley Hunt, R	New lines	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
UT-01	Blake Moore, R	New lines	Harris 60%	Solid Democratic
WA-04	Dan Newhouse, R	52%	Trump 59%	Solid Republican
WI-07	Tom Tiffany, R	64%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
WY-AL	Harriet Hageman, R	71%	Trump 72%	Solid Republican

**Note: Some outgoing Members are running in other districts*
Source: Nicholas Demba, Inside Elections

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get a perfect storm with a favorable political environment and flawed opponent in Anthony Constantino. The brash and wealthy CEO of Sticker Mule has made a number of enemies within the GOP establishment over the past two years, and recorded an album full of pro-Trump rap music. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Public Policy Polling (D) for The Bench, Sept. 9-10 (IVR/text)— General election ballot: Constantino over Gendebien, 48% - 43%. Image ratings: Gendebien 35% favorable / 33% unfavorable. Constantino 38% favorable / 45% unfavorable.

Ohio's 9th District. (Northwest Ohio) Marcy Kaptur, D. Trump 55%. Both parties think their candidate, either Kaptur or former state Rep. Derek Merrin, is going to win this race. Only one can. Tilt Republican.

DCCC Targeting & Analytics (D) for DCCC, Sept. 22-23 (481 LV)— General election ballot: Kaptur and Merrin tied at 48%.

Ohio's 15th District. (Southwestern Columbus area) Mike Carey, R, Trump 55%. Democrat Don Leonard has a PhD in political science but is a newcomer to electoral politics. While he's got some compelling

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pieces to his biography, it will be easy for Carey and his allies to portray him as a liberal college professor. Leonard's quip on a podcast that he would "lie to the people of the district in order to get their votes" has already featured in several Carey ads, and a Trump-backed super PAC is set to spend in the closing weeks of the race. What makes this race interesting is the political environment in Ohio. If Democrats are really leading the Senate and gubernatorial races, they are likely carrying this district, which gives Leonard a tailwind and chance at pulling off the upset. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Hart Research Associates (D) for House Majority PAC, Sept. 22-24 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Leonard over Carey, 46% - 45%.

Oklahoma's 5th District. (Oklahoma City area) Stephanie Bice, R, re-elected 61%. Trump 58%. Democrat Jena Nelson released a poll showing her trailing Bice by 5 points, and her campaign manager told The Oklahoman that he expected "major funding" from the DCCC. In reality, that is unlikely to happen. Nelson has few resources of her own to marshall against Bice, and trailed the incumbent in cash on hand, $2 million to $17,000, on June 30. Solid Republican.

GBAO (D) for Nelson, Sept. 17-20 (500 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election: Bice over Nelson, 48% - 43%. Image ratings: Nelson 21% favorable / 9% unfavorable. Bice 39% favorable / 38% unfavorable.

Pennsylvania's 1st District. (Northern Philadelphia suburbs) Brian Fitzpatrick, R, re-elected 56%. Harris 49.7%. A rare publicly released Republican poll found Fitzpatrick well ahead of his Democratic opponent, Bucks County Commissioner Bob Harvie. While both parties agree that Gov. Josh Shapiro will win the district by a healthy, double-digit margin at the top of the ticket, there's more disagreement about whether Fitzpatrick is ahead or not. Lean Republican.

Public Opinion Strategies (R) for Fitzpatrick/NRCC, Sept. 11-14 (400 RV)— General election ballot: Fitzpatrick over Harvie, 51% - 42%.

Virginia's 1st District. (Western Chesapeake Bay and suburbs north and west of Richmond) Rob Wittman, R, re-elected 56%. Trump 52%. Two new surveys point to a competitive race in a district that will set the tone for the rest of election night when Virginia polls close. Democrats have been concerned that Gov. Abigail Spanberger's unpopularity is dragging down their candidates, including Henrico Commonwealth's Attorney Shannon Taylor. But a worsening environment for Republicans and a strong showing by Sen. Mark Warner at the top of the ticket is keeping these races competitive. Lean Republican.



