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Inside Elections

With Nathan L. Gonzales

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2026 Election Overview: Democrats on the March

By Nathan L. Gonzales, Jacob Rubashkin and Inshara Ali

With less than a month before Election Day, the question is whether this will be a good or great midterm cycle for Democrats.

While President Donald Trump has a reputation for defying political odds, his job approval rating is in the 30s and Republicans are at risk of losing both chambers of Congress. Trump's political standing has dropped steadily over the last two years and the coalition that got him elected in 2024 has diminished.

The House and Senate battlegrounds have expanded from the typical swing places to include Republican districts and states that are afterthoughts in most elections. Republican ad spending in states including Kansas and South Carolina, as well as House seats that Trump won by more than 10 points, is evidence that the GOP is firmly on the defensive.

Republicans are struggling to recreate their 2024 magic as GOP voters, including those in rural areas, are conflicted between frustration in the absence of a promised economic rebound and the potential for Democratic majorities. The assumption that Trump permanently changed the party coalitions is being challenged as his approval rating has dropped across the board.

Despite the dire national political environment, Republican optimism is rooted in the memory of prior polling misses that underestimated GOP support, faith in the party turnout operation that elected Trump in 2024 and belief that Republican voters in Republican areas will ultimately turn out, even if they're unenthusiastic. While the deluge of GOP spending in September didn't move the ballot in many of the most competitive districts, it succeeded in driving up Democratic candidates' negative image ratings, potentially giving Republicans an opening to disqualify individual nominees in the closing weeks.

Democrats remain favorites to win control of the House. Once again, we're increasing our House projection slightly to a Democratic gain of 10-20 seats. (They need three for control.) We're maintaining our Senate projection of a likely Democratic gain of 3-5 seats, but a Democratic gain of eight seats is not out of the question. (They need four for control.)

Collectively, there are dozens of House and Senate races where the Republican and Democratic candidates are within a few points of each other. If Republicans can improve by 2-4 points in the final weeks, they can avoid embarrassing losses. But without a final boost, Republicans are at risk of a historic blowout.

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (6D, 12R)

AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)
CA 22 (Valadao, R)
CO 8 (Evans, R)
FL 14 (Castor, D)
FL25 (Moskowitz, D)
IA 2 (Open; Hinson, R)#
MI 7 (Barrett, R)
NC 1 (Davis, D)#
NC 11 (Open; Edwards, R)#
NY 17 (Lawler, R)
OH 7 (Miller, R)
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)#
PA 10 (Perry, R)
TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)#
TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
VA 2 (Kiggans, R)
WA 3 (Perez, D)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Tilt Democratic (5D, 7R)

AZ 1 (Open; Schweikert, R)#
CA 13 (Gray, D)
CA 48 (Open; Issa, R)
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)
IA 3 (Nunn, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
NY 4 (Gillen, D)
OH 1 (Landsman, D)
PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)#
PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)#
TX 28 (Cuellar, D)

Tilt Republican (1D, 5R)

CO 5 (Crank, R)
FL 22 (Open; Frankel, D)
KY 6 (Open; Barr, R)#
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
MT 1 (Open; Zinke, R)#

Lean Democratic (4D, 1R, 1I)

CA 6 (Open; Bera, D/Kiley, I)
NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)#
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)
NV 1 (Titus, D)
NV 3 (Lee, D)
NY 3 (Suozzi, D)

Lean Republican (3D, 7R)

AL 2 (Figures, D)#
FL 13 (Luna, R)
FL 27 (Salazar, R)
ME 2 (Open; Golden, D)#
NV 2 (Open; Amodei, R)#
NY 21 (Open; Stefanik, R)#
PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
SC 1 (Open; Mace, R)#
TX 35 (Open; Casar, D)
VA 1 (Wittman, R)

Likely Democratic (7D)

CA 45 (Tran, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)
MI 3 (Scholten, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)
NV 4 (Horsford, D)
VA 7 (Vindman, D)

Likely Republican (2D, 15R)

AK AL (Begich, R)
AR 2 (Hill, R)#
AZ 2 (Crane, R)
CO 3 (Hurd, R)
FL 7 (Open; Mills, R)
FL 9 (Soto, D)
FL 12 (Bilirakis R)#
FL 16 (Open; Buchanan, R)
IN 5 (Spartz R)#
MN 1 (Finstad, R)
NE 1 (Flood, R)#
OH 15 (Carey, R)
TX 9 (Open; Green, D)
TX 23 (Vacant; Gonzales, R)
VA 5 (McGuire, R)
WI 1 (Steil, R)
WY AL (Open; Hageman, R)#

	GOP	DEM
Solid	173	187
Likely/Lean/Tilt	32	25
Total	205	212
Toss-up	18	
Needed for majority	218	

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

CALENDAR

Oct. 19	Early voting begins in Texas, Alaska, South Carolina, Colorado
Oct. 20	NBA Season begins
Nov. 3	Election Day

Senate Report Shorts

Florida. Ashley Moody, R, appointed 2025. Democrats don't have the money to seriously challenge Moody and Republicans don't have the resources to defend her (except for a friendly super PAC), so this looks like a true test of the political environment. Just two years after Trump won the Sunshine State by a dozen points and Sen. Rick Scott won re-election by a similar margin, this race looks like it's going to be much closer. Democratic state Rep. Angie Nixon could become a household name early on Election Night, depending on the margin. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Ashley Moody

St. Pete Polls for Florida Politics, Oct. 5-7 (836 LV)(IVR/SMS)— General election ballot: Moody over Nixon, 47% - 45%.

Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy for NBC 6/Telemundo, Sept. 28-Oct. 1 (625 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Moody over Nixon, 50% - 40%.

InsiderAdvantage (R), Sept. 20-21 (600 LV)— General election ballot: Moody over Nixon, 49% - 42%.

Stetson Univ., Sept. 14-21 (522 LV) (online panel)— General election ballot: Moody over Nixon, 51% - 40%.

St. Pete Polls for Florida Politics, Sept. 15-17 (913 LV)(live caller/SMS)— General election ballot: Moody and Nixon tied at 45%.

Idaho. Jim Risch (R), elected 2008 (58%), 2014 (65%), 2020 (63%). Risch may be headed for the worst performance by an Idaho Republican in a Senate race since 1986, but that doesn't mean independent Todd Achilles is in a position to pull off the upset. Multiple Republican polls show Risch under 50 percent, but well ahead of Achilles and a handful of other minor-party candidates. Even in ruby-red Idaho, Risch may be confronting a poor political environment for Republicans and voter fatigue as the 83-year-old seeks a fourth term. Ultimately, the state is so Republican that it's difficult to see Risch losing; the presence of a Libertarian and another independent on the ballot may help the incumbent as well. Solid Republican.