Courtesy Taylor Campaign

Shannon Taylor

Washington Post/ George Mason Univ., Sept. 23-28 (609 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Taylor over Wittman, 50% - 46%.

DCCC Analytics, Sept 15-17 (519 LV)(text-to-web/live caller)— General election ballot: Wittman over Taylor, 47% - 46%.

Virginia's 5th District. (Charlottesville and western Southside Virginia) John McGuire, R, elected 58%. Trump 56%. Former Rep. Tom Perriello looks like he has a puncher's chance to win in this difficult district a decade and a half after it booted him from office. Perriello is the rare Democratic candidate with a spending advantage over McGuire, who was recruited to run for Congress by Trump but hasn't received any support from the president's super PACs yet. A pro-Perriello super PAC has been advertising against McGuire, and Democrats are eager to hit the congressman over his vote in the Virginia state legislature against banning child marriage. Polling shows this race close, but Perriello has a ways to go before he's in position to win. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Washington Post/ George Mason Univ., Sept. 23-28 (600 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: McGuire over Perriello, 51% - 45%. IE

Senate Report Shorts

Alaska. Dan Sullivan (R), elected 2014 (48%) and 2020 (54%). Republican strategists are increasingly concerned about Sullivan's re-election prospects, especially with another candidate named Dan Sullivan also appearing on the ballot. A story about former Rep. Mary Peltola's treatment of her staff probably won't move the needle much, and some Democrats even believe that it could be helpful to her. Alaska's longest-serving members of Congress, Sen. Ted Stevens and Rep. Don Young, both had famous tempers. Polling shows a tight race, and there's real uncertainty over how the ranked choice allocation will play out. It's possible control of the Senate could come down to the outcome in Alaska, which may not be known for weeks after Election Day. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

Trafalgar Group (R), Sept. 22-24 (1,079 LV)— General election ballot: Sullivan 47%, Peltola 46%, Daniel J. Sullivan Jr. (R) 3%, Gerald Heikes (R) 1%.

co/efficient (R), Sept. 14-17 (799 LV)(SMS/IVR)— General election ballot: Sullivan 48%, Peltola 46%, Daniel J. Sullivan Jr. 1%, Heikes 1%.

Fabrizio Ward (R)/Impact Research (D) for AARP, Sept. 8-11 (800 LV) (live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Peltola 46%, Sullivan 41%, Daniel J. Sullivan Jr. 4%, Heikes 3%. After ranked choice vote: Peltola over Sullivan, 53% - 47%.

Georgia. Jon Ossoff (D), elected 2020 (51%). Outside GOP groups spent more than $15 million in September on this race but Rep. Mike Collins hasn't made up much ground against Ossoff. The Thune-aligned Senate Leadership Fund still has an October TV reservation in Georgia, but time is running out for Collins to change the dynamic of this race. Ossoff's massive cash-on-hand advantage means that he can air more advertisements than the Republicans, even if GOP groups outspend in actual dollars. Republicans had hoped that gubernatorial nominee Rick Jackson's limitless spending might help drag Collins over the finish line; instead, it's barely been enough for Jackson to put any distance between himself and the underfunded Democrat-

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ic nominee, Keisha Lance Bottoms. Move from Tilt Democratic to Lean Democratic.

InsiderAdvantage (R), Sept. 22-23 (1,200 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Ossoff over Collins, 50% - 42%.

Iowa. Open; Joni Ernst (R), not seeking re-election. Privately, Republicans are starting to feel a little better about this race as they believe GOP Rep. Ashley Hinson has put some distance between herself and Democratic state Rep. Josh Turek. But Iowa remains a huge headache for the GOP as Democrat Rob Sand is on pace to become the state's next governor and Democrats could win three out of four House races. It's still not clear that Hinson is uniquely strong enough to swim against that tide or that Turek is flawed enough not to ride it. Tilt Republican.

InsiderAdvantage (R), Sept. 22-23 (1,200 LV)— General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 47% - 46%, Thomas Laehn (L) 2%.

Marist Univ., Sept. 17-20 (1,050 RV)(multimodal)— General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 50% - 42%.

Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2024 (53%). Republicans wish they didn't have to spend any time worrying about Kansas, but they haven't hit the panic button quite yet. Apathetic rural voters frustrated by a weak economy have laid the foundation for a competitive race, and Marshall has made things even more complicated by how much time he spends in Florida and attention on suing former patients for unpaid bills. But Republicans are confident that they can frame Democratic pastor Adam Hamilton as a wolf in sheep's clothing, including by attacking him as a "megachurch CEO." That fact that everyone is paying any attention to this race is evidence of a good political climate for Democrats. Likely Republican.

Emerson College for Nexstar, Sept. 15-16 (750 LV)— General election ballot: Hamilton over Marshall, 45% - 43%, David C. Graham (L) 4%.

Louisiana. Open; Bill Cassidy (R), lost in primary. A Hart Research survey conducted by the Jamie Davis campaign found the Democratic farmer trailing Rep. Julia Letlow by 6 points, 51-45 percent. The poll also had Trump's approval rating 1 point underwater in a state he won by 22 percent. Davis is still largely unknown — more than half of voters don't have an opinion of him — and isn't likely to get any help from a national party more focused on a dozen other Senate races. But it could be a sign that backlash to mid-decade redistricting in the wake of the Supreme Court's defanging of the Voting Rights Act could be manifesting across the South. Solid Republican.



Courtesy Letlow Campaign

Julia Letlow

Hart Research (D) for Davis, Sept. 17-19 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Letlow over Davis, 51% - 45%.

Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election. Democratic nominee Abdul El-Sayed weathered a contentious primary and an initial round of GOP attack ads. The progressive doctor has established a small but consistent lead over former Rep. Mike Rogers, the GOP nominee, though he still trails the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, Jocelyn Benson. Republicans currently have significantly more advertising reserved for the final five weeks of the race than Democrats, but their spending advantage so far hasn't altered the state of the race by much. While Republicans have successfully inverted El-Sayed's image, Rogers remains even less popular. Republicans would welcome a replay of the Democratic primary, when polls overestimated El-Sayed's advantage. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

Beacon Research (D)/Shaw & Co. (R) for Fox News, Sept. 24-28 (1,028 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 50% - 49%.

Marist University, Sept. 25-27 (1,235 RV)(multi-mode)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 51% - 44%.

co-efficient (R), Sept. 21-23 (843 LV)(SMS/live caller)— General election ballot: El-Sayed and Rogers tied at 45%.

The New York Times/Siena Univ., Sept. 15-22 (605 LV) (live caller)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 49% - 44%.

GBAO (D) for Senate Majority PAC, Sept. 19-22 (800 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 48% - 44%.

Cygnal (R)/Beacon Research (D) for the Michigan Enjoyer, Sept. 18-21 (600 LV)(live caller/text message)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 45% - 40%, Lydia Christensen (L) 1%.

Minnesota. Open; Tina Smith (DFL), not seeking re-election. This is the closest race that gets the least amount of attention. Even though Minnesota is a Democratic state and this is a Democratic year, the race between former NFL sideline reporter Michele Tafoya and Democratic Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan is close. Long-time Democratic control of the state, pervasive stories about fraud at the state level and Flanagan's progressive reputation is making this race competitive. But GOP strategists admit that an outside group, potentially one of President Trump's affiliated super PACs, will need to invest in the race to help Tafoya. Move from Likely Democratic to Lean Democratic.

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Senate Open Seats

A record number of senators are calling it quits this year, and two lost their primaries — the most since 2010.

State	Outgoing Senator	2024 Presidential	Rating	Outgoing Senator Status
Alabama	Tommy Tuberville, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican	Running for Governor
Illinois	Dick Durbin, D	Harris 54%	Solid Democratic	Retiring
Iowa	Joni Ernst, R	Trump 56%	Tilt Republican	Retiring
Kentucky	Mitch McConnell, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican	Retiring
Louisiana	Bill Cassidy, R	Trump 60%	Solid Republican	Lost Renomination
Michigan	Gary Peters, D	Trump 49.7%	Tilt Democratic	Retiring
Minnesota	Tina Smith, DFL	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic	Retiring
Montana	Steve Daines, R	Trump 58%	Solid Republican	Retiring
New Hampshire	Jeanne Shaheen, D	Harris 51%	Toss-up	Retiring
North Carolina	Thom Tillis, R	Trump 51%	Lean Democratic	Retiring
Oklahoma	Alan Armstrong, R	Trump 66%	Solid Republican	Prohibited from running
Texas	John Cornyn, R	Trump 56%	Tilt Republican	Lost Renomination
Wyoming	Cynthia Lummis, R	Trump 72%	Solid Republican	Retiring