Peak Insights (R) for Risch, Sept. 28-30 (500 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Risch 49%, Achilles 24%, Natalie Fleming (I) 3%, Matt Loesby (L) 2%.

Iowa. Open; Joni Ernst (R), not seeking re-election. Polls showing GOP Rep. Ashley Hinson leading Democratic state Sen. Josh Turek look precarious compared to Democrats leading the gubernatorial race and potentially winning three out of four House seats. VoteVets is on the air opposing Hinson, but there will be a deluge of other ads in this race in the final weeks. Tilt Republican.



Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Ashley Hinson

Marist Univ., Oct. 8-11 (1,100 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 48% - 45%.

Emerson College for Nexstar, Oct. 5-6 (650 LV)(online panel/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Hinson over Turek, 47% - 45%, Thomas Laehn (L) 2%.

CNN/SRSS, Sept. 29-Oct. 5 (801 LV)(online/live caller)— General election ballot: Hinson over Turek, 45% - 43%.

Suffolk University, Oct. 1-4 (500 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 48% - 44%.

New York Times/Siena Univ., Sept. 22-Oct. 1 (606 LV)—General election ballot: Hinson over Turek, 48% - 47%.

Beacon Research (D)/Shaw (R) for Fox News, Sept. 24-28 (1,008 LV)— General election ballot: Turek over Hinson, 49% - 47%.

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

Kansas. Roger Marshall (R), elected 2024 (53%). Kansas has muscled its way onto a Senate battleground that has otherwise remained largely static since the beginning of the year. The Republican

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Senate Leadership Fund recently launched a $10 million rescue mission for Marshall, whose lead against Methodist pastor Adam Hamilton has evaporated in both parties' polling. Kansas hasn't elected a Democrat to the Senate in nearly 100 years but Marshall's unenthusiastic campaign has given Hamilton an opening. The Democrat has hammered Marshall over reporting that the OBGYN had his patients arrested for failing to pay their bills and reports about the senator's alleged use of official office funds for the 2020 campaign. Marshall has in turn begun to attack Hamilton over reporting that Hamilton didn't take action against a church volunteer accused of child sexual abuse. Move from Likely Republican to Tilt Republican.



Courtesy Hamilton Campaign

Adam Hamilton

InsiderAdvantage, Oct. 9-10 (1,200 LV)— General election ballot: Hamilton over Marshall, 48% - 47%.

GBAO (D) for Hamilton, Sept. 30-Oct. 4 (600 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Hamilton over Marshall, 46% - 41%, David Graham (L) 7%. Hamilton over Marshall, 49% - 44%.

YouGov, Sept. 24 - Oct. 4 (2,253 LV)(online)— General election ballot: Hamilton over Marshall, 48% - 45%.

New York Times/Siena University, Sept. 22-30 (605 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Hamilton and Marshall tied at 45%, Graham (L) 5%. Marshall over Hamilton, 47% - 46%.

Global Strategy Group (D), Sept. 13-15 (800 LV)— General election ballot: Hamilton over Marshall, 47% - 43%, Graham (L) 5%. Hamilton over Marshall, 49% - 47%.

Maine. Susan Collins (R), elected 1996 (49%), 2002 (58%), 2008 (61%) 2014 (69%), and 2020 (51%). There's a growing divide between how the two parties view this race. Republicans are confident that Collins is ahead and on pace to defy political gravity once again. Democrats are cautiously optimistic that they've done what they needed to do to the senator's image and believe Troy Jackson is finally on track to do what no other Democrats have been able to do before him: defeat Susan Collins. One party is going to be very right and the other very wrong. Toss-up.

Suffolk Univ. for USA Today, Oct. 8-11 (500 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Jackson over Collins, 49% - 47%.

Washington Post/George Mason Univ., Sept. 30-Oct. 5 (800 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Jackson over Collins, 50% - 46%.

Marist Univ., Oct. 1-4 (1,505 RV)(multimodal)— General election ballot: Jackson over Collins, 51% - 47%.

co/efficient (R), Sept. 28-30 (1,240 LV)(live caller/text)— General election ballot: Collins over Jackson, 48% - 46%.

Siena Univ./New York Times/Portland Press Herald, Sept. 15-22 (619 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Collins over Jackson, 49% - 46%.

Michigan. Open; Gary Peters (D), not seeking re-election. Democrat Abdul El-Sayed is running narrowly ahead of former GOP Rep. Mike Rogers, but Republicans are optimistic that polls that overestimated El-Sayed in the primary will do so again in the general election. El-Sayed's softer numbers among Black voters (especially in the Detroit region) and his views on Israel also give Republicans hope that he'll underperform. Tilt Democratic.

YouGov, Sept. 22-Oct. 4 (3,947 LV)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 49% - 48%.

Mitchell Research & Communications, Oct. 1 (682 LV)— General election ballot: El-Sayed over Rogers, 46% - 41%, Christensen (L) 3%, Kristy (Natural Law Party) 2%, Long (U.S. Taxpayers Party) 1%, Marsh (G) 1%.

New Hampshire. Open; Jeanne Shaheen (D), not seeking re-election. Prior GOP optimism has started to fade as Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas has opened up a narrow lead against former GOP Sen. John Sununu. New Hampshire is typically a swing state, but a place that also tends to vote with the national political environment, and this is not a good year for the GOP. Republican Gov. Kelly Ayotte is on track to win re-election to a second, two-year term, but Pappas is on track to keep this seat in the Democratic column. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

YouGov, Sept. 28 - Oct. 5 (1,520 LV)— General election ballot: Pappas over Sununu, 51% - 43%.

St. Anselm's College for AARP, Sept. 28-29 (1,042 LV)— General election ballot: Pappas over Sununu, 51% - 44%.

Univ. of New Hampshire, Sept. 17-21 (1,392 LV)(online panel)— General election ballot: Pappas over Sununu, 50% - 42%, Edmond Laplante (Constitution Party) 2%.

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2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (4)	
Sullivan (R-Ak.)	Husted (R-Ohio)
Collins (R-Maine)	TX Open (Cornyn, R)#
Tilt Democratic (2)	**Tilt Republican (2)**
MI Open (Peters, D)	IA Open (Ernst, R)
NH Open (Shaheen, D)#	Marshall (R-Kan.)#
Lean Democratic (3)	**Lean Republican (2)**
MN Open (Smith, DFL)	Ricketts (R-Neb.)
NC Open (Tillis, R)	Graham (R-S.C.)#
Ossoff (D-Ga.)	
Likely Democratic	**Likely Republican (1)**
	Moody (R-Fl.)#
Solid Democratic (9)	**Solid Republican (12)**
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.)
	Risch (R-Idaho)
	Rounds (R-S.D.)

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

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North Carolina. Open; Thom Tillis (R) not seeking re-election. Republicans continue to shift resources away from the Tar Heel State to other races including Kansas and South Carolina. Former Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper is the clear frontrunner over former RNC chairman Michael Whatley, who recently paused all of his TV advertising. Lean Democratic.

SurveyUSA for WRAL/WSOC, Oct. 7-11 (643 LV)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 54% - 40%.

Change Research (D) for Carolina Forward, Oct. 1-7 (829 LV)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 50% - 40%.

East Carolina Univ., Sept. 30-Oct. 3 (810 LV)(online panel/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Cooper over Whatley, 50% - 43%.

Ohio. Jon Husted (R), appointed 2025. This continues to be one of the most expensive races in the country. But even though the race is tied or former Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown is only up a point or two, Republicans aren't talking optimistically about Husted's chances. This looks like Democrats' second or third best takeover opportunity. Toss-up.

co/efficient (R), Oct. 5-6 (925 LV)— General election ballot: Husted over Brown, 44% - 43%. Levy (I) 3%, Redpath (L) 1%. Husted over Brown, 46% - 45%.

CNN/SRSS, Sept. 29-Oct. 5 (760 LV)(online/live caller)— General election ballot: Brown over Husted, 49% - 43%.

New York Times/Siena Univ., Sept. 22-Oct. 1. (616 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Brown over Husted, 49% - 46%.

South Carolina. Darline Graham (R), appointed 2026. It's been 60 years since a non-incumbent Democrat won a Senate race in South Carolina, but pediatrician Annie Andrews has a chance to do it this November. Since announcing she was running for the full term, Darline Graham has struggled to ramp up her campaign to the point that there are serious concerns about her ability to win. Late-spending by outside groups such as the Senate Leadership Fund could help right the ship. But this race is much closer than previously expected. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

InsiderAdvantage (R), Sept. 28-29 (1,200 LV)(multimodal)— General election ballot: Graham over Andrews, 46% - 45%, Mark Hackett (C) 3%, Kasie Whitener (L) 2%.

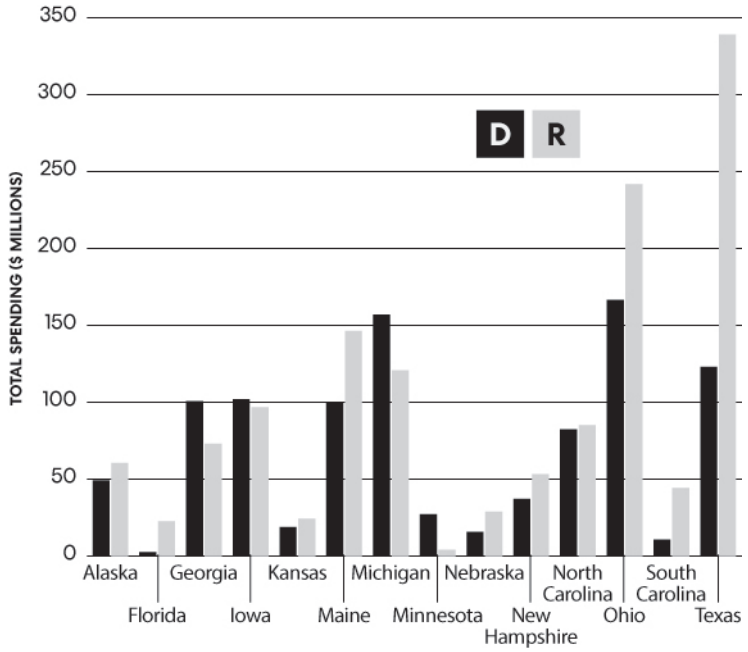
South Dakota. Mike Rounds (R), elected 2014 (50%) and 2020 (66%). The South Dakota race is closer than expected but it's still not clear there's a path to victory for independent Brian Bengs, who is the only other candidate on the ballot. While Democratic pollsters see Bengs within striking distance, GOP polling is more optimistic for the incumbent, who hasn't committed a fireable offense and has an advantage on the airwaves in the closing weeks of the race. This could be another ugly finish for Rounds, a former governor who won his first term with a bare majority in 2014, but he's still in the driver's seat. Solid Republican.

Inside Elections Podcast

Episode 81: Nathan, Jacob and Inshara analyze the casting and counting of ballots and potential vulnerabilities in the election process with Nathaniel Rakich of Votebeat.

Episode 80: Teddy Schleifer of the *New York Times* joins Nathan, Jacob and Inshara for a deep dive into the complex web of wealthy donors and big money in elections.

Republicans Outspending Democrats on Ads in Competitive Senate Races



Source: AdImpact
Graphic: Inshara Ali

Zenith Research for Bengs (I), Sept. 24-27 (500 LV)(multimodal)— General election ballot: Rounds over Bengs, 53% - 47%.

Public Policy Polling for Bengs (I), Sept. 8-9 (629 RV)— General election ballot: Rounds over Bengs, 45% - 42%.

Texas. Open; John Cornyn (R), lost primary runoff. Even though Democrats haven't won a statewide race in decades, state Rep. James Talarico has led GOP state Attorney General Ken Paxton for nearly five months. The lead is narrow, but has been in the face of a few hundred million dollars in spending. Republicans are hoping millions more will be enough to boost GOP turnout and pull Paxton across the finish line. But the closer-than-expected governor's race and GOP struggles in key House races demonstrate Republicans have a bigger problem in Texas than just Paxton. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.



Courtesy Talarico Campaign

James Talarico

Marist University, Oct. 8-11 (1,196 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 47% - 45%.

ReconMR/Siena Univ., Oct. 5-8 (617 LV)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 48% - 44%.

Univ. of Texas/YouGov, Sept. 25-Oct. 5 (841 LV)(online panel)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 50% - 47%, Ted Brown (L) 1%.

New York Times/Siena Univ., Sept. 21-30 (615 LV)— General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 51% - 45%.

Guidant Polling and Strategy (R) for Public First Action, Sept. 20-28 (800 LV)—General election ballot: Talarico over Paxton, 47% - 44%. IE

House Report Shorts

Alabama's 2nd District. (Montgomery and southeastern Alabama) Shomari Figures, D. Trump 57%. Republicans redrew the seat in order to defeat the congressman, but his incumbency and the political environment has complicated that mission for Republican Rhett Marques. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Arizona's 1st District. (Northeastern Phoenix and Scottsdale) Open; David Schweikert, R, lost GOP gubernatorial primary. Trump 51%. Physician Amish Shah has had a narrow but consistent edge over former NFL kicker Jay Feely. In this environment, it's hard to see Republicans holding onto this open seat. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

FirstStrategic Communications and Public Affairs (R), Oct. 1 (400 RV) (text-to-web)— General election ballot, Shah over Feely, 44% - 42%.

Arkansas' 2nd District. (Greater Little Rock) French Hill, R, re-elected 59%. Trump 57%. In a sign of how deep GOP woes extend this cycle, Hill's race has become a cause for concern. Polling from both sides of the aisle points to a very close race between the House Financial Services chairman and Chris Jones, an MIT-educated physicist, urban planner and minister who was the Democratic nominee for governor in 2022. Hill has enjoyed a significant financial advantage over Jones, who was only recently added to the DCCC's Red to Blue list. Hill stepped up his campaigning last month, and a friendly super PAC started running negative ads against Jones. But now Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker's PAC is getting involved as well, with a plan to spend $1 million on negative ads against Hill. Black voter backlash to the evisceration of the Voting Rights Act may be driving better turnout for Jones as well. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Indiana's 5th District. (Northern Indianapolis suburbs and part of centra.l Indiana) Victoria Spartz, R, re-elected 57%. Trump 57%. Democratic state Sen. J.D. Ford wouldn't have much of a chance in a normal cycle, but this is developing into a competitive race and suburban voters might be ready to move on from the quirky congresswoman. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Iowa's 2nd District. (Northeastern Iowa) Open; Ashley Hinson, R, running for Senate. Trump 57%. Democrat Lindsay James is running even with or ahead of Republican Joe Mitchell in this open seat, as Iowa continues to be a giant headache for the GOP up and down the ballot. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

Kentucky's 6th District. (Greater Lexington area) Open; Andy Barr, R, running for Senate. Trump 57%. Democratic attorney Zach Dembo is running close to or even ahead of Republican Ralph Alvarado as open seats around the country look like a problem for the GOP. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

DCCC Targeting & Analytics (D) for DCCC, Oct. 2-5 (606 LV)— General election ballot: Dembo over Alvarado, 46% - 40%, Bowman (I) 5%, Lynch (Kentucky Party) 1%.

Change Research for Kentuckians Not Corruption (pro-Dembo), Sept. 29-Oct. 5 (524 LV)(online/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Dembo over Alvarado, 47% - 38%.

GQR for Dembo, Sept. 25-30 (401 LV)—General election ballot: Dembo over Alvarado, 42% - 37%.

Maine's 2nd District. (Northern Maine) Open; Jared Golden, D, not seeking re-election. Trump 54%. Former GOP Gov. Paul LePage still has the advantage in the race, but some GOP strategists admit he's only ahead of Democrat Matt Dunlap by a few points. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Tulchin Research for Dunlap (D), Sept. 27-30 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Dunlap over LePage, 50% - 48%.

Univ. of New Hampshire, Sept. 17-21 (627 LV)— General election ballot: Dunlap over LePage, 51% - 45%.

Montana's 1st District. (Western Montana) Open; Ryan Zinke, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 54%. Some private surveys have Democrat Sam Forstag leading Republican Aaron Flint with just a few weeks to go. Even though Montana is a red state and this is a red district, Trump's job approval rating is slumping nearly everywhere. Republicans can still rally here and elsewhere, but Democrats have a chance for an upset. Move from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican.

Nebraska's 1st District. (Lincoln and rural eastern Nebraska) Mike Flood, R, re-elected 60%. Trump 55%. Democrat Chris Backemeyer's profile as a career State Department official might not be the most obvious fit for the district, but continued voter frustration over Trump's tariff and agriculture policy, and high costs driven by the Iran War, have put this race in play. Flood recently began airing negative ads against Backemeyer, hitting him for spending decades away from Nebraska and working on the Iran deal under the Obama administration. A super PAC funded in part by Democratic dark money groups is spending against Flood as well. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

Nebraska's 2nd District. (Greater Omaha Area) Open; Don Bacon, R, not seeking re-election. Harris 52%. The Congressional Leadership Fund, the main GOP House super PAC, has triaged this district, a sign that national Republicans are not confident in Omaha councilman Brinker Harding's ability to keep the district in GOP hands against Democrat Denise Powell. Move from Tilt Democratic to Lean Democratic.

National Public Affairs (R), Oct. 2-5 (377 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Powell over Harding, 50% - 38%, Eric Foreman (L) 6%.

Nevada's 2nd District. (Reno area and northern Nevada) Open; Mark Amodei, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 56%. The Club for Growth and its affiliates have spent upward of $1.7 million over the past two months bolstering the candidacy of David Flippo, the Air Force veteran and GOP nominee against Democrat Teresa Benitez-Thompson. Flippo, who made an enemy of the outgoing congressman earlier this year, has also raised the ire of some veterans' groups after the *Washington Post* reported that he had misrepresented a military award. Even though the district was drawn to elect

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a Republican, Flippo's lack of ties to the region, Benitez-Thompson's political operation and a seven-figure investment from a pro-clean energy group make this a more realistic target for Democrats. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

New Jersey's 7th District. (Southwestern New York City suburbs and exurbs) Tom Kean Jr., R, re-elected 52%. Trump 50%. Kean's image doesn't seem to have recovered from his extended, initially unexplained absence from Congress earlier this year. Even after the scion of one of New Jersey's most storied political dynasties revealed he had sought in-patient treatment for depression, voters in the highly educated, wealthy district appeared unwilling to send him back to Congress. The main House GOP super PAC, the Congressional Leadership Fund, began removing its remaining ad reservations from this district. Former helicopter pilot Rebecca Bennett is the favorite now. Tilt Democratic.

New Jersey's 9th District. (Urban North Jersey and western New York City suburbs) Nellie Pou, D, elected 51%. Harris 51%. Despite the 6-point race in 2024, there's no evidence that Republican Rosie Pino is within striking distance of the congresswoman this cycle in a much worse political environment for the GOP. Move from Likely Democratic to Solid Democratic.

New Mexico's 2nd District. (Southern New Mexico and western Albuquerque area) Gabe Vasquez, D, re-elected 52%. Trump 49.9%. Republicans are high on their nominee Greg Cunningham but it's a very tough cycle for Republicans, and the congressman appears to have a narrow lead. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's outside group is taking over the Democratic ad load in the race as he tries to build his resume to run for president. Tilt Democratic.

Research & Polling Inc. for Albuquerque Journal, Oct. 1-9 (383 LV)— General election ballot: Vasquez over Cunningham, 48% - 44%.

New York's 19th District. (Southeastern upstate New York) Josh Riley, D, elected 51%. Harris 50%. State Sen. Peter Oberacker was the first candidate to be triaged by House Republicans. This district could be competitive in a different cycle, but not this one. Move from Likely Democratic to Solid Democratic.

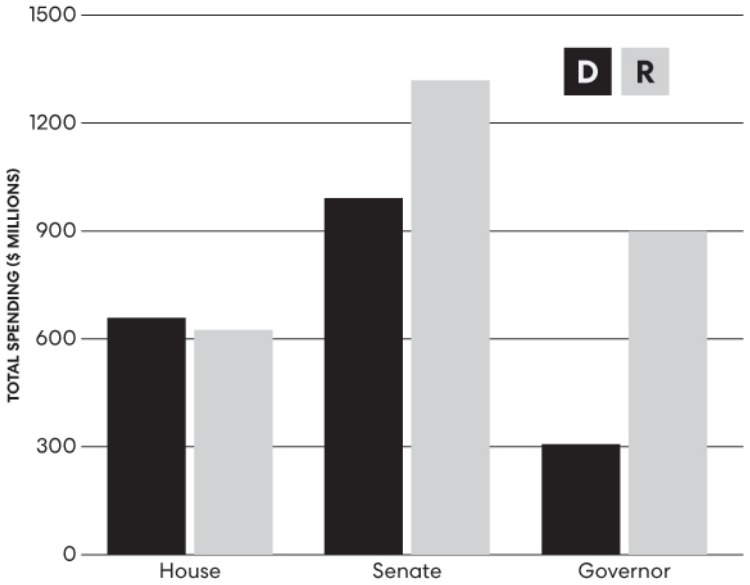
New York's 21st District. (North Country and part of Albany area) Open; Elise Stefanik, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 62%. A recent survey showed Democratic farmer Blake Gendebien leading Republican sticker company owner Anthony Constantino by 4 points, 46-42 percent. That might be rosy for Democrats, and the poll included an independent candidate as an option even though he's running as a write-in. But this is a real race despite the typically Republican DNA of the North Country district. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Siena Univ. for NBC5 News/Albany Times-Union/WAMC Radio, Sept. 30-Oct. 6 (496 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Gendebien over Constantino, 46% - 42%, Christopher Schmidt (I) 5%.

Impact Research for Gendebien (D), Sept. 29 - Oct. 4 (500 LV)— General election ballot: Constantino over Gendebien, 48% - 45%.

North Carolina's 1st District. (Northeastern North Carolina) Don Davis, D, re-elected 49.5%. Trump 51%. Democrats believe

Ad War: GOP Spending Outpaces Democratic Spending



Source: AdImpact
Graphic: Inshara Ali

Davis has carved out a significant advantage post-Labor Day. GOP polling has the race closer. But it's no longer fair to say that Davis is an underdog in his rematch against retired Army Lt. Col. Laurie Buckhout, despite Republicans redrawing his district to defeat him. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

co/efficient (R) for Buckhout, Oct. 6-8 (623 LV)(IVR/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Buckhout over Davis, 43% - 42%, Tom Bailey (L) 2%.

Neighborhood Research (R), Oct. 1-6 (303 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Davis over Buckhout, 51% - 41%.

GQR (D) for Davis, Sept. 29-Oct. 4 (500 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Davis over Buckhout, 47% - 39%, Bailey 8%.

North Carolina's 11th District. (Western North Carolina) Open; Chuck Edwards, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 54%. Republicans forced Edwards out of the race and their replacement nominee, state Rep. Jennifer Balkcom, is having a tough time adjusting to the speed and spotlight of the race. Democrat Jamie Ager continues to run a strong campaign while former Gov. Roy Cooper's Senate run gives the party a strong ticket. Move from Lean Republican to Toss-up.

Ohio's 1st District. (Cincinnati plus Warren and Clinton counties) Greg Landsman, D. Trump 51%. Republicans are encouraged that GOP challenger Eric Conroy is still within striking distance of the congressman. But Conroy needs to find a way to raise his name I.D. in order to consolidate GOP voters in a very expensive and crowded media landscape with two, high-stakes statewide races for Senate and governor. Tilt Democratic.

Ohio's 9th District. (Northwest Ohio) Marcy Kaptur, D. Trump 55%. The congresswoman still has a difficult race, particularly because the district was drawn to be even more Republican than it was two years ago when she narrowly won. But the political environ-

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ment is better and she's running even with Republican Derek Merrin. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up

DCCC Analytics, Sept. 22-23 (481 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Kaptur and Merrin tied at 48%.

Pennsylvania's 1st District. (Northern Philadelphia suburbs) Brian Fitzpatrick, R, re-elected 56%. Harris 49.7%. The political environment is bad for Republicans and Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro is on track to win re-election in this district by at least 20 points, but Fitzpatrick is still holding up in this suburban district as Republicans drive up Democrat Bob Harvie's negatives. Lean Republican.

Global Strategy Group for Harvie (D), Oct. 1-8 (1,032 LV) — General election ballot: Fitzpatrick and Harvie tied at 46%.

Pennsylvania's 7th District. (Lehigh Valley) Ryan Mackenzie, R, elected 51%. Trump 51%.

A combination of Trump's negative job rating and Gov. Josh Shapiro's strong re-election bid are helping Democrat Bob Brooks unseat Mackenzie. The race isn't over, but even some Republicans admit this seat is already in the Democratic column. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

Franklin & Marshall College, Sept. 9-20 (357 RV)— General election ballot: Brooks over Mackenzie, 45% - 40%.

Pennsylvania's 8th District. (Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and northeastern Pennsylvania) Rob Bresnahan, R, elected 51%. Trump 54%. While his colleague Ryan Mackenzie might be a victim of the political environment, even some GOP strategists admit that Bresnahan has made this race harder than it needed to be. Democratic Scranton Mayor Paige Cognetti has a narrow edge. Move from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic.

South Carolina's 1st District. (Coastal South Carolina and Charleston suburbs) Open; Nancy Mace, R, ran for governor. Trump 56%. As the top GOP super PAC, Congressional Leadership Fund, cuts bait on more Democratic-leaning districts, it's sending reinforcements to support Charleston County councilor Jenny Costa Honeycutt, who's in a close race against retired Vice Admiral Nancy Lacore. The genteel, wealthy 1st leans Republican, and Costa Honeycutt is the daughter of one of the state's most well-connected Republicans, but Lacore has outpaced her in fundraising, and the political environment is only getting worse for the GOP. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Texas' 2nd District. (Northern Houston suburbs) Open; Dan Crenshaw, R, lost primary. Trump 61%. A poll for financial advisor Shaun Finnie, the Democratic nominee, found him trailing state Rep. Steve Toth by 9 points, 46-37 percent. Finnie is personally wealthy and as of June 30 had loaned his campaign $2 million, giving him a significant financial edge over Toth. This is not a district on anyone's radar and it will be a steep climb for Finnie to pick up 13 points in five weeks. However, the district's environmental factors bode well for Democrats. Despite Trump winning by 23 points two years ago, the president's approval rating is 5 points underwater, and Democratic Senate nominee James Talarico trails in that race by just 2 points, 48-46 percent. If that's true, Talarico is winning statewide. Solid Republican.

Impact Research (D) for Finnie, Sept. 29 - Oct. 4 (501 LV)(mixed mode)— General election ballot: Toth over Finnie, 46% - 37%.

Texas' 10th District. (Austin suburbs and rural central Texas between Austin and Houston) Open; Michael McCaul, R, not seeking re-election. Trump 60%. A Change Research poll for Democrat Caitlin Rourk found the Army Reserve intelligence officer and marketing consultant trailing attorney Chris Gober by 7 points, 48-41 percent. The district has seen virtually no spending and neither Rourk nor Gober had significant resources as of the last campaign finance filing deadline, June 30. But Gober, a former lawyer for Elon Musk, is well-connected and had a super PAC in the GOP primary. The Rourk poll found Trump's approval rating underwater and Republican Ken Paxton with just a 2 point lead in the Senate race. Solid Republican.

Change Research (D) for Rourk, Sept. 18-22 (613 LV)— General election ballot: Gober over Rourk, 48% - 41%.

Texas' 15th District. (McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley to the outer San Antonio metro area) Monica De La Cruz, R. Trump 58%. Republicans are having trouble matching their previous performances up and down the ballot. This district was drawn to re-elect De La Cruz, but Democrat Bobby Pulido is running at least even with the congresswoman, even after Republicans have thrown plenty of attacks at him. Move from Tilt Republican to Toss-up.

Normington Petts for House Majority PAC (D), Sept. 24-28 (400 LV)— General election ballot: Pulido over De La Cruz, 54% - 41%.

Wyoming's At-Large District. Open; Harriet Hageman, R, running for Senate. Trump 71%. The most Republican state in the country shouldn't be anywhere close to the House battleground. But Trump is barely above water according to private polling, and GOP nominee Chuck Gray, the state secretary of state, is deeply unpopular statewide and divisive even among Republicans. He won just 25 percent of the vote in his contentious primary, as many of his allies in the state Freedom Caucus lost their own races, and he didn't enter the fall looking strong in the general election. Gray is fortunate to have the partisan lean of the state in his favor, and for the presence of Libertarian and Constitution Party candidates on the ballot. Democrat Lisa Kinney, an attorney and former state senator, had virtually no campaign funds as of June 30. But Wyoming is a cheap state to advertise in, and one GOP strategist warned there was a window of opportunity for an outside Democratic group to create some mischief in a surprisingly fluid House race. This is not a race Democrats should win or have made any effort to put into play. But Gray's unique vulnerabilities could make it the most competitive Wyoming race since Democrat Gary Trauner's near misses in 2006 and 2008. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican. IE



Courtesy Kinney Campaign

Lisa Kinney

Governor Report Shorts

Florida. Open; Ron DeSantis (R), term-limited. Democratic nominee David Jolly's decision to unilaterally refuse to debate GOP nominee Byron Donalds looks like an unforced error that might have arrested some of the former congressman's momentum. It's still an uphill climb for any Democrat in the state but Jolly is running closer than Senate nominee Angie Nixon. Lean Republican.

Change Research (D) for Freedom Project USA, Oct. 8-10 (920 LV) (online)— General election ballot: Donalds and Jolly tied, 47%.

St. Pete Polls for Florida Politics, Oct. 5-7 (836 LV)(IVR/SMS)— General election ballot: Donalds and Jolly tied, 45%.

Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy for NBC 6/Telemundo, Sept. 28-Oct. 1 (625 LV)(live caller)— General election ballot: Donalds over Jolly, 48% - 41%.

Nebraska. Jim Pillen (R), elected 2022 (59%). A crowded ballot, an unpopular incumbent, and a difficult environment for Republicans make this race one to watch. Pillen is underwater even in deeply Republican parts of the state, and former Republican state Sen. Brett Lindstrom offers disaffected GOP voters a place to land on the ballot without pulling the lever for Democrat Lynne Walz.

The math still makes Pillen a favorite. There just aren't that many votes for a Democrat in Nebraska. Walz's polling still only has her at 40 percent, which is still 2 points shy of the Democratic high water mark in any statewide race over the past 18 years (42.4 percent). So the state senator will have to put in a generational performance and also hope Lindstrom peels off closer to 15 percent of the GOP vote, not the 9 percent he's winning in Walz's poll. There's also a Legal Marijuana Now party candidate in the mix, which could hamper Walz in her effort to consolidate left-leaning anti-Pillen voters. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

YouGov, Sept. 24-Oct. 3 (1,809 LV)(text-to-web)— General election ballot: Pillen over Walz, 44% - 43%.

co/efficient (R), Sept. 28-30 (1,113 LV)(text-to-web/IVR)— General election ballot: Pillen over Walz, 43% - 38%, Lindstrom (America First) 5%, Rick Beard (Legal Marjiuana Now) 4%.

Lake Research Partners (D) for Walz, Sept. 8-14 (RV)— General election ballot: Walz and Pillen tied at 40%, Lindstrom 9%, Beard 4%.

Vermont. Phil Scott (R), elected 2016 (53%), 2018 (55%), 2020 (69%), 2022 (71%), 2024 (73%). Scott won his last election by more than 50 points, so his bid for a sixth term has been treated as a fait accompli for months. But things may be more complicated for the last liberal Republican governor in America. A new poll from elections site State Navigate found Scott leading Democrat Amanda Janoo, an economist from Strafford making her first run for office, by just 3 points. The result splits the difference between two earlier surveys: a University of New Hampshire poll found Janoo ahead, and a Braun Research survey that put Scott 10 points up but under 50 percent of the vote. Janoo also outraised Scott in September and entered October with a similar amount in the bank: $280,000 to his $307,000. There's been no outside spending (compare that to Scott's last competitive race, in 2016, which saw $13 million) and neither the DGA nor RGA have signaled an intention to invest heavily. Scott is still the favorite thanks to his robust approval rating; governors with positive approval rarely lose re-election. But the political environment and Vermont's pronounced Democratic lean make this year a little different. It probably doesn't help Scott that this is his eighth consecutive election appearing on a statewide ballot for governor or lieutenant governor. Move from Solid Republican to Likely Republican.

State Navigate, Oct. 2-4 (948 LV)(text-to-web)— General election ballot: Scott over Janoo, 46% - 43%.

Texas. Greg Abbott (R), elected 2014 (59%), 2018 (56%), 2022 (55%). Abbott's $60 million spending spree over August and September hasn't moved the needle for the three-term incumbent. If anything, polls have only gotten tighter over the past two months as state Rep. Gina Hinojosa picks up national attention and fundraising dollars. Abbott went negative on Hinojosa weeks ago, and national groups continue to pour money into Texas to rescue state Attorney General Ken Paxton in the Senate race. But while the governor began the year with a $100 million edge over his opponent, he entered October with a relatively pedestrian $18 million to $4 million advantage. Move from Likely Republican to Lean Republican.

Marist Univ., Oct. 8-11 (1,196 LV)— General election ballot: Abbott over Hinojosa, 49% - 45%.

ReconMR/Siena Univ., Oct. 5-8 (617 LV)— General election ballot: Abbott over Hinojosa, 48% - 47%.

GBAO (D) for Hinojosa, Oct. 5-8 (800 LV)(live caller/text-to-web)— General election ballot: Hinojosa over Abbott, 47% - 45%, Pat Dixon (L) 4%.

Univ. of Texas/YouGov, Sept. 25-Oct. 5 (841 LV)— General election ballot: Hinojosa over Abbott, 49% - 48%, Dixon (L) 1%. 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 (2R)**
Kotek (D-Ore.)	FL Open (DeSantis, R)
	Abbott (R-Texas)#
Likely Democratic (3D)	**Likely Republican (3R)**
NM Open (Lujan-Grisham, D)	OK Open (Stitt, R)
MN Open (Walz, DFL)	Pillen (R-Neb.)#
Hochul (D-N.Y.)	Scott (R-Vt.)#
Solid Democratic (10D)	**Solid Republican (8R)**
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.)	Rhoden (R-S.D.)
Pritzker (D-Ill.)	
Shapiro (D-Penn.)	

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

Where White Women Could Swing in November

By Bradley Wascher

With the 2026 battleground map expanding into redder districts and states, one group has re-emerged as a key voting bloc: white women.

Comprising around two-fifths of the national electorate, white women typically lean toward Republicans, but they do swing in wave years. And despite growing polarization between white women with and without a college degree, Democrats are poised to gain among both groups this November — boosting the party's chances in key congressional and gubernatorial races, particularly in the Midwest and Rust Belt.

In the Donald Trump era, white women have voted for Republicans in House races by around 8 points, based on an average of six voter studies and exit polls.

But the latest polling suggests a double digit swing: according to data shared with Inside Elections by Split Ticket's Lakshya Jain, the 2026 generic ballot margin among white women is projected to be Democratic +6.

White women have voted for the GOP in seven of the last ten congressional elections, with the three exceptions being Democrats' greatest recent hits: 2006, 2008, and 2018. If white women were to flip in November, it would be the fourth blue wave of the 21st century.

Historical Context

White women make up around 40 percent of the national electorate, per the Catalist voter study. Of that total, white women with a college degree compose around 15 percent, while white non-college women are around 25 percent.

A defining feature of recent elections has been the growing education gap: voters with a college degree are more likely to vote for Democrats, while those without a college degree are increasingly Republican. In the 2024 national House popular vote, Democrats carried white women with a college degree by 9 points, and Republicans won non-college white women by 24 points.

The 33-point education gap in 2024 lines up with other recent cycles — but it's nearly 10 points wider than the divide a decade ago.

Heading into November, polls suggest Democrats are poised to make gains among both groups. Based on Jain's modeling at Split Ticket, the 2026 generic ballot margin among college-educated white women is projected to be Democratic +21, while white women without a college degree are expected to vote Republican +6.

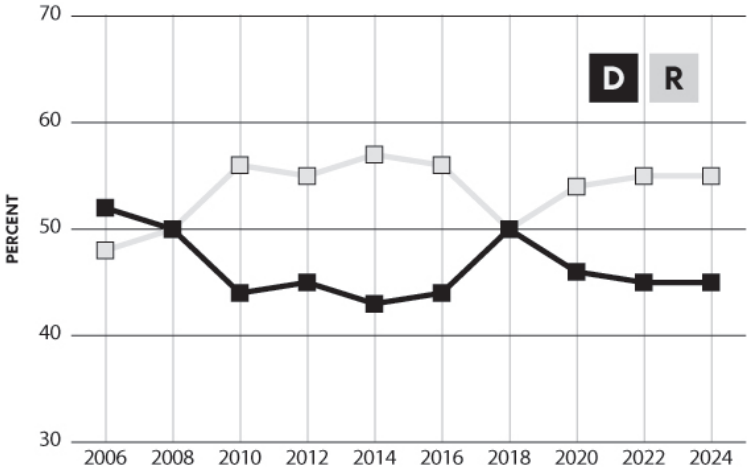
A September Fox News survey directionally agreed: college-educated white women preferred Democrats by 9 points (with an 8-point margin of error within the subgroup) and white women without a college degree were Republican +8 (5.5-point margin of error).

If true, a single-digit margin among non-college white women would be Republicans' worst result since 2006. Even amid the 2018 blue wave, the GOP carried white women without a college degree by around 14 points.

Affordability is the driving factor of GOP attrition among white working-class women. In the Fox News poll, a majority of white women without a college degree said their top issue was either the cost of living or the economy. As noted by The 19th* News, the gender pay gap has widened over the past two years — marking the first consecutive expansion in over half a century.

US House Vote Choice: White Women

Average supprt for Democratic and Republican congressional candidates



Source: American National Election Studies, AP VoteCast, Catalist, Cooperative Congressional Election Study, Pew Research Center, exit polls

It cuts across race and even generations. A September AARP poll found that women over 50 were 13 points more likely than men in the same age group to report cutting back spending over the past month. And according to the spring 2026 Harvard Youth Poll — conducted among those under 30 — more young women than men said it would be difficult for students in their class to find a permanent job upon graduation given the state of the economy.

November Impact

With marquee battleground races happening across the Midwest and Rust Belt, Democratic gains among white women could boost candidates in key Senate, governor, and House races.

In late September, Marist University polled a number of states hosting competitive elections for both Senate and governor. All three surveys showed Democrats massively improving among white women, particularly those with a college degree.

In the Michigan governor's race, Marist saw Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson leading Republican Rep. John James by 41 points among college-educated white women. In the Senate race, this same group preferred Democrat Abdul El-Sayed by 36 points over Republican Mike Rogers.

When Rogers ran unsuccessfully in the 2024 Senate race against Democrat Elissa Slotkin, college-educated white women preferred Slotkin by 20 points, according to an average of exit polls and AP VoteCast interviews. White non-college women backed Rogers by 15 points.

White women without a college degree were a swing group in the Marist poll, backing Benson by 5 points in the governor's race and Rogers by 4 points in the Senate race. Surveys have consistently shown Benson performing a few points better among women overall than El-Sayed.

In Ohio, Marist also found white non-college women narrowly sup-

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porting GOP candidates in both the Senate and governor's races. This group favored Republican Sen. Jon Husted over Democrat Sherrod Brown by 3 points, while backing Republican gubernatorial nominee Vivek Ramaswamy by 7 points over Democrat Amy Acton.

White non-college women voted down the middle when Brown was re-elected to the Senate in 2018, but he finished 22 points behind among them in his 2024 loss.

Among white women with a college degree, Marist found both Democrats leading by nearly 30 points. But an early August Fox News poll showed more typical margins among white college-educated women: Acton +16 and Brown +19.

Fox News also found a divide among white women without a college degree, who preferred Ramaswamy by 12 points and Brown by 1. When Ohio split its ticket in 2018 (choosing Republican Mike DeWine for governor and Brown for Senate), white women overall voted DeWine +5 and Brown +6.

White women will be especially important in Iowa, where they make up nearly half of the electorate. A September YouGov poll showed a gap in the Senate and governor's races: Democratic gubernatorial nominee Rob Sand led Republican Zach Lahn by 22 points among all women, twice the size of Democratic state Rep. Josh Turek's 11-point lead over Republican Rep. Ashley Hinson among the same group in the Senate race.

Like in Michigan and Ohio, Marist showed both Democrats with commanding leads among college-educated white women, backing Turek by 42 points and Sand by 46. Hinson and Lahn each led among white women without a college degree by around 10 points.

For a state as Republican-leaning as Iowa, white women without a college degree are actually more Democratic than you'd think; in 2020, they voted Trump +10 in Iowa compared to Trump +25 nationwide.

According to an Inside Elections analysis of AP VoteCast survey data, Iowa is one of the states where Democrats most overperform expectations among white non-college women, controlling for states' partisanship.

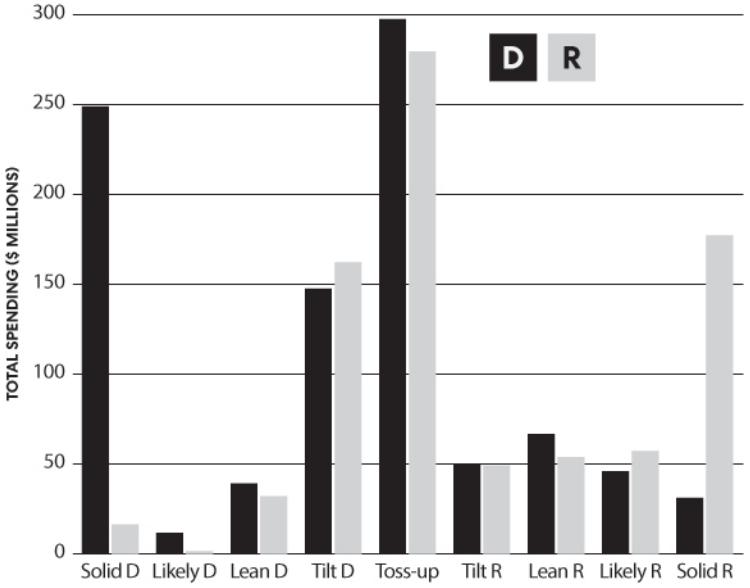
By this metric, Democrats fare best across the Midwest and Rust Belt — possibly explaining recent polling upticks in red states like Kansas and Nebraska. By contrast, Democrats generally underperform among white non-college women in the South.

For example, white non-college women in North Carolina consistently lean around 10 points more Republican than nationwide. The Tar Heel State will also host a competitive Senate race this November: an East Carolina University poll found Democrat Roy Cooper leading by 7 points overall, in line with Inside Elections' Lean Democratic rating. But white women in the survey were evenly split between Cooper and Republican Michael Whatley, 42-42 percent.

White women could also influence the Senate race in Maine — which by some measures is the whitest state in the country. It is also among the oldest states, putting the focus particularly on older white women.

Polls suggest Republican Sen. Susan Collins is failing to meet her marks. A CNN/SRSS survey from early September showed Collins trailing Democrat Troy Jackson by 15 points among women (which, in Maine, is nearly synonymous with white women). In her 2014 and 2020 re-election victories, Collins carried white women by 32 points and 3 points, respectively.

Republicans on Defense: Ad Spending Across House Races by Ratings



Source: AdImpact
Graphic: Inshara Ali

A late-September Marist poll found Collins leading by 20 points among white non-college women, but college-educated white women backed Jackson by 59. In 2020, Collins won white non-college women by 17 points and lost college-educated white women by 18 points.

In the House

Working-class white women will also define the fight for the House, where Democrats all over the country are running on messages of affordability.

Key Republican-held battleground districts like Pennsylvania's 8th (28 percent bachelor's or higher), Wisconsin's 3rd (30 percent), and Michigan's 10th (31 percent) all feature a white female Democrat.

Historically, white women voters in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are about 10 more points more Democratic than the national average.

According to Democratic pollster Celinda Lake in an op-ed for The Hill, "if less than 2 percent of Trump's white non-college educated voters in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin had gone for [Kamala] Harris, she would have won the election."

Virginia's 2nd District, a toss-up seat held by GOP Rep. Jen Kiggans, is also a top battleground. Democrats nominated former Rep. Elaine Luria, creating a general election matchup between two white women in a commonwealth where educational polarization is especially strong. (The education gap between Virginia white women was 51 points in 2024.)

All the way back in February 2025, the Democrat-aligned House Majority PAC announced an early list of district targets, based on "polling and focus groups of white non-college women."

Among the seats they named were Pennsylvania's 8th, Wisconsin's 3rd, Michigan's 10th, and Virginia's 2nd.

This November, white women could be decisive in these districts and beyond. IE