Source: Nicholas Demba, Inside Elections

Continued from page 6

InsiderAdvantage (R), Sept. 28-29 (1,200 LV)(text/online panel)— General election ballot: Flanagan over Tafoya, 46% - 45%, Rebecca Whiting (L) 2%, Lucia Simonetti (I) 1%.

co/efficient (R), Sept. 14-15 (833 LV)(landline/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Flanagan over Tafoya, 43% - 42%, Simonetti (I) 2%, Whiting (L) 2%.

SurveyUSA for KSTP-TV, Sept. 9-14 (654 LV)— General election ballot: Tafoya and Flanagan tied at 42%, Simonetti (I) 2%, Whiting (L) 2%.

Montana. Open; Steve Daines (R), not seeking re-election. Even as Democratic chances improve in the 1st District, the Senate race looks out of reach for either independent Seth Bodnar or Democratic nominee Alani Bankhead, who continue to split the Democratic and independent vote while Republican Kurt Alme heads to a plurality victory. Solid Republican.

American Pulse Research & Polling (R) for KULR-TV, Sept. 19-24 (604 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Alme 45%, Bodnar 26%, Bankhead 19%.

Aspect Strategic for Montana Freedom PAC (pro-Bodnar), Sept. 7-15 (715 LV)— General election ballot: Alme 44%, Bodnar (I) 32%, Bankhead 14%.

Nebraska. Pete Ricketts (R), appointed 2023, elected 2024 special (63%). There's a dramatic difference of opinion on the status of this race. Democrats are encouraged that independent Dan Osborn has been running even or close to the senator for months (and some Republicans acknowledge it is competitive). But other GOP sources are confident that Ricketts is in good shape with a significant lead. A majority of evidence points to a very competitive race so we're changing the rating from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

GBAO (D) for Working Class Majority PAC, Sept. 3-8 (800 LV)— General election ballot: Osborn over Ricketts, 47% - 46%.

North Carolina. Open; Thom Tillis (R) not seeking re-election. Time is running out for former RNC Chairman Michael Whatley to change the trajectory of this race. While North Carolina races often break late, there are signs Republicans are growing increasingly skeptical of Whatley's ability to win. Tillis has publicly expressed doubt about the race, and a pro-Whatley GOP super PAC began trimming its October TV reservations. While the GOP-aligned Senate Leadership Fund still has $20 million parked in the state for the next month, the $20 million it spent in August and September doesn't seem to have taken the shine off of Cooper. Move from Tilt Democratic to Lean Democratic.



Courtesy Whatley Campaign

Michael Whatley

Quantus Insights (R), Sept. 21-22 (686 LV)(text-to-web)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 48% - 43%, Dublin (G) 1%, Bray (L) 1%.

Fabrizio Ward (R)/Impact Research (D) for AARP, Sept. 17-20 (1,115 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 53% - 42%.

Opinion Diagnostics for Common Cause North Carolina, Sept. 17-20 (857 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 52% - 44%.

YouGov, Sept. 15-18 (3,864 RV)(text-to-web)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 51% - 41%.

Harper Polling (R) for Carolina Journal, Sept. 13-15 (608 LV)—General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 48% - 34%, Shannon Bray (L) 3%, Michael Dublin (G) 2%.

Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. Help is coming for Husted in the form of $30 million in spending from a cryptocurrency-backed super PAC. Republicans hope this race is a repeat of the 2024 race, when a late investment from cryptocurrency interests helped sink Sen. Sherrod Brown's re-election. But that year Brown was swimming against the tide and needed to win over lots of voters casting a ballot for Trump; this year, he has the wind at his back, and successfully pummeled Husted on the airwaves over the summer. While a recent Marist poll is more optimistic for Brown than other statewide private surveys from both parties, the 73-year-old could be on the verge of a remarkable comeback. Toss-up.



Courtesy Brown Campaign

Sherrod Brown

Marist University, Sept. 24-27 (1,298 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Brown over Husted, 51% - 43%.

Texas. Open; John Cornyn (R), lost primary runoff. The GOP cavalry continues to stampede through Texas. The Senate Leadership Fund and Trump's political operation flooded the state with $100 million in September and look ready to spend another $100 million in the final month before Election Day. State Rep. James Talarico remains popular despite Republican attacks on his politics, faith and appearance, while state Attorney General Ken Paxton struggles to consolidate skeptical Republican voters and recreate Trump's margins among Latinos in South Texas. While the Paxton campaign released an internal poll showing the Republican leading, the campaign's polling also said that Paxton had a lead back in May, when he trailed in most other surveys by 3 or 4 points, so their underlying assumptions may be different from most other pollsters. National Democrats are dipping their toes into the race — the Schumer-aligned Senate Majority PAC created a Texas-focused super PAC that is running digital advertising. Republicans believe the picture has improved since Labor Day but that there's still lots of work to be done to get Paxton across the finish line. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

Pulse Decision Science (R) for Paxton, Sept. 24-27 (800 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Paxton over Talarico, 48% - 45%.

Stratus Intelligence (R) for Texans for a Conservative Majority, Sept. 22-24 (865 LV)— General election ballot: Talarico and Paxton tied at 48%.

Slingshot Strategies (D) for Texas Public Opinion Research, Sept. 19-22 (1,007 LV)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 49% - 45%, Ted Brown (L) 3%.

Texas Southern Univ. Sept. 15-19 (1,800 LV)(text-to-web)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 47% - 46%, Brown (L) 3%. IE

Governor Report Shorts

Alaska. Open; Mike Dunleavy (R), term-limited. Republicans continue to face a structural challenge in this race as their three candidates vie against the sole Democrat, former state Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins. With Kreiss-Tomkins likely to land in the mid-40s in the initial round of voting, it's possible that enough Republican voters will fail to rank a second or third choice, allowing him to win in the ranked choice tabulation even if he doesn't pick up many second-choice votes of his own. Move from Lean Republican to Toss-up.

co/efficient (R), Sept. 14-17 (799 LV)— General election ballot: Kreiss-Tomkins 43%, Wilson 20%, Bronson 17%, Taylor 6%.

Ohio. Open; Mike DeWine (R), term-limited. GOP nominee Vivek Ramaswamy and his allies have outspent Democratic nominee Amy Acton and her supportive PACs by nearly three-to-one over the past two months. While Acton's image rating has taken a hit, her lead in polling has been durable. Both statewide and district-level data still show Acton tied or ahead, though two recent polls from Suffolk and Marist universities may be too rosy for the former state health director. Despite his wealth and close relationship with Trump, Ramaswamy may be struggling to win over some Republicans skeptical of his Indian heritage and Hindu faith. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

Suffolk University for USA Today, Sept. 23-27 (500 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Acton over Ramaswamy, 50% - 41%, Drew Kissick (L) 3%.

Marist University, Sept. 24-27 (LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Acton over Ramaswamy, 50% - 44%.

Oklahoma. Open; Kevin Stitt (R), term-limited. A quietly competitive race is shaping up in the Sooner State, where Trump-endorsed former state Sen. Mike Mazzei defeated the more moderate state Attorney General Gentner Drummond in the GOP primary runoff. Now Mazzei faces state House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson, who has barnstormed the state in an effort to become the first Democrat since Brad Henry to win the gubernatorial mansion. Democrats fielded competitive candidates in 2018 and 2022, but ultimately lost both races by double digits. Mazzei's image rating is still suffering from a late and personally contentious primary, while Munson hasn't taken any attacks on the airwaves. Some private polling shows a close race, but Munson has to avoid late deciders breaking against her, as happened to Democrats in 2018 and 2022. There hasn't been any spending in the general election, but Mazzei is personally wealthy and could outspend Munson significantly down the stretch, if he wants to. Perhaps most tellingly, though, Trump is traveling to Oklahoma next month to rally support for Mazzei in some of the state's most conservative reaches. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Texas. Greg Abbott (R), elected 2014 (59%), 2018 (56%), 2022 (55%). State Rep. Gina Hinojosa seems poised to turn in the best performance for a Texas Democratic gubernatorial nominee since the late Ann Richards. But despite a handful of polls showing her tied or even ahead, the majority of the data still suggests she's trailing Abbott and lagging behind the other Democrat at the top of the ticket, Senate nominee James Talarico. Abbott has outspent Hinojosa considerably on TV, but several months of positive advertising didn't seem to change the race much. His campaign only recently went negative on Hinojosa, with an ad focused on property taxes. If a few weeks of negative advertising doesn't soften her support, national Democrats may feel compelled to invest more into the race. Likely Republican.

Stratus Intelligence (R) for Texans for a Conservative Majority, Sept. 22-24 (865 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Abbott over Hinojosa, 50% - 45%.

Slingshot Strategies (D) Texas Public Opinion Research, Sept. 19-22 (1,007 LV)(online panel)— General election ballot: Abbott over Hinojosa, 50% - 46%.

Marist Univ., Sept. 17-20 (1,139 RV)(multimodal)— General election ballot: Hinojosa over Abbott, 49% - 46%.

Vermont. Phil Scott (R), elected 2016 (53%), 2018 (55%), 2020 (69%), 2022 (71%), 2024 (73%). A recent University of New Hampshire poll produced a shocking result for Scott, showing the Republican trailing his Democratic opponent by 6 points. Scott has not trailed in a poll across five races since 2016, and won re-election in 2024 by more than 50 points. The UNH survey likely oversampled younger voters and undersampled older voters, exaggerating Wellbeing Economic Alliance of Vermont co-founder Amanda Janoo's vote share given her performance among younger voters. The political environment may result in a closer race than Scott's previous wins, but it would still be an earthquake if he actually loses. Solid Republican.

Braun Research for Vermont Public Media, Sept. 10-21 (732 LV)(live caller/SMS)— General election ballot: Scott over Janoo, 44% - 34%.

Univ. of New Hampshire, Sept. 17-21 (829 LV)(online panel)— General election ballot: Janoo over Scott, 49% - 43%. IE

2026 Governor Ratings

Toss-up (1D, 3R)	
AK Open (Dunleavy, R)#	OH Open (DeWine, R)#
GA Open (Kemp, R)	WI Open (Evers, D)
Tilt Democratic (2D, 1R)	**Tilt Republican (1D, 1R)**
IA Open (Reynolds, R)	*KS Open (Kelly, D)*
MI Open (Whitmer, D)	Lombardo (R-Nev.)
Hobbs (D-Ariz.)	
Lean Democratic (1D)	**Lean Republican (1R)**
Kotek (D-Ore.)	FL Open (DeSantis, R)
Likely Democratic (3D)	**Likely Republican (2R)**
NM Open (Lujan-Grisham, D)	Abbott (R-Texas)
MN Open (Walz, DFL)	OK Open (Stitt, R)#
Hochul (D-N.Y.)	
Solid Democratic (10D)	**Solid Republican (10R)**
CA Open (Newsom, D)	AL Open (Ivey, R)
CO Open (Polis, D)	SC Open (McMaster, R)
ME Open (Mills, D)	TN Open (Lee, R)
RI Open (McKee, D)	WY Open (Gordon, R)
Green (D-Hawaii)	Ayotte (R-N.H.)
Healey (D-Mass.)	Huckabee Sanders (R-Ark.)
Lamont (D-Ct.)	Little (R-Idaho)
Moore (D-Md.)	Pillen (R-Neb.)
Pritzker (D-Ill.)	Rhoden (R-S.D.)
Shapiro (D-Penn.)	Scott (R-Vt.)

*Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans*