



MIDTERM 2026: THE END OF THE MAGA MOVEMENT?

MIDTERM ELECTIONS: TRUMP HEADED FOR A REBOUND OR FOR THE END?

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FOREWORD

¹'You gotta win the midterms, 'cause if we don't win the midterms, it's just going to be, I mean, they'll find a reason to impeach me' (Donald Trump, 6 January 2026).

As these remarks show, the 47th President of the United States is so aware of how divisive his presidency is that he admits he could face *impeachment*, the term for the procedure laid down by the US Constitution for bringing charges against a president (Article I for the procedure, Article II, Section 4, for the grounds), if the Republican Party loses the *midterms* (the mid-term elections). It would not be the first time, either: Donald Trump is the first American president to have been impeached twice, in 2019 for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress (in the affair of the telephone call with Volodymyr Zelensky), and in 2021 for incitement of insurrection following the attack on the Capitol by MAGA activists on 6 January 2021². He was ultimately acquitted in both impeachment trials, because the Democrats never managed to secure the two-thirds majority required in the Senate to convict him.

These midterm elections will therefore be decisive for the rest of Donald Trump's second presidential term, which ends on 20 January 2029. The *midterms* are comparable to legislative elections in France. In the United States of America, Congress holds legislative power and currently comprises 435 members of the House of Representatives (218 Republicans, 214 Democrats, 1 independent and 2 vacant seats)³ and 100 senators (53 Republicans, 45 Democrats and 2 independents)⁴. Its role is to act as a check on the executive (the president and the vice-president). A change in the composition of Congress, which currently has a Republican majority, can shift the balance of power between the branches of government. This is what is known as a *divided government*. In concrete terms, if the Democrats won a majority in Congress, they could block the

¹ *Trump says Democrats 'will find a reason to impeach me' if GOP loses midterms.* (2026, 6 January). [Video]. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2026-election/trump-predicts-impeachment-if-republicans-lose-2026-midterms-rcna252604>

² Constitution.congress.gov. (2026). ArtII.S4.4.9 President Donald Trump and Impeachable Offenses. https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artII-S4-4-9/ALDE_00000035/

³ *Party Breakdown | House Press Gallery.* (2026). House Press Gallery. <https://pressgallery.house.gov/member-data/party-breakdown>

⁴ U.S. Senate: Party division. (2025). <https://www.senate.gov/history/partydiv.htm>

legislative agenda or start budget battles, and so jeopardise Donald Trump's MAGA political project. It should also be noted that 36 governorships are at stake across the country in these midterm elections. Although these are local elections whose influence will be felt more at state level than at federal level, the governor remains a key figure in American politics, since he or she wields genuine executive power at local level (this varies with each state's constitution, but broadly speaking governors oversee state bodies). The governor of Illinois, Jay Robert Pritzker, for example, stood up to Donald Trump in October 2025 when Illinois went to federal court to block the deployment of the National Guard in Chicago⁵.

The midterm elections: historically difficult for the party in power. As things stand, the odds are not all in Trump's favour. The war in Iran is dragging on, fracturing his electoral base and weighing on Americans' morale. The warning lights are indeed flashing red. In August 2026, Donald Trump's favourable ratings stood at 37% according to the *New York Times*⁶, and in a Reuters/Ipsos poll the same month, for the first time in ten years, voters preferred the Democrats to the Republicans on the economy: 37% said the Democratic Party had the better approach to the US economy, against 36% for the Republican Party^{7,8}. Le Millénaire's forecasting model thus gives the Democrats, as of 20 October 2026, a 72.8% chance of winning a majority in the House of Representatives, but only 30.2% in the Senate.

The aim of this report is to analyse the dynamics of the midterm elections in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the two parties. In the first part, we review the record of the first two years of Donald Trump's second term. In the second part, we look at the history of midterm elections. In the third part, we analyse the forces at play and the dynamics within the Democratic and Republican parties in the context of the 2026 midterm elections.

⁵ AP. (2025). Judge blocks National Guard deployment in Illinois for 2 weeks. MPRnews. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2025/10/09/judge-blocks-national-guard-deployment-in-illinois-for-2-weeks>

⁶ New York Times. (2026). President Trump's Approval Rating: Latest Polls. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/polls/donald-trump-approval-rating-polls.html>

⁷ Lange, J. (2026). Voters prefer Democrats over Republicans on economy for first time in a decade, Reuters/Ipsos poll finds. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/democrats-lead-republicans-economy-trump-approval-falls-reutersipsos-poll-finds-2026-08-03/>

⁸ Predictions for the Senate - 2026 Midterms - Updated Daily, Race to the WH. (2026). Race To The WH. <https://www.racetothewh.com/senate/26>

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THE RECORD OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF DONALD TRUMP'S SECOND TERM

A) THE PROMISED RETURN OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF AMERICA

Donald Trump's return to the White House was meant to mark the culmination of his second MAGA conservative revolution. His ambition was to pick up his political projects where he had left them at the end of his first term, from 2017 to 2021. That term had been marked by a degree of unpreparedness, linked in particular to the fact that Donald Trump was a political novice, and by internal hostility from Republican elected officials who were not devoted body and soul to the MAGA line. This was the '*Never Trump*' movement. It brought together a coalition of traditional Republicans, neoconservatives and right-wing intellectuals who regarded Donald Trump as a threat to conservative values, to democracy and to the foreign policy of the United States of America. Among the '*Never Trumpers*' were Liz Cheney (daughter of former Vice-President Dick Cheney), the Bush family (neither George W. Bush nor his father George H.W. Bush supported Donald Trump in 2016), Mitt Romney (Republican candidate in 2012 and senator for Utah from 2019 to 2025) and John McCain (senator for Arizona and former presidential candidate in 2008).

By 2024, however, Trump dominated the Republican Party politically, to the point that converted *Never Trumpers* are now leading figures of the MAGA movement, such as his vice-president JD Vance (who had compared Trump to Hitler in 2016) or Marco Rubio (Trump and Rubio had faced each other in the 2016 Republican primary)⁹. He then came to dominate American politics, as the Republican Party won a *trifecta* in 2024, that is, control of the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives, to which must be added a Supreme

⁹ Berenson, T. Abramson, A. (2020). Revenge of the Never Trumpers: Meet the Republican Dissidents Fighting to Push Donald Trump Out of Office. Time. <https://time.com/5870475/never-trumpers-2020-election/>

Court that already had a conservative majority. With the road wide open, Trump was able to roll out his programme, carefully prepared with the conservative think tank *The Heritage Foundation* as part of Project 2025, which we discussed in detail in Le Millénaire's report 'Le Monde selon Trump' (The World According to Trump). All the more so as the nature of the second term differs from the first: this is the term in which his political legacy is at stake, as the remarks reported by Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan in *Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump* illustrate:

'This time is about legacy. We're going to do big things. Even people who don't like me will like it' (Donald Trump)¹⁰.

The aim of the following paragraphs is therefore to recall briefly what these major promises were, whose ultimate purpose was to bring back the *Golden Age of America*. We had already discussed them in Le Millénaire's report *Le retour de Donald Trump : vers une révolution 2.0* (The Return of Donald Trump: Towards a Revolution 2.0).

On the domestic front

On the economy, Donald Trump promised to pursue a typically *America First* policy, with the return of the strategist state, combining intervention in the economy when American interests are at stake with deregulation to encourage innovation and trade. Donald Trump's economic ambitions for his second term focused on several key areas. The first was cutting regulation, particularly in the energy sector, in order to boost domestic production and achieve energy independence (ending restrictions on the extraction of oil, natural gas and coal). On renewable energy, Trump promised to reduce investment and environmental regulation because, in his view, they hold back the competitiveness of the United States of America. He also planned sweeping tax cuts for the middle class, the upper class and businesses. In Agenda47, the MAGA movement promised to make permanent the provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, passed during his first term, much of which was due to expire at

¹⁰ Haberman, M. Swan, J. (2026). *Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump*. Simon & Schuster. p. 10

the end of 2025. For this second term, Trump suggested that companies manufacturing products in the United States of America could benefit from a tax rate reduced to 15%. A new feature in 2024 was the proposal to abolish taxes on tips in the restaurant and hotel trades. In addition, he repeated his intention to impose new tariffs on imports in order to protect American industries. The president-elect stated that he would impose across-the-board tariffs of 10% to 20% on all goods imported into the United States and, more specifically, tariffs of 60% on all Chinese goods, signalling his determination to end American dependence on China. Another key element for Donald Trump was to encourage foreign investment on American soil. To revive the American economy, he had also promised major budget cuts and an overhaul of federal agencies in order to streamline government operations through the DOGE department. All these economic reforms were intended to bring prices down quickly and to make America affordable again¹¹.

On health, Trump proposed to reform the *Affordable Care Act*, or *Obamacare*, by easing the regulations that apply to insurers and by targeting specific parts of the law for repeal or reform¹². He also expressed his intention to take on the big pharmaceutical companies, lower the prices of drugs covered by Medicare and tackle drug shortages by boosting domestic production, as well as by tying the prices of certain drugs to lower costs abroad. In other words, he suggested regulating the price of medicines rather than leaving it to the market.

On immigration and security, Donald Trump promised to hold a firm line, in continuity with his first term. The real estate tycoon also stated that he would end the practice of *catch and release*, which consists of releasing migrants onto national soil while they await their hearing before the immigration court. Instead, he wanted to promote the *Remain in Mexico* policy, which requires asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their case is processed¹³. In Agenda47, Trump asserted that he would sign an executive order on 'Day One' to end automatic citizenship for the children of 'illegal aliens'. He also proposed to continue building the wall on the southern border, to bring troops back from American

¹¹ Savage, C. Kanno-Youngs, Z. (2025). Trump Promised Radical Change in His Second Term. Here's What He's Done So Far. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/27/us/politics/trump-second-term-promises-actions.html>

¹² Payne, D. (2024). The Trump agenda: Here's what to expect from his second term. Politico.

¹³ Payne, D. (2024). The Trump agenda: Here's what to expect from his second term. Politico.

bases abroad and station them along the border, to deploy the Navy to create a 'Fentanyl Blockade' and to use every means necessary to stop illegal immigration. Donald Trump also intended to carry out the largest deportation of immigrants in the country's history. Furthermore, Trump intended to reform birthright citizenship, that is, to end citizenship by birth, which means that children born on American soil to illegal immigrants would no longer automatically be citizens. The stated ambition was to favour merit-based immigration.

On social issues, Trump promised to rearm American society morally around conservative values by waging a crusade against woke ideology. Republicans believe it is necessary to rearm morally an American society they regard as decadent because of its consumerism, its leftism and now its wokeism, which brings together all the anti-American and deconstructionist ideologies that seek to make Americans feel guilty for being who they are. To achieve their ends, the Republicans proposed in Agenda47 to purge woke elements from federal institutions, and from the military in particular. In education, Trump's proposals to stem the influence of woke ideology concerned the funding of schools. He proposed cutting federal funding for schools teaching gender theory or critical race theory. There were also references to making home schooling easier. Trump also emphasised a return to 'patriotic education' which, in his view, would better prepare pupils for citizenship. In an unprecedented move, Donald Trump proposed simply abolishing the Department of Education and making education a responsibility managed by the states rather than the federal government.

Trump also promised a reform that would profoundly change the rules of access to the ballot in the United States, tightening access to voting under the banner of fighting fraud. His main measures included the requirement to prove citizenship (with a passport or birth certificate) in order to register, the widespread use of photo identification checks at polling stations, drastic limits on postal voting, restricting voting to a single day and a return to paper ballots.

In the name of transparency, Trump had also promised to make public classified documents in the file on the assassination of the 35th President of the United

States, John F. Kennedy, as well as the files relating to the Epstein affair. In the same spirit of fighting the deep state, Donald Trump promised to pardon the rioters of 6 January 2021 who had been convicted and jailed for attacking the Capitol in Washington DC. He also intended, in turn, to prosecute the political enemies who had persecuted him under Joe Biden's presidency from 2021 to 2025¹⁴. At CPAC in Maryland on 4 March 2023, he notably declared:¹⁵*'I am your warrior, I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution.'* To carry out this project, Trump intended to rely on the Department of Justice and on the deployment of military troops on American soil to track down undocumented migrants, fight crime in Democrat-run cities and crack down on protests that he described as riots¹⁶.

On the foreign policy front

Donald Trump promised an aggressive diplomacy. The guiding principle in international affairs would be an America First policy, in other words a policy aimed at defending the interests of the American people above all else. We deliberately speak here of a policy of America First rather than isolationism, since the Trump line is not to isolate the United States from world affairs like a hedgehog curling up into a ball. On the contrary, Donald Trump wanted to pursue an interventionist but pragmatic, or realist, foreign policy, solely concerned with the interests of the American people. Agenda47 states in black and white that Donald Trump aimed to restore the global balance with a foreign policy of 'peace through strength'. To carry out this policy, he proposed to modernise the military by investing in cutting-edge technological research, and to strengthen alliances while ensuring that the allies of the United States of America contribute to their own defence. Donald Trump stressed the importance of investing in and reviving the American defence industry by favouring the purchase of American security and defence equipment. Donald Trump's current aggressive diplomacy stems from this concern to secure American strategic interests and to halt the country's decline.

¹⁴ Esomonu, E., Lodhi, H., & Woodward, C. (2025). Tracking Trump's presidential promises. AP News. <https://apnews.com/projects/trump-campaign-promise-tracker/>

¹⁵ Downen, R. (2023, 26 March). Trump vows retribution at Waco rally: "I am your warrior, I am your justice". The Texas Tribune. <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/03/25/donald-trump-waco-rally-retribution-justice/>

¹⁶ Savage, C. Kanno-Youngs, Z. (2025). Trump Promised Radical Change in His Second Term. Here's What He's Done So Far. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/27/us/politics/trump-second-term-promises-actions.html>

He also stressed his wish to extend the pivot to Asia by reducing the American presence in Europe. Trump does not want to reduce American influence in Europe, only to subcontract it by pushing European states to contribute more to the NATO budget, and also by ending the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East in order to concentrate on the Chinese threat. He claimed he could end the war in Ukraine in 24 hours.

Another pillar of Trump's strategic vision is the construction of the *Golden Dome*, the name given to the future \$175 billion missile defence programme that would, for the first time, place American weapons in space by January 2029. The system is also intended to integrate ground-based and space-based capabilities able to detect and intercept missiles at different stages of an attack in order to protect the United States of America.

B) THE PROMISES KEPT DURING DONALD TRUMP'S SECOND TERM

As we have just discussed, Donald Trump promised the return of the *Golden Age of America*, but what is the reality two years after his return to power? According to the Center for Progressive Reform and Governing for Impact, 53% of the measures proposed in the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 had been launched or implemented 12 months after the president's inauguration. Without listing them all in detail (283 measures out of 532), we have grouped the main measures by campaign theme:

In the fight against the deep state, Trump has taken back control over the allocation of federal budgets. More specifically, he has required by executive order that political appointees, and not (unelected) career civil servants, personally sign off on the apportionment of funds. Agencies must apply directly to the *Office of Management and Budget* for the allocation of their funds. The OMB is headed by Russell Vought, one of the principal architects of Project 2025.

By executive order (Executive Order 14215 of 18 February 2025), Trump strengthened executive power over the independent agencies by requiring them

to go through the filter of OIRA (the *Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs*). This is an office attached directly to the White House. It acts as the 'gatekeeper' of regulation, since its role is to check whether a proposal is consistent with the president's political priorities and whether its economic analysis is sound. Trump's aim is to ensure that no federal authority (even an independent one such as the *Federal Communications Commission*) can adopt rules that run counter to the president's political or economic agenda.

Donald Trump has strengthened the powers of the White House *Office of Science and Technology Policy* (*Executive Order on Restoring Gold Standard Science*) on the grounds that science is being manipulated within agencies to serve separate political and institutional agendas. His aim is to prevent scientific truth from being distorted to serve particular interests.

The 47th President of the United States has also made sure that grant programmes fund the president's drug control priorities, and not 'woke' non-profit organisations with left-wing political agendas. The administration will achieve this by ensuring that the *Office of National Drug Control Policy* is run by political appointees committed to advancing the president's agenda¹⁷.

Donald Trump has also kept his promise to release the files relating to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (*Executive Order 14176*¹⁸).

As for the promise to pardon the 6 January rioters, on 20 January 2025, his first day back in the White House for his second term, he granted blanket clemency to nearly 1,500 people¹⁹.

The fight against environmental policies and measures to unleash American energy. Through Executive Order 14154, Trump disbanded the working group researching the social cost of carbon. Executive Order 14154 also directed the

¹⁷ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=1225888214#gid=1225888214>

¹⁸ *JFK assassination records - 2025 documents release*. (2026). National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/release-2025>

¹⁹ House, W. (2025). Granting pardons and commutation of sentences for certain offenses relating to the events at or near the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/granting-pardons-and-commutation-of-sentences-for-certain-offenses-relating-to-the-events-at-or-near-the-united-states-capitol-on-january-6-2021/>

federal government to stop all funding to advocacy groups for examining which potential federal investments will translate into concrete environmental improvements. In addition, he authorised the sale of offshore oil and gas leases permitted under the 2023-2028 leasing programme. Trump also ordered that the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska be opened to leasing and development²⁰. The 47th President of the United States then ordered that grants and funding go to state regulatory bodies rather than to non-profit organisations. He also eliminated the funding programmes of several agencies working on the energy transition, such as the *Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations*, the *Office of State and Community Energy Programs* and the *Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights*²¹.

For the second time, Donald Trump withdrew the United States of America from the Paris climate agreement, this time as early as 20 January 2025²². The first withdrawal, announced in June 2017, took effect on 4 November 2020, but President Joe Biden rejoined the agreement on his first day in office in January 2021.

An end to the waste of public money. To keep this promise, Trump has used several levers. The first is welfare, by restoring and strengthening the work requirements tied to eligibility for food assistance programmes (the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*)²³. He has also reformed *Medicaid*, the health insurance programme for low-income Americans. The Trump administration has restricted direct access to public assistance through work requirements and privatised health coverage through a voucher mechanism, notably by providing for a ‘personal option’ allowing families to use *Medicaid* funds to purchase coverage outside the *Medicaid* programme.

²⁰ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=97220946#gid=97220946>

²¹ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=57220411#gid=257220411>

²² House, W. (2025). *Putting America first in international environmental agreements*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/>

²³ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=989904427#gid=989904427>

We obviously cannot discuss the waste of public money without mentioning DOGE (the *Department of Government Efficiency*), a short-lived American advisory body created by Donald Trump in January 2025 and headed by Elon Musk to slash public spending and the federal bureaucracy on a massive scale. Its mandate was due to end on 4 July 2026, but the body had already ceased to function as such by November 2025.²⁴ According to the OMB, more than 260,000 federal employees left the administration in 2025 (through dismissals, voluntary departures and early retirements, not all of which are attributable to DOGE) and, whereas Elon Musk aimed to cut \$2 trillion, the DOGE website claimed savings of around \$215 billion. This figure is disputed by American civil society.

The fight against wokeism is one of the pillars of this second term. Donald Trump has sought to restructure social and family policy by replacing the progressive model with a conservative vision centred on the traditional nuclear family. He has had policies replaced that focused on equity for LGBTQ+ people, the subsidising of single parenthood (among mothers), discouraging work and penalising marriage. In addition, the budget law of 4 July 2025 (One Big Beautiful Bill Act) prohibited for one year the payment of Medicaid funds to Planned Parenthood and to non-profit organisations providing abortions that had received more than \$800,000 from Medicaid in 2023. Trump also directed the *Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health*, the US federal body that oversees the major national public health programmes and issues the government's official medical recommendations, to withdraw all recommendations and all support concerning cross-sex medical interventions and 'gender-affirming care'. The same applies to the *Office for Civil Rights*, the enforcement arm of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) responsible for enforcing civil rights laws: Trump ordered it to withdraw all guidance issued under the Biden administration on sexual orientation and gender identity²⁵.

On the promotion of the Christian religion, the Trump administration favours policies guaranteeing rigorous respect for the free exercise of religion in the workplace, notably under the First Amendment, the *Religious Freedom*

²⁴ *Trump promised to "drain the swamp." The DOGE-led cuts hit more than that.* (2026). NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/data-graphics/2025-doge-trump-administration-federal-job-cuts-total-rcna588589>

²⁵ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=728790709#gid=728790709>

Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), Title VII and the federal laws protecting freedom of conscience. The Trump administration also supports the idea that employers are free to run their businesses in accordance with their religious convictions, and supports the participation of religious employees and employers as federal contractors and in federal activities and programmes²⁶.

In the name of defending free speech, on 20 January 2025 Trump signed Executive Order 14149 (Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship), which prohibits any federal officer or agency from engaging in activities to combat the spread of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' by Americans with no connection to any plausible criminal activity.

The fight against immigration is another pillar of the MAGA project. Within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ), the DOJ body responsible for enforcing the laws that protect citizens against discrimination, the Trump administration has ordered rigorous enforcement of immigration law within the division's Immigrant and Employee Rights Section, to ensure that no American citizen suffers discrimination in employment in favour of a temporary or foreign worker²⁷.

In addition,²⁸ under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (2025) and the Secure America Act (2026), Congress has allocated around \$240 billion to the detention and deportation of immigrants. The staff of the immigration agency ICE (*Immigration and Customs Enforcement*) has grown from 10,000 to 22,000 officers. On his return to power, Trump also declared a state of emergency at the border and mobilised the National Guard and the military to secure it. The administration has also ended Temporary Protected Status for nationals of several countries (notably Syria, Haiti, Venezuela and Somalia), thereby exposing them to deportation²⁹.

²⁶ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=345539819#gid=345539819>

²⁷ Center for Progressive Reform. (2026). <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n0xtOFS-7vRfUU-sr4ZNURrSNJO-fNIG/edit?gid=400623548#gid=400623548>

²⁸ Institute for Policy Studies. (2026). Trump Bill for Mass Deportations: \$268.9 Billion, and Counting. <https://ips-dc.org/trump-bill-for-mass-deportations-268-9-billion-and-counting/>

²⁹ White House. (2026). secure the border. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/border-immigration/>

Furthermore, the Trump administration has implemented 'Project Homecoming', a US Department of Homeland Security initiative launched in May 2025. It encourages illegal immigrants to leave the country voluntarily by offering free one-way flights and financial incentives to depart (of up to \$2,600), all coordinated through the '*CBP Home*' mobile app, while brandishing the threat of strict law enforcement against those who choose to stay³⁰.

According to the administration's official figures, these zero-tolerance measures have produced negative net migration in the United States, a first in at least fifty years. More than 2.5 million illegal immigrants³¹ are said to have left American territory since Donald Trump's return to power (according to the Department of Homeland Security, at the end of 2025, including so-called voluntary departures).

In order to revive the American economy, on 4 July 2025 Donald Trump signed into law the 'One Big Beautiful Bill Act' (OBBBA), a budget law whose main objective is to make the 2017 tax cuts permanent and to eliminate taxes on tips and overtime. The OBBBA also finances massive increases in the immigration and defence budgets (an increase of \$150 billion, with the administration subsequently asking Congress for \$1.5 trillion for national defence for fiscal year 2027) through major cuts to Medicaid and food assistance (as mentioned above with SNAP) and the cancellation of unspent grants under the *Inflation Reduction Act* for green energy (signed by Joe Biden in 2022)³². Then, on international economic policy, on 'Liberation Day' (2 April 2025) Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14257, introducing the largest increase in tariffs in the United States since 1930. This rise in tariffs upended world trade, with a universal baseline tariff of 10% and sectoral tariffs of 25% on steel, aluminium and cars (raised to 50% for steel and aluminium in June 2025). He also targeted tariffs by country, with, for example, the EU negotiating tariffs of 15% and China reaching 145% at the peak (a first truce was reached in Geneva in May 2025, followed by a one-year truce in Busan on 30 October 2025, after China had imposed tariffs of 125% on American goods and restricted its exports of rare earths).

³⁰ White House. (2025). Establishing project homecoming. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/establishing-project-homecoming/>

³¹ Homeland Security. (2025). Thanks to President Trump and Secretary Noem, More than 2.5 Million Illegal Aliens Left the U.S. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/12/10/thanks-president-trump-and-secretary-noem-more-25-million-illegal-aliens-left-us>

³² The one big beautiful bill: the White House. (2026). The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/obbb/>

To bring peace through strength, the Trump administration ordered that drug cartels and criminal gangs be designated as terrorists in order to fight them more effectively. This historic measure was formalised on the very first day of his term, 20 January 2025, with the signing of Executive Order 14157. It aims to give the American military and justice system greater powers to dismantle these criminal networks, which are treated as threats to national security³³.

The Trump administration then ordered the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores on 3 January 2026 in a military operation code-named '*Operation Absolute Resolve*'.³⁴ They were then flown to the United States to stand trial, notably for narco-terrorism conspiracy and conspiracy to import cocaine.

In addition, the Gaza peace agreement, initiated by Donald Trump's administration, was sponsored by the United States and co-signed at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit on 13 October 2025. This historic agreement, which aims to stabilise the Gaza Strip (ending the war between Israel and Hamas), was officially endorsed by a joint declaration (Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity) signed by the leaders of the four mediating powers: the United States, Egypt, Qatar and Turkey. A transitional governance was then put in place with an international body called the *Board of Peace*, created and chaired by Donald Trump in person, to oversee reconstruction and the political transition in Gaza.

Nevertheless, despite a genuine effort by the MAGA administration to bring about a second conservative revolution, a majority of Americans do not seem convinced by the project.

C) AMERICANS PERPLEXED BY A RECORD SEEN AS MIXED

³³ Congress.gov. Designating Cartels and Other Criminal Organizations as Foreign Terrorists: Recent Developments. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN11205>

³⁴ Savage, C. Kanno-Youngs, Z. (2025). Trump Promised Radical Change in His Second Term. Here's What He's Done So Far. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/27/us/politics/trump-second-term-promises-actions.html>

Warning lights are flashing red for the Republican Party

In France, we all know the saying about the French tendency to dwell only on bad news: 'We often talk about the trains that arrive late, but very rarely about the ones that arrive on time'. Yet this is a universal principle in politics, even across the Atlantic, where Americans are nonetheless known for their optimism... During a presidency, good news is fleeting while bad news piles up, and that is the case for Donald Trump right now: the excesses of ICE, the Epstein affair, the war in Ukraine, the war in Iran, inflation, tariffs, and so on. This accumulation of political difficulties creates the impression that Trump is no longer in control of the situation. This is all the more problematic as midterm elections are traditionally a vote in reaction to the president's record over the first two years of his term.

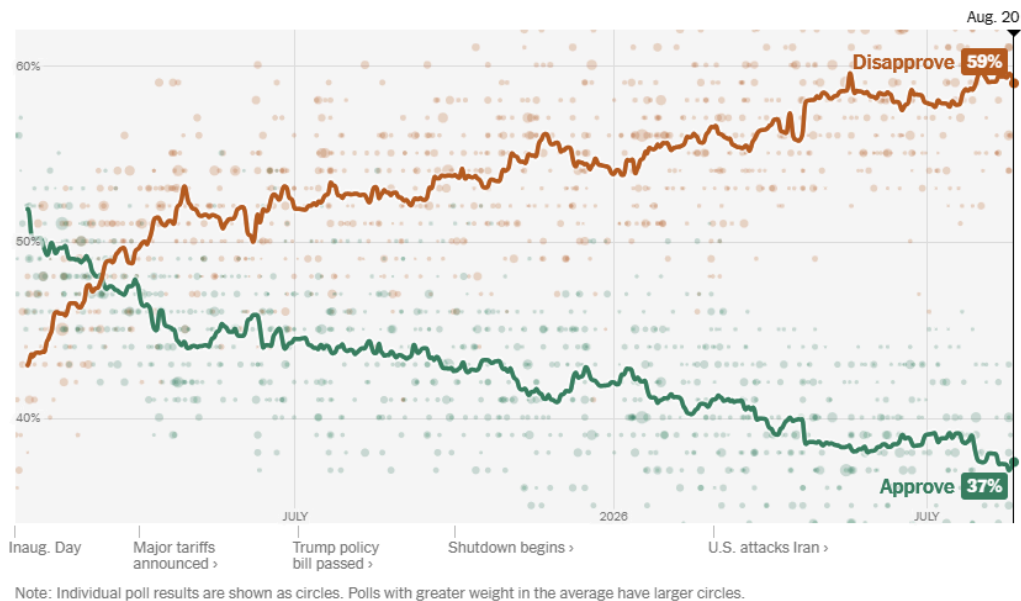
At the end of this summer, the warning lights are flashing red for Donald Trump and the Republican Party. Donald Trump's approval rating³⁵ stood at 37% on 20 August 2026 (it has not risen above 40% since April 2026), according to the New York Times. By comparison, his approval rating was 41% according to Gallup at the same point before the 2018 *midterms*³⁶ (in that election, the Republicans lost the House of Representatives but gained seats in the Senate).

³⁵ Igielnik, R. (2026). President Trump's Approval Rating: Latest Polls. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/polls/donald-trump-approval-rating-polls.html>

³⁶ Gallup, Inc. (2026). 203198 > table > Presidential Approval Ratings -- Donald Trump > Overall Averages. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203234/americans-views-presidential-debates.aspx>

Presidential approval rating

This is a daily average of polls conducted by dozens of different organizations since Inauguration Day. See the [latest polls](#).

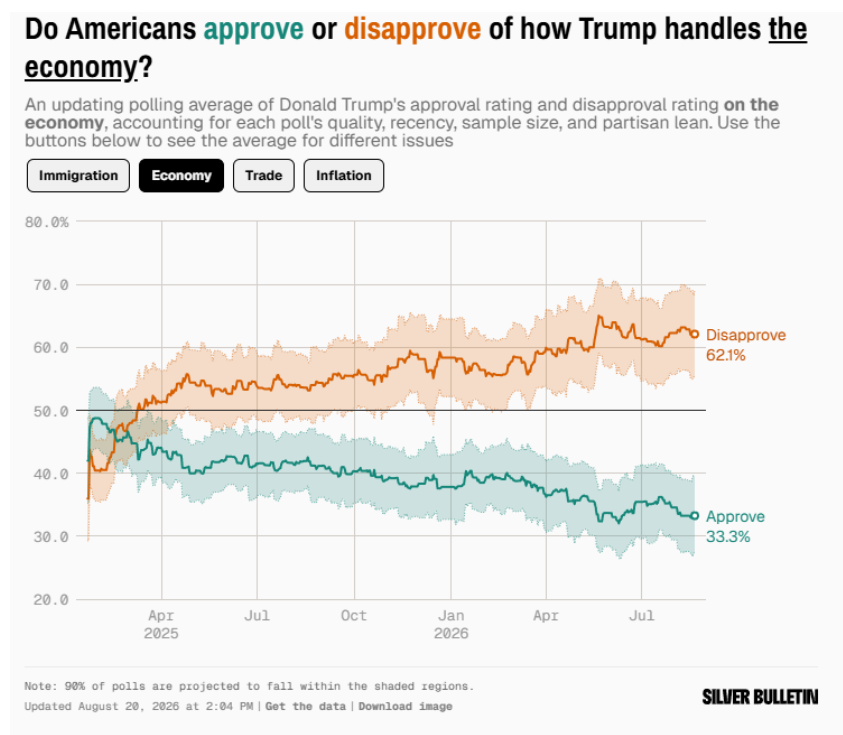


Source: *The New York Times*

Let us also compare him with one of his predecessors, the conservative president George W. Bush: in the run-up to the 2006 midterm elections, he too was unpopular.³⁷ In the last Gallup poll before the 2006 election, his approval rating stood at 38%. As a result, the 2006 midterm elections ended in victory for the Democratic Party, which took control of both chambers of Congress (the Senate and the House of Representatives) as well as a majority of governorships for the first time since 1994. The election was widely seen as public opinion rejecting President George W. Bush's administration, driven mainly by voters' weariness with the Iraq War, which had been launched three years earlier, in 2003. The question today, therefore, is whether the war in Iran will inflict a 'Bush 2.0' scenario on Donald Trump. Faced with American public discontent over the quagmire in Iraq, the Democratic Party succeeded at the 2006 *midterms* in taking control of the Senate, the House of Representatives and a majority of governorships.

³⁷ George W. Bush Public Approval | The American Presidency Project. (2026). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/data/george-w-bush-public-approval>

Moreover, for the first time in a decade, a Reuters/Ipsos poll reports that voters prefer the Democrats (37%) to the Republicans (36%) on their ability to manage the American economy³⁸. Americans' perception of Trump's handling of the economy has deteriorated steadily since his return to the White House in January 2025. The *Silver Bulletin* reports that, as of 19 August, 33% of Americans approve of Donald Trump's economic policy, compared with 42% at the start of his term (with a peak of 48% in February 2025). It is worth recalling that the economy is the campaign issue on which Trump is seen as credible compared with his opponents.



Source: *Silver Bulletin*

Furthermore, in 2024, Trump won the presidential election by bringing together a historic coalition of ethnic minorities, young people and the working class. According to the *Pew Research Center*, Trump reached near parity among Hispanic voters in 2024 (51% for Harris, 48% for Trump), after losing them to Joe Biden (61% to 36%) in 2020. Among African Americans, Trump won 15% of the Black vote, compared with 8% four years earlier. Trump also did better among

³⁸ Lange, J. (2026). Voters prefer Democrats over Republicans on economy for first time in a decade, Reuters/Ipsos poll finds. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/democrats-lead-republicans-economy-trump-approval-falls-reutersipsos-poll-finds-2026-08-03/>

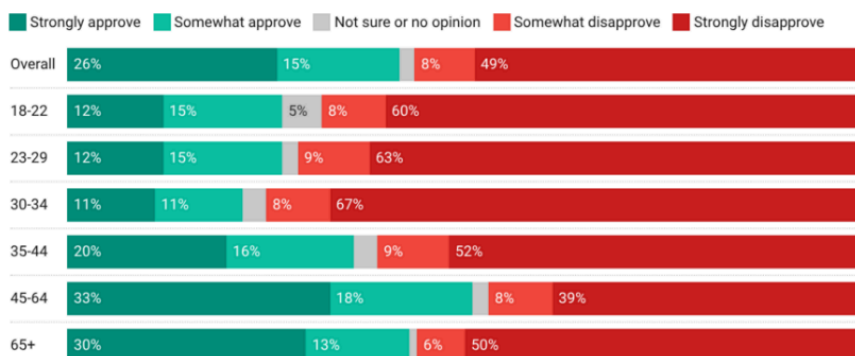
Asian voters: while a majority of them (57%) backed Harris, 40% opted for Trump, a narrower gap than Biden's in 2020 (70% to 30%)³⁹. Then, among voters under 30, Trump took 46% of the vote in 2024 according to AP VoteCast (compared with only 36% in 2020)^{40,41}. Yet the spring 2026 *Yale Youth Poll* reports that 57% of all voters disapprove of Donald Trump's performance as president, including 68% of voters aged 18 to 22 and 72% of those aged 23 to 29. It is above all among men under 30 that Trump has lost the most ground⁴².

Young Voters Massively Disapprove of Trump, Plan to Vote for Democrats in 2026

Most voters (57%) disapprove of President Donald Trump's job performance, compared to 41% who approve. Young voters overwhelmingly disapprove of the president's performance, with large majorities of voters aged 18-22 (68%), 23-29 (72%), and 30-34 (75%) expressing disapproval.

Young voters massively disapprove of Trump

How do you feel about the way that Donald Trump is handling his job as president?



National sample of N=3,429 RVs surveyed online from 3/9-3/23, 2026, with an oversample of RVs under 35 of N=2,008. Results weighted for age, sex, race, education, and party ID. Post-weighting 95% CI margin of error is ±1.4 percentage points for the full sample and ±2.0 percentage points for the youth sample (voters aged 18-34). The MOEs were ±5.0, ±3.4, ±3.4, ±5.6, ±3.9, and ±4.5 percentage points for voters aged 18-22, 23-29, 30-34, 35-44, 45-64, and 65+, respectively. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Chart: @YalePolling on X • Source: Yale Youth Poll spring 2026 survey • Created with Datawrapper

Source: Yale Youth Poll

The *Yale Youth Poll* also reports that, in the 18-22 and 23-29 age groups, only 29% and 28% respectively say they would vote for a Republican Party candidate if the election were held today.

³⁹ Hartig, H., Keeter, S., Daniller, A., & Van Green, T. (2026). Behind Trump's 2024 Victory : Turnout, Voting Patterns and Demographics. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/behind-trumps-2024-victory-a-more-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-voter-coalition/>

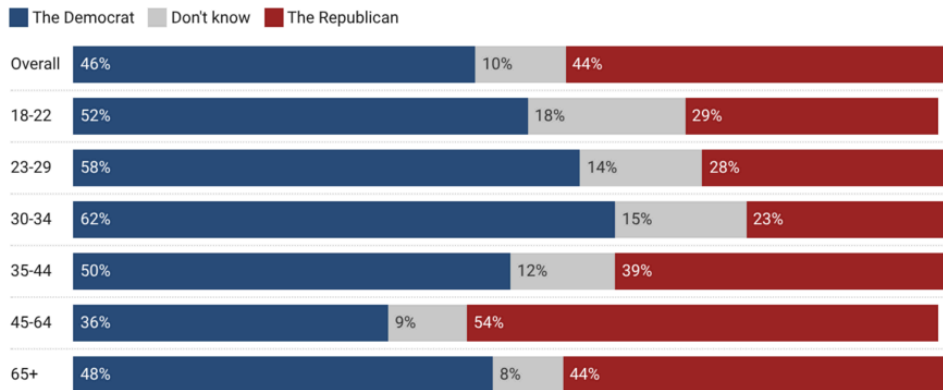
⁴⁰ The Youth Vote in 2024. (2024). CIRCLE. <https://circle.tufts.edu/2024-election#youth-vote-+4-for-harris,-major-differences-by-race-and-gender>

⁴¹ Election Week 2020 : Young People Increase Turnout, Lead Biden to Victory. (2020). CIRCLE. <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/election-week-2020#vote-choice-by-age-and-by-race-and-ethnicity>

⁴² Spring 2026 results. (2026). Yale Youth Poll. <https://youthpoll.yale.edu/spring-2026-results>

Democrats lead the generic ballot, especially among younger voters

If the election for U.S. Congress in your district were held today, which one of the following candidates would you vote for?



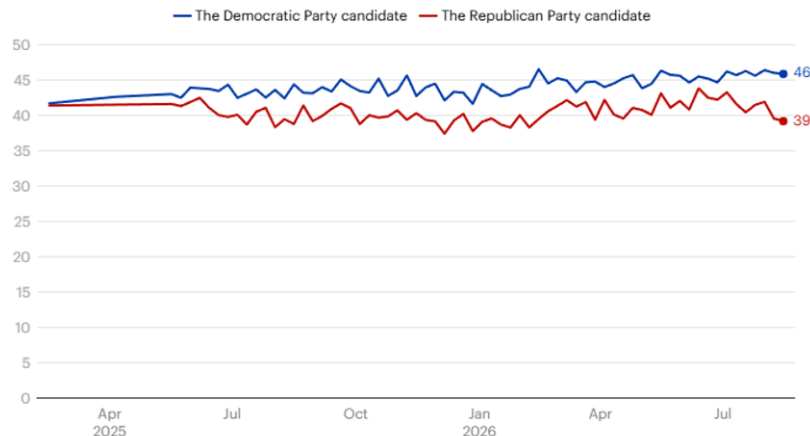
National sample of N=3,429 RVs surveyed online from 3/9-3/23, 2026, with an oversample of RVs under 35 of N=2,008. Results weighted for age, sex, race, education, and party ID. Post-weighting 95% CI margin of error is ± 1.4 percentage points for the full sample and ± 2.0 percentage points for the youth sample (voters aged 18-34). The MOEs were ± 5.0 , ± 3.4 , ± 3.4 , ± 5.6 , ± 3.9 , and ± 4.5 percentage points for voters aged 18-22, 23-29, 30-34, 35-44, 45-64, and 65+, respectively. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Chart: @YalePolling on X • Source: Yale Youth Poll spring 2026 survey • Created with Datawrapper

Source: Yale Youth Poll

How registered voters plan to vote for Congress in 2026

In the elections for U.S. Congress in November, who will you vote for in the district where you live? (% of registered voters)



Note: The displayed question has been used since the August 14 - 17, 2026 survey. Prior surveys asked, "If the elections for U.S. Congress were being held today, who would you vote for in the district where you live?" Responses of "other," "not sure," "I would not vote," and "I will not vote" are not shown.

YouGov

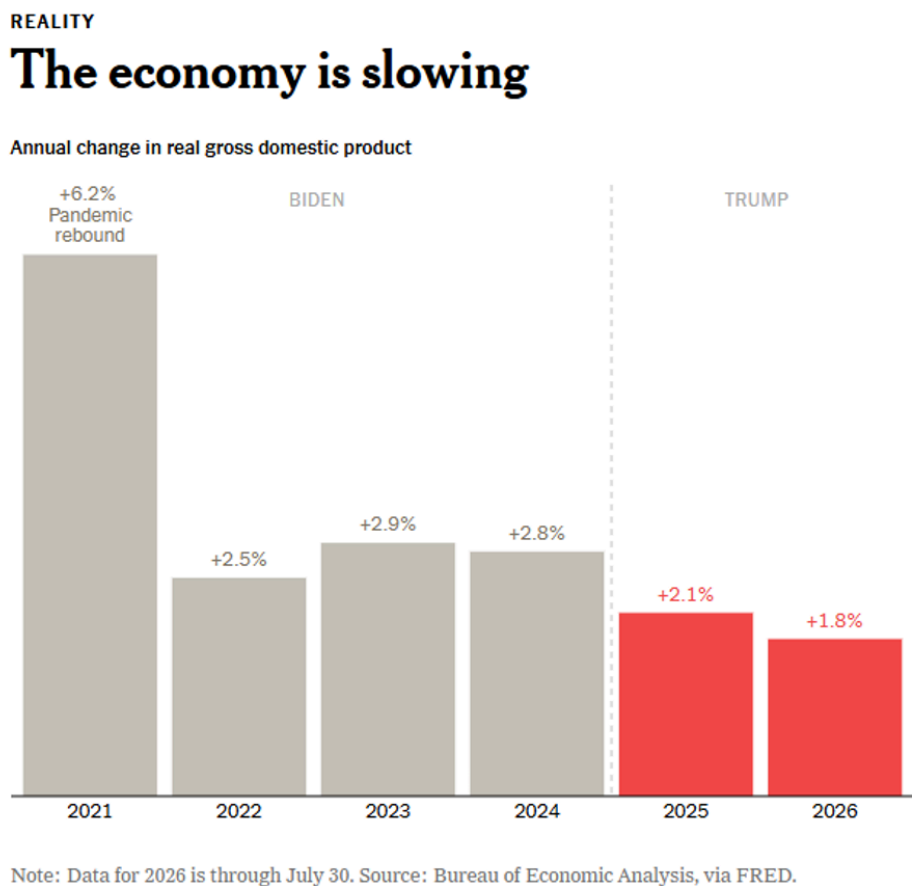
Chart: David H. Montgomery • The Economist / YouGov | February 16, 2025 - August 17, 2026 • [Get the data](#)

Source: YouGov

This decline in the popularity of President Trump and the Republican Party would translate into defeat in the midterm elections of 3 November 2026 (Le Millénaire's forecasting model gives the Democrats a 72.8% chance of winning the House of Representatives, but only 30.2% for the Senate).

The broken promises fracturing the coalition that brought Trump to power in 2024

The polls unfavourable to the Republican Party ahead of the midterms can be explained by a series of broken campaign promises that have shattered the trust between Donald Trump and the coalition of voters who brought him to power in 2024. First, there is the promise of exceptional economic growth, which does not seem to be materialising, as the chart below shows:



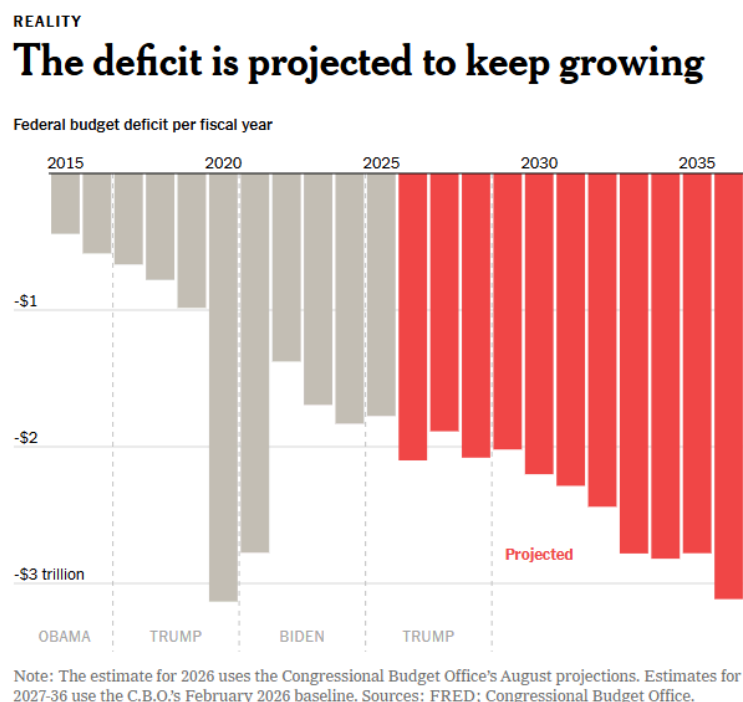
Source: *The New York Times*⁴³

Indeed, growth has slowed to an annualised rate of 1.8% in the first half of 2026, far from the promises of the *Golden Age of America*. It has been held back by the uncertainty surrounding President Trump’s international trade policy, with numerous tariffs forcing companies to rethink their supply chains. Higher federal

⁴³ Rattner, S. Maggiacimo, T. (2026). Trump’s Broken Promises, in 11 Charts. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/08/18/opinion/trump-economy-campaign-promises.html>

spending and the war in Iran have driven up commodity prices (oil and gas) and increased global uncertainty⁴⁴.

Second, Donald Trump had promised to cut public spending. We remember the creation of DOGE, headed by Elon Musk, at the start of his second term. The objective was simple: to honour the campaign promise to cut bureaucracy and fight 'waste'. The cooperation between the two men ended in June 2025 when Trump refused to revisit the federal spending in the *One Big Beautiful Bill*, which Musk accused of being too high. The two charts below show that the deficit is likely to widen in the years ahead and that American debt is reaching record levels comparable to those of the Second World War. Trump's promises to restore fiscal discipline and ease the burden of American debt have been thwarted by spending on the war against Iran, tax cuts and tariff refunds.



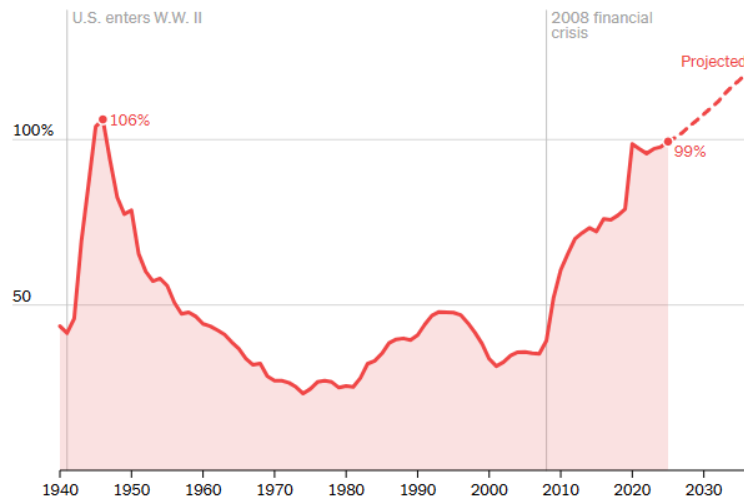
Source: *The New York Times*

⁴⁴ Race, M. (2026, 30 July). US economic growth sees surprise slowdown in second quarter. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd0xvrmlx2eo>

REALITY

National debt is about to break its World War II record

Federal debt as a share of G.D.P., by fiscal year



Note: Chart excludes debt the federal government owes itself. Sources: Office of Management and Budget; Congressional Budget Office.

Source: *The New York Times*

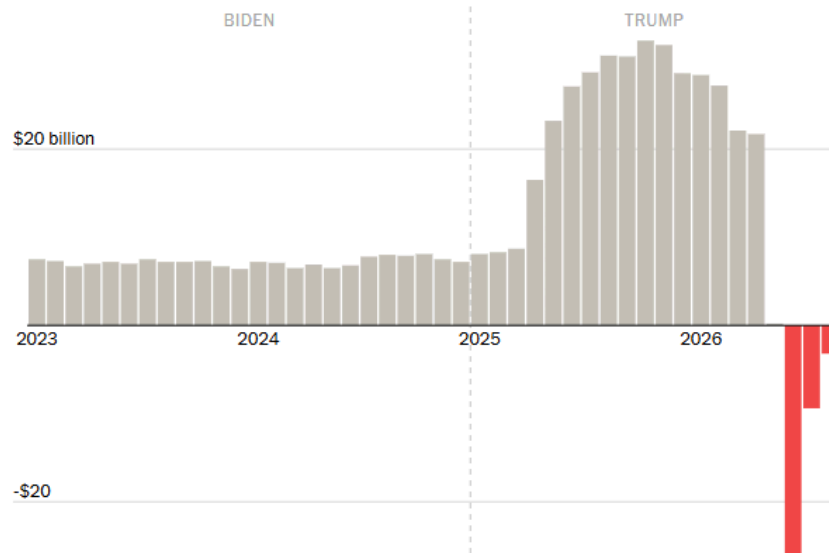
Third, Trump had promised that tariffs would restore the American economy to its former might. Since 2016, he has praised tariffs as a tool of industrial protectionism and a lever of geopolitical negotiation that enhances American power. However, on 20 February 2026, the Supreme Court of the United States of America struck down the universal tariffs (a baseline of at least 10% on almost all products imported into the United States). The Supreme Court held that the Trump administration was misusing the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977. According to the Court, while this law allows imports to be blocked or regulated in times of crisis, the text nowhere mentions the power to levy taxes or tariffs in peacetime, which is what Donald Trump was doing. The Court therefore ruled that the president had exceeded the powers conferred on him by this law by unilaterally imposing these taxes. It should be noted that the Supreme Court has stood up to Donald Trump on other attempted reforms, refusing on 14 September 2026 to allow Trump's scheme to make postal voting more difficult to be applied for the midterms. He wanted to obstruct postal voting by instructing the US Postal Service (USPS) to deliver and carry mail-in ballots only to voters appearing on each state's approved lists, drawn up from

citizenship data compiled by the Department of Homeland Security⁴⁵.

REALITY

Tariff refunds are in full swing

Monthly net U.S. customs revenue



Note: Data as of Aug. 13, 2026. Source: U.S. Treasury.

Source: *The New York Times*

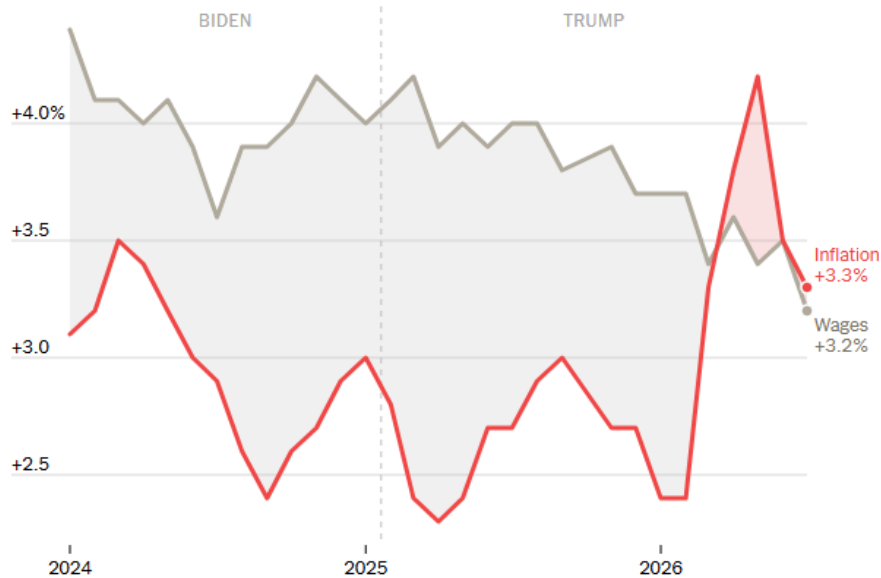
Fourth, during the campaign Trump had repeatedly criticised Joe Biden for causing runaway inflation, which he would bring down if elected. However, as the chart below shows, under Donald Trump's second term, inflation has outpaced wage growth since 2026.

⁴⁵ Liptak, A. (2026). In Fits and Starts, the Supreme Court Stands Up to Trump. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/15/us/politics/supreme-court-trump-mail-ballots.html>

REALITY

Inflation has caught up with paychecks

Percent change, year over year



Note: Data through July 2026. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

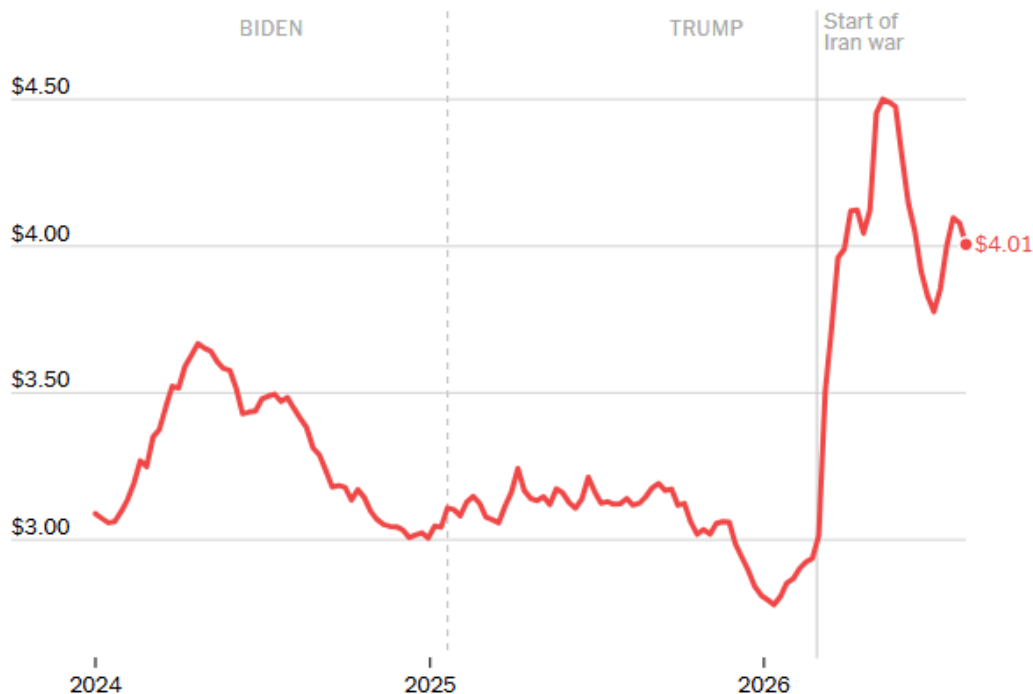
Source: *The New York Times*

Fifth, Trump had promised to bring the price of petrol down to under \$2 a gallon. Yet, as the chart below shows, the Trump administration managed to bring the price below the \$3 mark, only for it then to rise above \$4.5 a gallon (\$4.56 on 21 May 2026) following the attack on Iran in Operation *Epic Fury*.

REALITY

Gas is above \$4 a gallon

Average price of regular gasoline in the U.S.



Note: Data as of Aug. 10, 2026. Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Source: *The New York Times*

Sixth, Donald Trump stands out from his predecessors as the only American president (along with Barack Obama in Libya in 2011) who has been unable to rally the American people behind the war in Iran. In March 2026, 41% of Americans supported the war against Iran. By comparison, 97% favoured entering the Second World War and 76% the Iraq War in 2003⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Biyce, L. Igielnik, R. (2026). Unlike Past U.S. Conflicts, Iran Attack Is Opposed by Most Americans. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/10/us/politics/polls-wars-us-support.html>

Unlike Past U.S. Conflicts, Iran Attack Is Opposed by Most Americans

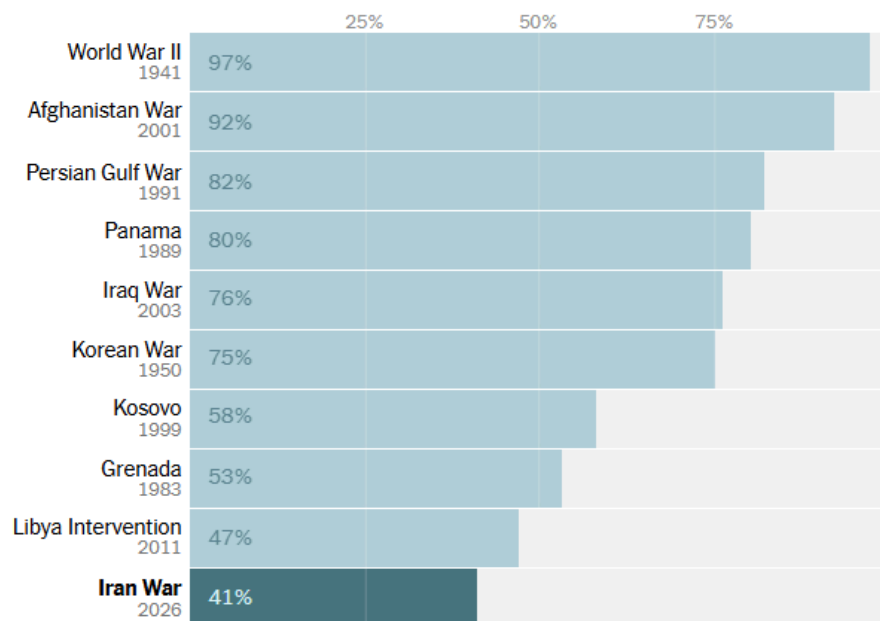
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1.1K

Public support for U.S. military intervention in the first days of international conflicts



Note: There is no polling on public approval of the Vietnam War at the start of the conflict.

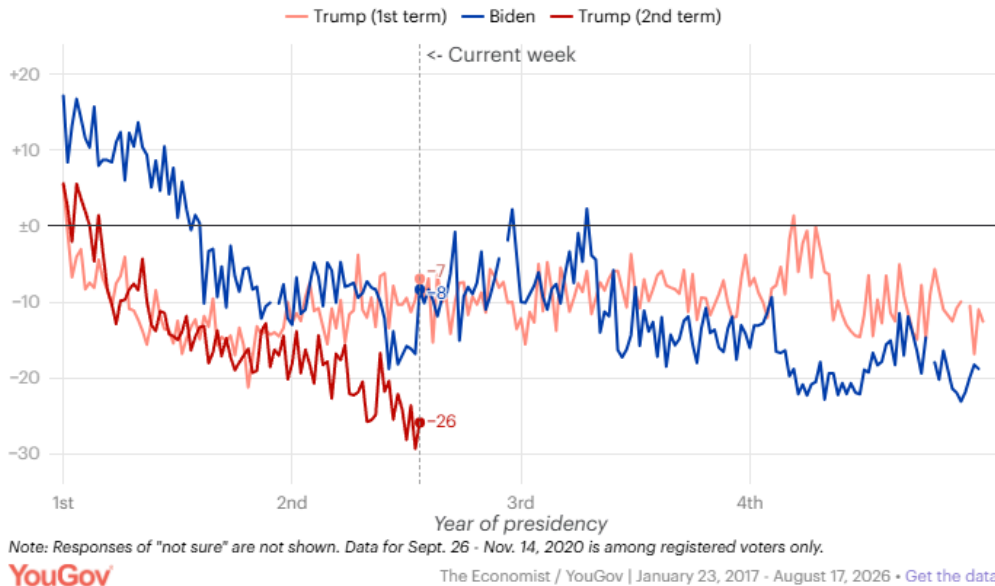
Source: *The New York Times*

As a result, all these broken promises have led to a fall in Donald Trump's popularity, with his net approval rating now lower than during his first term, and also lower than that of Joe Biden, his predecessor in the White House⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Republican support for Trump has fallen as Democrats hold a big lead among enthusiastic midterms voters. (2026). <https://yougov.com/en-us/articles/55391-republican-support-donald--trump-fallen-democrats-hold-big-lead-among-enthusiastic-midterms-voters-august-14-17-2026-economist-yougov-poll>

Net job approval among U.S. adult citizens in Trump's first term, Biden's term, and Trump's second term

Do you approve or disapprove of the way [Joe Biden / Donald Trump] is handling his job as President? (% of U.S. adult citizens who strongly or somewhat approve minus the % who strongly or somewhat disapprove)

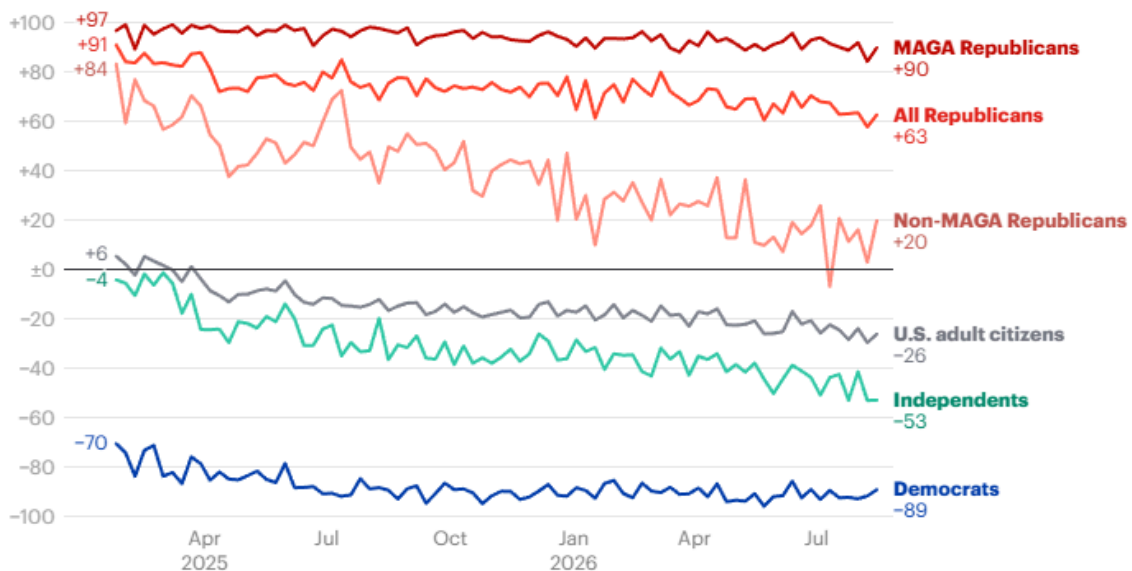


Source: YouGov

However, as the chart below shows, in August 2026 Trump retains solid support among Republicans who back the MAGA movement. Within this group, which now accounts for around half of Republicans, 95% approve of his presidency. Disapproval of Trump, by contrast, is greater among independent voters.

Net approval of Donald Trump among Americans, Democrats, Independents, MAGA Republicans, and non-MAGA Republicans

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President? (% who strongly or somewhat approve minus the % who strongly or somewhat disapprove)



Note: Responses of "not sure" are not shown. Identification as a MAGA Republican is based on Republicans' responses to the question, "Are you a MAGA supporter?" Non-MAGA Republicans are Republicans who say "no"; Republicans who say "not sure" are not shown.

YouGov

Chart: David H. Montgomery • The Economist / YouGov | January 26, 2025 - August 17, 2026 • [Get the data](#)

Source: YouGov

Moreover, Americans now see the Republican Party, and no longer the Democratic Party, as the embodiment of the elite. According to a New York Times/Siena poll from September 2026, voters are now more likely to regard Republicans than Democrats as 'elitist' (43% to 33% of likely voters, compared with near parity in 2022). This is a significant paradigm shift, given that Donald Trump's credibility has been built since 2016 on an anti-establishment profile that railed against a liberal elite seen as preying on the United States of America⁴⁸.

Disillusionment and division in the MAGA camp

Although the polls report near-unanimous support for President Trump among the MAGA electorate, that electorate appears to be splitting over certain policy

⁴⁸ Bidgood, J. (2026). Republicans Are Now the 'Elitist' Party, Voters Say. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/18/us/politics/republicans-elitist-party-voters-poll.html>

decisions that have sparked fierce debate in American society.

We have already mentioned the war in Iran, which divides the American people but also the MAGA base. The decision to go to war against Iran drew strong criticism from several influencers and high-profile figures in the MAGA sphere, including Joe Rogan, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Tucker Carlson, Megyn Kelly, Candace Owens and Joe Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, who resigned on 17 March 2026 in protest against the war. The war in Iran has shattered the unity of the conservative opinion *leaders* who today embody the MAGA base, and who accuse President Trump of betraying his promise to be the ‘candidate of peace’ and to oppose endless and costly military interventions in the Middle East. Rejection is particularly evident among Generation Z. Young people aged 18 to 29, who had voted for Trump in large numbers in 2024 (Trump won around 46% of the vote among voters aged 18 to 29, compared with 36% in 2020, according to AP VoteCast), show the highest rate of opposition to this war⁴⁹.

A generational fracture within the MAGA coalition can be identified, between the young and ‘the boomers’. This fracture is visible in support for the war in Iran and for the State of Israel. The latter is a central point of contention, with dissident voices in the MAGA sphere arguing that the alliance must not take precedence over the security of American citizens, some denouncing a war waged above all for the benefit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s strategy. In May 2026, the *New York Times* reported that on almost every foreign policy question, Republicans aged 18 to 44 express a divergent view. Only 40% think he made the right decision in choosing to attack Iran. Furthermore, only 33% favour additional economic and military support for Israel, compared with 72% of those aged 45 and over. Then, 54% of 18 to 44 year olds believe that Trump has been ‘too favourable to Israel’, compared with 16% of those aged 45 and over. Finally, nearly three quarters believe that the United States should pay less attention to problems abroad, compared with 40% of Republicans aged 45 and over⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ Johansen, B. (2026). The anti-war crack in MAGA's youth base. Politico. <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/05/18/the-anti-war-crack-in-magas-youth-base-00926619>

⁵⁰ Cohn, N. (2026). A Generational Fracture Emerges for Republicans Over Foreign Policy. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/19/upshot/republicans-times-siena-poll-iran.html>

In addition, Donald Trump's second term is also marked by the MAGA base's frustration with the prioritisation of policies and the strategy adopted to implement them. A first striking example is immigration, where the principle of firmness on migration is unanimously supported, but the methods used are unsettling part of the MAGA coalition. According to a Politico poll published in August 2026, nearly one in four Trump voters believes that the deportation campaign is too aggressive⁵¹. This perception of an inhumane and aggressive handling of immigration policy has been felt above all within the Hispanic community, as illustrated by the remarks of María Elvira Salazar, the representative for Florida's 27th district:

'Mr. President, some of your immigration enforcement efforts have gone too far,' Ms. Salazar said straight into the camera. She later added: 'The same Hispanics who helped you get to the White House in 2024 feel betrayed today.'⁵²

The second example is the handling of the Epstein affair. Donald Trump did not provide Epstein's famous 'client list', which he had promised to release during his campaigns. And when the *Department of Justice* released 3.5 million pages (out of a total of 6 million) relating to the Epstein files in late 2025 and early 2026, they disappointed, since many names and passages had been redacted, prompting cries of a cover-up. The book by Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan, *Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump*, reports that the affair took such a turn that *Donald Trump's senior staff held a crisis meeting, chaired by Vice President JD Vance, in the Situation Room, the White House crisis management room*⁵³. A third factor fragmenting the MAGA base is that of a president who prioritises international issues over domestic ones such as the economy and Americans' purchasing power. Indeed, the choice to launch a war in Iran is breaking up the MAGA coalition insofar as it is seen as contrary to the promise of *no more forever wars* and to the 2025 American foreign policy doctrine, which stated that the days when Middle Eastern wars dominated the

⁵¹ Swaiy, F. (2026). Almost 1 in 4 Trump voters see mass deportation campaign as too aggressive: Survey. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/6038104-trump-immigration-poll-aggressive/>

⁵² "Mr. President, some of your immigration enforcement efforts have gone too far," Ms. Salazar said straight into the camera. She later added: "The same Hispanics who helped you get to the White House in 2024 feel betrayed today." Mazzei, P et al. (2026). G.O.P. Representative Breaks With Trump in Ad: Hispanic Voters 'Feel Betrayed'. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/17/us/politics/salazar-florida-republican-immigration-trump.html>

⁵³ Haberman, M. Swan, J. (2026). *Regime Change : inside the imperial presidency of Donald Trump*. Simon & Schuster. P.228

American political agenda were over. Furthermore, Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan report in their book that Donald Trump was warned of this situation through internal memos stating that American public opinion believed that Trump's foreign policy was diverting the president's attention from public health, the economy and purchasing power. Yet the book describes how these memos did not seem to influence Donald Trump, who in this second term operates more than ever on instinct⁵⁴.

Finally, as we explained above, the economic situation is dividing the MAGA base between the Trump administration, which praises a positive macroeconomic record, and the reality of the American population, which feels that its daily life is not improving and that prices keep rising. Admittedly, the stock market rose by more than 37% between the 2024 election and 25 September 2026⁵⁵, but that does not mean that households' real economy has improved. As we have shown, petrol prices and inflation have risen under Trump's second term. In reality, Trump is making the same mistake as Biden in 2024, argues former White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. The current president is failing to convince Americans of the merits of his economic project and of the direction in which he is taking them.

The gap between everyday reality and encouraging macroeconomic news is too wide. Politically, once a narrative rooted in daily life (in our case, economic hardship) has taken hold, it is almost impossible for decision-makers to shake it off⁵⁶.

The challenge in these midterms will be to bring together a divided American electorate

Beyond the binary classification of voters as Republicans and Democrats, it is necessary to decipher the complexity of the different electoral sensibilities in the United States of America, which are far from binary. Americans hold a complex

⁵⁴ Haberman, M. Swan, J. (2026). *Regime Change : inside the imperial presidency of Donald Trump*. Simon & Schuster. P. 402, 403, 409

⁵⁵ US Bank. (2026). *Stocks under the Trump administration: What is driving markets in 2026?*. <https://www.usbank.com/investing/financial-perspectives/market-news/stock-market-under-trump.html>

⁵⁶ Jean-Pierre, K. (2026). *This Mistake Doomed Biden. Trump Is Falling Into the Same Trap*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/02/opinion/trump-biden-economic-message.html>

set of values and convictions that do not always correspond to the two major parties. According to the Pew Research Center's political typology (June 2026), the American adult population can be divided into nine groups.

1. The *No Apologies Right* group represents 9% of American adults; it embodies the hard line of Trumpism and supports the president in all his actions.

2. The *Faith First Conservatives* group represents 12% of American adults; it also embodies the hard line of Trumpism and supports the president in all his actions. The difference from the first group lies in attachment to religion, which is central to this group.

3. The *Unconventional Right* group represents 12% of American adults and embodies a more moderate conservative line, notably on abortion and the welfare system.

4. The *Pragmatic and Polite Right* group represents 11% of American adults; its members are conservative on economic issues and more moderate on race and immigration.

5. The *Leftward Progressives* group represents 7% of American adults; its members are highly critical of Trump and embody a progressive line in every area.

6. The *Loyal Liberals* group represents 11% of American adults. Its members are more moderate, have greater trust in institutions and are attached to the role of the United States as a leader of international diplomacy.

7. The *Order and Opportunity Left* group represents 18% of American adults. It is a racially and ethnically diverse group. Its members are liberal on economic matters, but concerned about crime and in favour of restrictions on immigration.

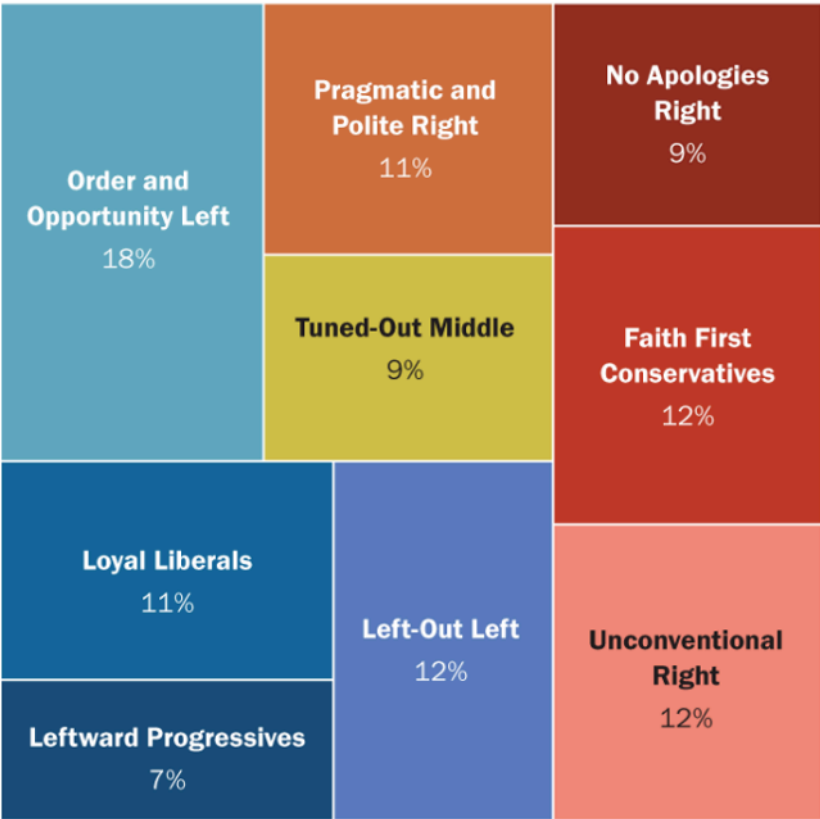
8. The *Left-Out Left* group represents 12% of American adults. This electorate stands out for its mix of liberal and moderate views. It is a group that tends to feel

ignored by politics, faces financial difficulties and is also very sceptical about politics and the country's future.

9. The *Tuned-Out Middle* group represents 9% of American adults. It embodies the share of voters who are divided and show little interest in politics⁵⁷.

The 2026 Pew Research Center Political Typology

% of U.S. adults in each typology group



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-30, 2025.

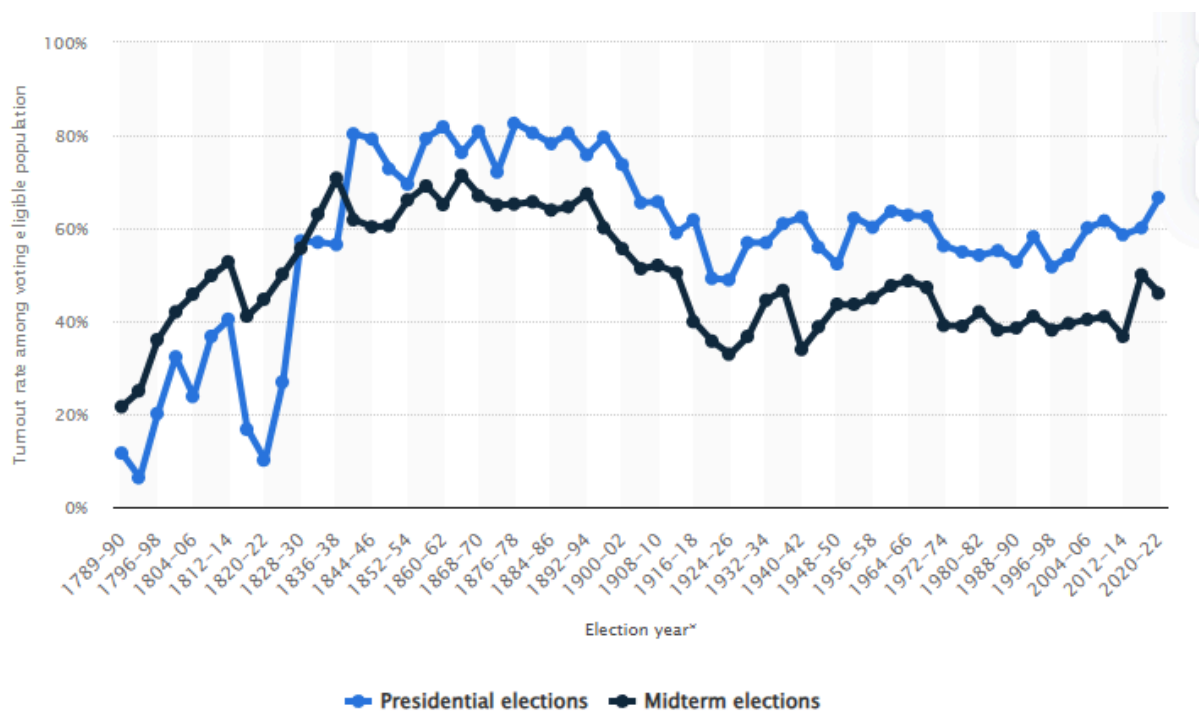
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Research Center

It is important to grasp this architecture, which makes up the two electoral coalitions of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, in the context of the

⁵⁷ Kiley, J. et al. (2026). Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology. Pew Research Centre. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2026/06/10/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology/#the-typology-groups>

midterms. Since 1838, these midterm elections have differed from the presidential election in having lower turnout. In practice, the electorate turns out less than for the presidential election: in 2020, 66.6% of eligible Americans voted in the presidential election, and in 2022, 46% voted in the midterm elections⁵⁸. The challenge for both parties is therefore to mobilise as many voters as possible from the most loyal core of their electorate, since these are the voters who turn out most. *For the Republicans, these are the No Apologies Right and the Faith First Conservatives*. For the Democrats, they are the Leftward Progressives and the Loyal Liberals.



Source: Statista

⁵⁸ Voter turnout in U.S. presidential and midterm elections 1789-2020| Statista. (2026). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1139251/voter-turnout-in-us-presidential-and-midterm-elections/#google_vignette

UNDERSTANDING THE NOVEMBER ELECTION

A) THE MIDTERMS: A THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY

Let us say it from the outset: midterm elections often turn into a show of strength for the opposition. Deprived of the White House barely two years earlier, the opposition is galvanised by the opportunity to recover and to obstruct the president's agenda, precisely with a view to seizing executive power. The task is all the easier in a two-party system, since it is accountable for none of the federal policies and mechanically stands as the only alternative. Conversely, the president's party is generally forced to defend its positions by extolling the merits of its record before voters who are passing judgement on it for the first time. Washington then becomes a kind of theatre in which one side strives to ward off the wear and tear of power while the other aspires to regain it. In short, the midterms are both a dress rehearsal for the next presidential election and the epilogue of the previous one.

Since at least 1982, being a member of the president's party in a swing district during the *midterms* has been a risky occupation. Indeed, these elections have resulted on average in a loss of 22 seats in the House of Representatives and three in the Senate⁵⁹, the latter being renewed by thirds and therefore showing greater inertia. As a result, the president's party has lost at least one chamber seven times in the last 11 midterm elections, while the opposition has emerged with control of the entire Congress four times. Observers therefore often seek not to determine the winner of the election but to gauge the scale of the governing party's defeat⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Molly E. Reynolds and Abby Ward, "Losses by the President's Party in Midterm Elections, 1862-2022," table 2-4 in Vital Statistics on Congress (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, April 10, 2026), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/2-4-Full.pdf>

⁶⁰ Wikipedia contributors, 'United States Midterm Election', Wikipedia, last modified 31 August 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_midterm_election

First and foremost, the midterms are an occasion for backlash. Two years at the head of the country are enough to wear a party down before it has had time to show the benefits of its policies; it is too late for a honeymoon and too early for gratitude. Moreover, the figure of the president often fuels the resentment of part of the population, hence its heightened motivation to vote. In 2006, 36% of voters thus said they were going to the polls to punish President Bush⁶¹. To make matters worse, the majority must absorb the effects of a protest vote against a president who is not even on the ballot and who consequently struggles to mobilise his most fervent supporters, a trend illustrated by the defeats of Mark Udall and Kay Hagan. Both had been elected in fairly Republican states in the wake of the Obama comet in 2008, and neither survived the red wave that swept the country in 2014. Udall is particularly emblematic of this phenomenon because, despite a financial advantage of nearly \$7 million, his local profile as an elected official from Colorado since 1997 and his impressive victory by more than 10 points, he could not prevent the GOP from flipping his state⁶². Yet this in no way prevented the Democrat John Hickenlooper from being re-elected governor of Colorado the same year⁶³, which suggests that the state's residents were not rejecting Democrats as such but that the brand had become too toxic at national level. Despite regional particularities, midterm elections therefore remain a federal contest in which control of Washington is at stake, which is why Americans are less inclined to look past candidates' party affiliations. As a result, the president's party finds itself caught in a vice between a lukewarm base and a white-hot opposition, often in an unfavourable environment; this is the scissor effect of politics.

Furthermore, the *midterms* give the opposition an opportunity to rally around a common cause and to close ranks in adversity. If one assumes that turnout falls when there is no presidential election, which is generally the case since national contests generate more enthusiasm, the votes of the discontented who take the time to go to the polls have a considerable impact on the outcome. The

⁶¹ Pew Research Center, 'Centrists Deliver for Democrats: In an Election That Proved to Be a Referendum on Bush and Iraq, Political Independents Cast the Deciding Votes', 8 November 2006, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2006/11/08/centrists-deliver-for-democrats/>

⁶² Ballotpedia, 'United States Senate Elections in Colorado, 2014', accessed 26 September 2026, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_elections_in_Colorado,_2014

⁶³ Ballotpedia, 'Colorado Gubernatorial and Lieutenant Gubernatorial Election, 2014', accessed 26 September 2026, https://ballotpedia.org/Colorado_gubernatorial_and_lieutenant_gubernatorial_election,_2014

mechanism is formidable. After a winning presidential election, the president's party often holds marginal seats won thanks to its exceptional mobilisation and its coattail effects. Two years later, some occasional voters do not return and these overexposed seats revert to their previous equilibrium. The 2010 elections are the emblematic example. According to the *Census Bureau*, turnout then reached a meagre 45%⁶⁴, against more than 63% in 2008⁶⁵, a plunge of 18 points. At this stage, it is quite simply no longer the same electorate from one election to the next. This gap alone would admittedly not explain the Democrats' defeat, particularly in the Southern states, but it must be read in light of the enactment of the *Affordable Care Act*. According to a counterfactual analysis⁶⁶ carried out after the fact, which must therefore be handled with caution, the Democrats could have saved around 25 seats if the members concerned had distanced themselves from the new law. The authors of the study note that the GOP managed to turn this law into a genuine red rag with which to demonise the most vulnerable Democrats and kill their hopes of re-election. In short, tying the governing party to controversial policies can indeed turn the tide in a substantial number of swing districts.

The *midterms* are also an opportunity for the opposition to break the momentum of the president's party and to cut into its room for manoeuvre. The US Constitution is clear: Congress enjoys broad powers in budgetary and international matters. Losing a chamber therefore jeopardises the agenda of the president's party and forces it into compromises, a godsend for the opposition, which can then partly impose its own pace and themes. Above all, losing the Senate effectively deprives the executive branch of control over the appointment of federal judges, first and foremost those sitting on the Supreme Court. In recent history, Obama is probably the president who paid the heaviest price for this logic. From January 2015, he faced a hostile Congress while his party was beginning to turn the page on his presidency. He knew he would not sign any

⁶⁴ Thom File, *Who Votes? Congressional Elections and the American Electorate: 1978-2014*, Current Population Reports, No. P20-577 (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, July 2015), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p20-577.pdf>

⁶⁵ Thom File and Sarah Crissey, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008*, Current Population Reports, No. P20-562RV (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, July 2012), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2012/demo/p20-562rv.pdf>

⁶⁶ Brendan Nyhan, Eric McGhee, John Sides, Seth Masket and Steven Greene, 'One Vote Out of Step? The Effects of Salient Roll Call Votes in the 2010 Election', *American Politics Research* 40, No. 5 (2012): 844-879, <https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.dartmouth.edu/dist/5/2293/files/2021/03/health-care-vote-effects.pdf>

further major legislation and that his political capital had shrunk to almost nothing. When Antonin Scalia died in early 2016, he therefore understood that his final mission would be to appoint his replacement on the Supreme Court. He turned to Merrick Garland, whose record was impeccable and who seemed capable of surviving a Republican Senate. The problem was that Garland had the misfortune of being a liberal and, with the presidential campaign already in full swing, Republicans decided they would not confirm him under any circumstances, blocking his nomination for almost a year⁶⁷. Had the Senate remained Democratic, the confirmation would have been a mere formality and the Supreme Court would today have one more liberal justice, reducing the conservative majority to 5 to 4. Given the impact that the top of the judiciary has on Americans' lives, this is the most important political event of the last 20 years. By stripping Obama of this power, the GOP secured control of the Court for decades, profoundly reshaping the national balance and overturning many social gains, abortion and equal access to the vote first among them, thereby tarnishing Obama's legacy. In short, winning these elections allows the opposition to turn the president into a lame duck and to reduce him to a mere tenant of the White House.

However, these strong structural trends are not an absolute law. The party in power has on several occasions taken advantage of particular circumstances to limit the scale of its defeat, or even to win an outright victory. First, the national mood can be a stabilising factor, particularly in times of crisis, as shown by the Republican Party's victory in the 2002 midterm elections, after which the GOP took control of the Senate while keeping the House⁶⁸. While this performance is impressive for a party whose president had entered the White House almost by breaking in, it is explained above all by the rally-round-the-flag effect that gripped the country in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001 and pushed Americans to close ranks behind the commander-in-chief. Less tragically, a president enjoying remarkable popularity can quite easily boost his party's electoral performance, if only by giving the opposition no grist for its mill. With

⁶⁷ Ron Elving, 'What Happened with Merrick Garland in 2016 and Why It Matters Now', NPR, 29 June 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/29/624467256/what-happened-with-merrick-garland-in-2016-and-why-it-matters-now>

⁶⁸ Thomas E. Mann, 'The 2002 U.S. Midterm Elections', Brookings Institution, 4 November 2002, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-2002-u-s-midterm-elections/>

Bill Clinton posting an insolent approval rating of 65%⁶⁹, the Democrats held their ground in the Senate in 1998⁷⁰ while poaching on Republican territory for a net gain of five districts in the House. Finally, the opposition can also simply trip over its own feet. While many analyses predicted a red tidal wave in 2022, betting that Biden's growing unpopularity amid soaring inflation would get the better of the Democrats, the party held up rather well. Admittedly, the Democrats had to concede the House that year, but they suffered a net loss of just nine seats while picking up a seat in the Senate, even though several states such as Georgia, Arizona and Pennsylvania were not structurally favourable to them⁷¹. This resilience owed less to the strength of their strategy than to the weakness of the GOP's, which fielded a string of poor-quality candidates, got bogged down in unbridled Trumpism and, above all, bore the brunt of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which had protected abortion at federal level, a decisive issue for a quarter of the electorate⁷². Without re-running the autopsy of these three elections here, it is clear that the outcome is never a foregone conclusion. In a word, midterm elections structurally favour the opposition, but they are no less competitive for it.

This is why the true measure of a midterm election is the opposition's ability to swing part of the electorate in its favour. The point is not so much to win as to convince independent or disappointed voters in order to build a renewed coalition. So it was with the Democrats, who won handsomely in 2018 because they managed to gain 9.5 points compared with 2016, just as they had gained more than 10 points between 2004 and 2006⁷³, two elections that allowed them to approach the 2008 and 2020 presidential elections with confidence. Conversely, the Republicans delivered only a timid performance in 2022 because they had gained just 5.9 points, compared with nearly 8 between 2012 and 2014. In this context, the fragility of the coalition that propelled Trump to the White House for the second time is the GOP's greatest vulnerability, precisely because

⁶⁹ Pew Research Center, 'Clinton Leadership Position Enhanced: Election Pleases Voters Despite Mudslinging', 13 November 1998, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/1998/11/13/clinton-leadership-position-enhanced/>

⁷⁰ Stuart Rothenberg, 'Learning from the 1998 and 2002 Midterms', Roll Call, 7 September 2022, <https://rollcall.com/2022/09/07/learning-from-the-1998-and-2002-midterms/>

⁷¹ Louise Chetcuti, 'Understanding the Outcome of the 2022 US Midterms', Institut Montaigne, 7 December 2022, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/understanding-outcome-2022-us-midterms>

⁷² Ashley Kirzinger, Audrey Kearney, Mellisha Stokes, Alex Montero, Liz Hamel and Mollyann Brodie, 'How the Supreme Court's Dobbs Decision Played in the 2022 Midterm Election: KFF/AP VoteCast Analysis', KFF, 11 November 2022, <https://www.kff.org/elections/2022-midterm-election-kff-ap-votecast-analysis/>

⁷³ RealClearPolling, 'This Day in History (Generic Ballot: 2026 vs. 2022, 2018, 2014, 2010)', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://www.realclearpolling.com/polls/this-day-in-history/generic-ballot/2026-vs-2022-vs-2018-vs-2014-vs-2010>

the Democrats can easily win back these voters, whose champion is moreover absent. In any case, the most relevant indicator to look at on the day after 3 November will be the Democrats' gain (or loss, although that hypothesis can reasonably be ruled out) on the *Generic Congressional Ballot*, rather than their absolute lead.

The defeat of the president's party in the midterms is often described as a kind of rite of passage, a tectonic logic against which it would be futile to fight. The reality is different, and the importance of this election cannot be underestimated, both from a political standpoint and in terms of its concrete and lasting consequences for Americans' lives.

B) GERRYMANDERING, OR THE SYMPTOM OF A CARVED-UP DEMOCRACY

Gerrymandering, or electoral butchery as the French call it, is the stock theme of analyses of the 2026 *midterms*. A political saga that began in 2025, it has been splashed across the international press, so much so that what was once a specialist reference has become a familiar landmark for the general public. Seen from France, this one-upmanship may raise a smile, so much does it make America look like a parody of democracy in which elected officials choose their voters. Yet, beyond its short- and medium-term political consequences, it is the most tangible symptom of the decay of American democracy, a baleful dynamic from which other Western democracies are not by nature immune and which calls for caution.

Let us dispel any misunderstanding: *gerrymandering* is not a loophole that the GOP rushed into, but a direct by-product of the American electoral system. The United States Constitution provides for a census every 10 years in order to allocate to each state its number of seats in the House and to redraw districts, in principle guaranteeing equal representation for all citizens. The *Census Bureau*⁷⁴ conducts this operation on a non-partisan basis, and the states are then free to

⁷⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 'About the Decennial Census of Population and Housing', last revised 14 September 2026, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about.html>

draw their own electoral maps⁷⁵, the sole condition being that districts contain roughly the same number of inhabitants (around 760,000 today⁷⁶). However, the census is so precise that overlaying the results of past elections is enough to carry out a detailed analysis of each precinct⁷⁷ and to draw districts that favour one side over the other, provided electoral coalitions remain the same. In other words, it becomes possible to pack all of one party's voters into a single district and then ensure that the other party has a narrow majority in the rest, a mechanism that the New York Times simulator illustrates perfectly⁷⁸. In practice, the most telling example of this method is North Carolina, where Republicans won nearly 53% of the vote in 2024 while taking 10 of the 14 seats, or 71% of the congressional delegation⁷⁹. Some states guard against this pitfall, such as California, which relied on an independent commission⁸⁰, and several safeguards exist at federal level, notably regarding racial representation. *Gerrymandering* is nonetheless formidably effective and has had striking consequences, for example in 2016, when the GOP won some 241 of 435 seats with a lead of just one point⁸¹. The fact remains that both parties engage in the practice (the Democratic counterpart to North Carolina being Illinois), so the system balances out without either side gaining a flagrant advantage.

Texas upset this relative status quo. By triggering a redistricting in the absence of a new census and on purely political grounds⁸², the GOP started a war it is not sure to win. Democrats also lead large states and have retaliated accordingly, as shown by Governor Newsom's offensive in California, where he managed to alter the make-up of five seats to make them more favourable to his party, thereby

⁷⁵ Justin Levitt, 'Who Draws the Lines?', All About Redistricting, Loyola Law School, accessed 26 September 2026, <https://redistricting.lis.edu/redistricting-101/who-draws-the-lines/>

⁷⁶ American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 'Enlarging the House', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://www.amacad.org/ourcommonpurpose/initiative/enlarging-house-representatives>

⁷⁷ Redistricting Data Hub, 'Precinct Boundaries and Election Results', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://redistrictingdatahub.org/data/about-our-data/precinct-boundaries-and-election-results/>

⁷⁸ Ella Koeze, Denise Lu and Charlie Smart, 'Can You Gerrymander Your Party to Power?', The New York Times, updated 8 August 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/us/politics/congressional-gerrymandering-redistricting-game.html>

⁷⁹ North Carolina State Board of Elections, 'NC SBE Contest Results', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://er.ncsbe.gov>

⁸⁰ California Citizens Redistricting Commission, 'About Us', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/about-us/>

⁸¹ Ballotpedia, 'United States Congress Elections, 2016', accessed 26 September 2026, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Congress_elections,_2016

⁸² Texas Legislature, H.B. No. 4: Relating to the Composition of the Districts for the Election of Members of the United States House of Representatives from the State of Texas, 89th Legislature, 2nd Called Session, enrolled version (2025), <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/892/billtext/html/HB00004F.htm>

cancelling out the gains Republicans hoped to make in Texas⁸³. In the wake of this, the Supreme Court weakened some of the provisions of the *Voting Rights Act* that required states to create a certain number of majority-minority districts⁸⁴, clearing the way for the most extreme racial *gerrymandering*, particularly in the states of the Old South. Redistricting fever then gripped America, with initiatives from Virginia to Louisiana by way of Florida, a cascade that has so far ended in a net gain of nine seats for the GOP⁸⁵. However, Republicans are far from certain of coming out ahead in the long term, as states such as New York, Washington, Maryland and New Jersey have already begun the process, although these efforts cannot be completed in time for 2026.

On the other hand, the way each party goes about its redistricting deserves closer attention. The GOP bends the law and ratifies electoral maps with the stroke of a pen, whereas Democrats strive to respect existing processes and have their proposals adopted by referendum. In Louisiana, Republican Governor Jeff Landry⁸⁶ suspended the House primaries that were already under way in order to carry out an express redistricting. In other words, he voided⁸⁷ the roughly 42,000 mail-in ballots already received, for the sole purpose of picking up a seat for his party. The same logic applied in Florida, where the local courts caved in⁸⁸ even though the map's designer, Jason Poreda, admitted during legislative hearings to having used partisan data in defiance of Florida law, which prohibits such practices. Conversely, although the new Virginia map was approved by nearly 52% of voters⁸⁹, the state's Supreme Court, whose conservative majority is a relic of past Republican dominance, hastened to have the vote annulled on vague

⁸³ Jonathan J. Cooper, Michael R. Blood and Trần Nguyễn, 'California Voters Approve New US House Map to Boost Democrats in 2026', Associated Press, 4 November 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/california-redistricting-prop-50-gavin-newsom-839193bfc2a817086acca7365315f26f>

⁸⁴ Supreme Court of the United States, *Louisiana v. Callais*, Nos. 24-109 and 24-110, 608 U.S., 29 April 2026, https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/25pdf/24-109_21o3.pdf

⁸⁵ Joseph Ax, 'How Republicans Are Winning the War over US Congressional Redistricting, State by State', Reuters, 29 May 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/how-republicans-are-winning-war-over-us-congressional-redistricting-state-by-2026-05-29/>

⁸⁶ Office of Governor Jeff Landry, 'Governor Jeff Landry Suspends Only U.S. House Primary Elections Following Supreme Court Ruling', 30 April 2026, <https://gov.louisiana.gov/news/5093>

⁸⁷ Jacob Knutson, 'Around 42,000 People Cast Mail Ballots Before Louisiana Halted Congressional Primaries to Gerrymander', Democracy Docket, 5 May 2026, <https://www.democracymarket.com/news-alerts/thousands-vote-louisiana-congressional-primaries-lan-dry-suspension/>

⁸⁸ Leon County Circuit Court, Florida, 'Order on Motions for Preliminary Injunction', Equal Ground Education Fund Inc. et al. v. Cord Byrd et al., Case No. 2026 CA 914, 26 May 2026, <https://statecourtreport.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/20260526-judge-hawkes-order-denying-preliminary-injunctions.pdf>

⁸⁹ 'Virginia Redistricting Election Results', The New York Times, 21 April 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/us/elections/results-virginia-redistricting.html>

procedural grounds⁹⁰. Democrats have indeed locked themselves into procedures designed to guarantee fair representation of every citizen, which is why changing the map in New York would even require amending the state Constitution⁹¹. Ironically, Democrats present their *gerrymandering* operations as a bulwark for democracy, a rhetoric one may judge as one wishes but which at least has the merit of being consistent with their conduct.

Be that as it may, this arms race has two major consequences. On the one hand, many voters no longer have a say, which feeds political resentment. In this respect, an in-depth study published in 2025 in *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* (Cambridge University Press)⁹² highlighted a link between the perception of abusive gerrymandering and lower satisfaction with democracy, itself a symptom of greater distrust of the political class. Among those very dissatisfied with redistricting in their state, the estimated probability of saying they are satisfied with the way democracy works is only 25%, compared with 85% among those most satisfied with the process. Worse, the whole population condemns the practice, since the perception of *gerrymandering* reduces the legitimacy attributed to the map among Democrats, Republicans and independents alike, the authors detecting no statistically significant difference between the three groups. Better still, for an identical map, attributing it to an independent commission rather than to the opposing party brings the perception of bias down from 76% to 52% among Democrats and from 67% to 44% among Republicans. These figures suggest that a general ban on *gerrymandering* would help ease partisan tensions and would be one of the most powerful levers of national cohesion. On the other hand, though this matters less, electoral butchery upsets local political balances. The logic is simple: districts change but voters do not move, which is why incumbents lose their advantage, as shown by the defeat of Representative Andy Ogles in the Republican primary of 6 August 2026 in Tennessee. A member of the most radical wing of the Republican Party, he had

⁹⁰ Supreme Court of Virginia, 'Don Scott, in His Official Capacity, et al. v. Ryan T. McDougale, Virginia State Senator, et al.', Record No. 260127, 8 May 2026, <https://www.vacourts.gov/static/opinions/opnscwvp/1260127.pdf>

⁹¹ New York State Assembly, 'A11553A: Concurrent Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution, in Relation to the Independent Redistricting Commission', 1 June 2026, <https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?Actions=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y&bn=A11553&term=2025>

⁹² Ryan D. Williamson and Florian Justwan, 'Is Gerrymandering Poisoning the Well of Democracy? Evaluating the Relationship between Redistricting and Citizens' Attitudes', *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 25, No. 4 (December 2025): 361-382, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/412DA405BED4D1E8D428A9B570090048/S1532440025100108a.pdf/is-gerrymandering-poisoning-the-well-of-democracy-evaluating-the-relationship-between-redistricting-and-citizens-attitudes.pdf>

withstood various attempts to unseat him thanks to his local roots and the right-leaning tendency of his district, but the recent redistricting was drawn in such a way that the district was now made up of 82% new voters⁹³, who were therefore far less attached to him. Ogles suffered a stinging defeat, with 53% of voters rejecting him⁹⁴, a precedent that will no doubt encourage elected officials to show restraint the next time their party seeks to alter the composition of their district. In short, *gerrymandering* is a perilous undertaking from which democracy emerges the loser and from which its instigators are not even certain to benefit.

The weight of money is the other sword of Damocles hanging over American politics. While contributions are in principle regulated and capped⁹⁵ in order to prevent bribe-taking, the reality of the system is quite different and points to money being showered far and wide. The *Federal Election Commission* is clear: an individual may not give more than \$3,500 per election directly to a single candidate, a ceiling that does not take into account contributions to the political parties themselves. Since the 1970s, however, the emergence of *Political Action Committees* (PACs) and their corollary, Super PACs, has made it possible to circumvent the spirit of the law. Without going into detail, the Supreme Court gradually ruled that corporations could take part in the political game, a logic that reached its peak with the *Citizens United* ruling⁹⁶, which enshrined their freedom of speech and allowed them to organise to defend their interests. In doing so, the ruling, combined with *SpeechNow*, enabled the emergence of political committees able to raise and spend unlimited sums to influence elections, provided they remain strictly independent of candidates: these are the Super PACs⁹⁷. From then on, money could flow freely.

⁹³ David A. Lieb and Kristin M. Hall, 'Tennessee Voters Oust Trump-Backed Congressman, Set Fall Matchup for Redrawn Memphis-Area House Seat', Associated Press, 6 August 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/tennessee-primary-election-congress-redistricting-memphis-ad0c23a4d0d5f7464ff2bdbb892b0a3f>

⁹⁴ Associated Press, 'Tennessee U.S. House Primary Election Results 2026', Associated Press, 6 August 2026, <https://apnews.com/projects/elections-2026/tennessee-primary-results-us-house/>

⁹⁵ Federal Election Commission, 'Contribution Limits', accessed 27 September 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/candidate-taking-receipts/contribution-limits/>

⁹⁶ Federal Election Commission, 'Citizens United v. FEC', accessed 27 September 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/citizens-united-v-fec/>

⁹⁷ Federal Election Commission, 'Registering as a Super PAC', accessed 27 September 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/filing-pac-reports/registering-super-pac/>

The problems this creates are many. On the one hand, despite their theoretical independence, these committees in effect favour special interests at the expense of the general interest. By making contributions running to several million dollars, some individuals effectively become privileged citizens whose concerns take precedence over the general interest. Such is the case of Michael Bloomberg, whose vehicle *Stand for New York PAC*⁹⁸ was decisive in Micah Lasher's success in the Democratic primary for New York's 12th congressional district. Created in January 2026, this PAC spent nearly \$11 million, coming exclusively from Bloomberg, in support of Lasher before being dissolved in July. The fact that Lasher is a former aide of Bloomberg completes the picture of an arrangement between friends, without any law being formally broken. On the other hand, the system rests on obvious hypocrisy. Claiming that Super PACs are independent in all circumstances is a fool's game whose limits have been exposed time and again. Who can seriously believe that MAGA Inc., whose war chest exceeds \$400 million⁹⁹ and whose head is none other than James Blair¹⁰⁰, the former White House deputy chief of staff for political affairs, has no link with Trump? No sophisticated scheme is needed: Trump has only to declare publicly his support for a given candidate for funds to flow in that candidate's favour. Beyond this common-sense suspicion, far more compelling evidence reveals some frankly dubious cases. Most recently, ProPublica¹⁰¹ revealed that Scott Reed, the head of the Super PAC supporting Susan Collins, had asked the executives of Navatek, a defence company heavily dependent on federal contracts, for \$500,000. Its CEO, Martin Kao, paid him a first instalment of \$150,000 through a shell company after making sure that the senator would know the true origin of the funds and would in return support the award of \$32 million to his company. Informed of the arrangement, Reed simply replied: 'Very smart'. Seven days after the cheque was cashed, one of his subordinates asked for Kao's number, explaining that Collins wished to thank him personally. A few weeks later, Kao triumphantly told his associates that the senator would support the hoped-for \$32 million, and

⁹⁸ Federal Election Commission, 'Stand for New York PAC: Committee Overview', accessed 26 September 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/data/committee/C00936591/>

⁹⁹ Federal Election Commission, 'MAGA Inc.: Committee Overview', accessed 27 September 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/data/committee/C00892471/>

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Beaumont, 'Trump Got the Senate Candidates He Wanted. How Much Will He Spend to Help Them?', Associated Press, 3 July 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-maga-paxton-cornyn-senate-e31ca3b1c7ad048617f5d73ff54aa8b0>

¹⁰¹ William Turton, Avi Asher-Schapiro, Molly Redden and Kirsten Berg, 'The FBI Anti-Corruption Squad Was Circling Susan Collins, Until Trump Got in the Way', ProPublica, 22 September 2026, <https://www.propublica.org/article/fbi-susan-collins-navatek-campaign-donations-investigation>

ProPublica was able to establish that at least \$10 million was indeed included by the Senate in the 2020 budget. Admittedly, Collins denies any collusion, no member of her entourage has been charged, and Kao, since convicted of illegal contributions and PPP loan fraud, was hoping to obtain a reduced sentence. The fact remains that FBI agents checked his account against hundreds of thousands of documents before requesting a broader investigation into possible corruption. Trump's return and the purge of the unit handling the case cut their investigation short before the courts could shed full light on the affair. Taken separately, each of these elements could still be debated; taken together, they form a body of evidence that is hard to dismiss. The wall supposed to separate the senator, her Super PAC and her donors looks here more like a curtain, behind which everyone seems to know who pays, what they expect and who must be informed. The FBI says it ultimately found nothing implicating the senator, who denies any wrongdoing. This kind of conduct further weakens the country's political system by giving the strong impression that a few individuals secure the favours of powerful elected officials at the expense of the American people.

Above all, this concentration of money currently benefits Republicans to a large extent, since 16 of the country's 20 richest donors have lined up behind the GOP¹⁰², an imbalance that is untenable in the long run and risks tipping into oligarchy. Worse still, it is even possible to make secret contributions, which further increases the risk of corruption by making investigations difficult. The *Government Accountability Office*¹⁰³ points out that it is sometimes impossible to trace the origin of funds, since they pass through a myriad of shell companies that conceal the identity of the ultimate owner. This partly explains why the FEC opened only 23 proceedings between 2010 and 2017, while the average investigation takes more than a year. To the bitter taste of bought politicians is thus added the sulphurous whiff of impunity, a cocktail that can only poison American democracy in the long run. This is why Republican and Democratic officials alike intend to tackle the problem at its root, although they remain a minority for now.

¹⁰² Ian Hodgson, Alex Rogers, Eva Xiao and Michael Taffe, 'US Billionaires Line Up to Bankroll Republicans' Election Push', Financial Times, 16 September 2026, <https://www.ft.com/content/2285c111-b103-4b04-96c7-fe26a3c04c3e?syn-25a6b1a6=1>

¹⁰³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, Campaign Finance: Federal Framework, Agency Roles and Responsibilities, and Perspectives, GAO-20-66R, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-66r.pdf>

As a final blow against the country's institutions, polarisation has reached a critical threshold that is undermining national cohesion. On the one hand, political leaders are less and less inclined to work together in the national interest. According to a count by the *Pew Research Center*¹⁰⁴, the number of moderate members sitting in Congress has collapsed from more than 160 in the early 1970s to around two dozen today. In practical terms, only a handful of legislators are still willing to reach across the aisle, which partly explains why the 118th Congress passed only 274 laws¹⁰⁵, one of the lowest totals in decades. Mechanically, unresolved problems keep piling up while the states and the judiciary step in to fill the void, at the risk of making public policy incoherent or even tainting it with illegitimacy. On the other hand, and beyond the party grandees, the general population is also afflicted by the ills of division. A third of the country still believes that Joe Biden's victory in 2020 was fraudulent¹⁰⁶, a figure repeated ad nauseam but too telling to ignore. Americans no longer see those with whom they disagree as opponents but as enemies to be destroyed, to whom absolutely nothing can be conceded, which is why the share of Americans holding a very unfavourable view of the opposing party has tripled since the 1990s¹⁰⁷. As a result, political violence is taking on terrifying proportions while a climate of widespread suspicion sets in. In this context, the Capitol Police¹⁰⁸ opened nearly 15,000 investigations into threats against elected officials in 2025, compared with only 9,500 the previous year. Taken together, these elements point to a country whose inhabitants now live face to face rather than side by side. Yet the purpose of democracy is not to create consensus but to manage dissent peacefully. Clearly, America is today almost incapable of doing so.

To top it all, the federal government, in the person of President Trump, is seeking to encroach on the prerogatives of the states by taking control of the organisation of elections. This interventionism is unprecedented because, while

¹⁰⁴ Drew DeSilver, 'The Polarization in Today's Congress Has Roots That Go Back Decades', Pew Research Center, 10 March 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/03/10/the-polarization-in-todays-congress-has-roots-that-go-back-decades/>

¹⁰⁵ Philip Wallach, *The Woebegone 118th Congress* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, February 2025), <https://www.understandingcongress.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Philip-Wallach-The-Woebegone-118th-Congress-02-2025.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ Monmouth University Polling Institute, 'Most Say Fundamental Rights Under Threat', 20 June 2023, https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_062023/

¹⁰⁷ Pew Research Center, 'As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration With the Two-Party System', 9 August 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/08/09/as-partisan-hostility-grows-signs-of-frustration-with-the-two-party-system/>

¹⁰⁸ United States Capitol Police, 'USCP Threat Assessment Cases for 2025', press release, 27 January 2026, <https://www.uscp.gov/media-center/press-releases/uscp-threat-assessment-cases-2025>

Congress can indeed regulate the conduct of elections, it is ultimately up to the states to organise them. Yet an executive order of 25 March 2025¹⁰⁹ sought to impose proof of citizenship, a national deadline for mail-in ballots and financial penalties against recalcitrant states, which is a clear violation of the separation of powers. Several judges therefore blocked the order, but it is nonetheless a sign of the GOP's desire to control elections. From there to fearing that Republicans might seek to undermine the integrity of the vote is but a short step, which is why these *midterms* are also being watched with great vigilance.

In sum, this analysis paints the picture of a vitiated, exhausted democracy that no longer knows how to manage dissent other than through cheating, invective, corruption and the silencing of dissenters. In a word, *gerrymandering* is to American democracy what metastasis is to cancer: the symptom of a deep-seated disease, the tip of the iceberg towards which Uncle Sam is hurtling at full speed.

C) AN ANXIOUS NATION

The themes that have driven the 2026 *midterms* campaign mirror the concerns running through the country and suggest that a declinist mood has taken hold of minds and hearts. Admittedly, most of them are familiar perennial topics, but the angle from which they are treated is striking.

The economy is emblematic of this. It overshadows every other concern. Asked in July 2026 by the *Pew Research Center*¹¹⁰ which issue they most wanted congressional candidates to address, 29% of registered voters spontaneously mentioned economic issues, notably the cost of living and purchasing power (15%), the general state of the economy (7%) and taxes (4%). These were followed by public ethics and institutional reform (9%), immigration (7%), health care (5%), then foreign policy and Donald Trump himself (4% each). The *midterms* will therefore above all be an opportunity for Americans to pass judgement on their

¹⁰⁹ Donald J. Trump, Executive Order No. 14248, 'Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections', Federal Register 90, No. 59 (28 March 2025): 14005-14010, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/eo-14248.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Andrew Daniller, Andy Cerda, Hannah Hartig and J. Baxter Oliphant, 'As the 2026 Midterms Approach, Economy Is Front and Center', Pew Research Center, 23 July 2026, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2026/07/23/as-the-2026-midterms-approach-economy-is-front-and-center/>

material situation. While it is not at all surprising that it tops the list of issues, the country's economic situation is a source of unprecedented anxiety. It lies at the heart of the sense of betrayal that Trump arouses, precisely because he was elected on the promise of a golden age whose record voters see as mixed. Admittedly, the United States has returned to growth, notably thanks to new technologies, while unemployment is stable at around 4%¹¹¹, but a cascade of weak signals suggests that the machine is seizing up, hence the impression, shared by part of the population, that Trump is no better than Biden in this area. For 2025, the Fed¹¹² notes that 16% of Americans did not pay all of their bills the previous month, that 26% went without medical care because of the cost and, above all, that 23% of renters were late with their rent at least once during the year, an indicator up six points since 2021. In this context, barely a third of Americans believe the country is heading in the right direction¹¹³, the lowest share since summer 2024, when the party in power was about to be ousted. A major caveat: 73% of adults nonetheless say they are doing at least okay financially, so it is the general state of the country that is causing concern. Claiming that the American economy is in tatters would therefore be excessive, but voters' perception of it is clearly capable of triggering a political shift.

A corollary of this economic gloom, the energy question is more pressing than ever. Here, the malaise is directly attributable to Trump's policies, since the war in Iran is the determining factor¹¹⁴. The GOP thus goes before voters answerable for a price per gallon of petrol¹¹⁵ that reached an average of \$4.36 in September, an increase of around \$1.19 (+37.6%) over one year. Households are being hit hard by this surge, since petrol alone accounted for more than a third of the monthly price increase recorded in August¹¹⁶, straining household budgets and affecting the economy as a whole. In some remote areas of Alaska, where the Republican

¹¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 'The Employment Situation: August 2026', press release No. USDL-26-1435, 4 September 2026, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/emp/sit.nr0.htm>

¹¹² Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 'Executive Summary', in Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2025, 19 May 2026, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2026-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2025-executive-summary.htm>

¹¹³ RealClearPolling, 'Direction of Country', accessed 27 September 2026, <https://www.realclearpolling.com/polls/state-of-the-union/direction-of-country>

¹¹⁴ Malcolm Moore and Sam Fleming, 'Five Ways the Iran Energy Shock Is Wrongfooting the World', Financial Times, 19 September 2026, <https://www.ft.com/content/09c2e11c-1632-42e3-8fc6-809468b7f87e?syn-25a6b1a6=1>

¹¹⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, 'Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update', accessed 29 September 2026, <https://www.eia.gov/petroleum/gasdiesel/>

¹¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 'Consumer Price Index: August 2026', press release No. USDL-26-1496, 11 September 2026, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/cpi_09112026.htm

senator is fighting for his political survival, a gallon of petrol has even sold for as much as \$26¹¹⁷, quite simply unsustainable amounts. Above all, it should be recalled that energy ought not to have been at the top of the country's concerns. The issue seemed settled, as energy prices in the United States had been falling since 2023, before Trump went and got bogged down in the Middle East. The international situation is therefore on the menu, in the sense that it is poisoning Americans' daily lives, whereas the Republican Party promised the opposite: a second conservative revolution putting America first rather than international affairs. In short, the Republican ranks are about to suffer a haemorrhage similar to the one Americans' wallets are suffering, especially as the situation is far from a one-off shock and seems set to last.

Finally, tariffs are putting the viability of many businesses at risk, first and foremost that of the soybean growers who abound in the Midwest, normally a solid stronghold of the MAGA movement. Despite alarmist predictions, the famous tariffs do not seem to have triggered the apocalypse, and their impact on consumer prices has been moderate all things considered. The *Congressional Budget Office*¹¹⁸, a body independent of the executive branch, estimated that they would raise the annual inflation rate by around 0.4 percentage points on average in 2025 and 2026. However, the retaliatory measures taken around the world are hurting American producers, the real victims of this policy, as the howls of protest heard from the farms of Iowa attest. A state that voted for Trump by more than 10 points barely two years ago, Iowa has suddenly become competitive as outlets for soybean exports have dried up. The equation is brutal: US soybean exports to China collapsed from 26.8 million tonnes in 2024 to 7.2 million in 2025, a 73% drop in one year¹¹⁹. In value terms, they fell from \$12.6 billion to \$3.1 billion. This gaping hole represents lost income for the farmers concerned, which is why Washington had released \$23 billion in aid in 2018 and 2019¹²⁰, during the first wave of tariffs launched by Trump in his previous term. While it is

¹¹⁷ Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs, Alaska Fuel Price Report: Summer 2026, 28 August 2026, <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/4/pub/Summer%202026%20Alaska%20Fuel%20Price%20Report.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Congressional Budget Office, Budgetary and Economic Effects of Increases in Tariffs Implemented Between January 6 and May 13, 2025, 4 June 2025, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61389>

¹¹⁹ Sharon Li, 'Fact Check: Are U.S. Soybeans Being Exported to China in Record Numbers?', EconoFact, 27 July 2026, <https://econoFact.org/factbrief/fact-check-are-u-s-soybeans-being-exported-to-china-in-record-numbers>

¹²⁰ Government Accountability Office, USDA Market Facilitation Program: Oversight of Future Supplemental Assistance to Farmers Could Be Improved, GAO-22-104259, January 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104259.pdf>

hazardous for now to try to quantify the scale of the damage, it is a safe bet that it will be at least equivalent to that of previous attempts. Beyond the tariff issue, Trump is on the verge of bringing down the country's entire agricultural edifice, which is why the *Financial Times* goes so far as to describe the end of American hegemony in this field¹²¹. Politically, the British daily stresses the risk this decline poses for the GOP, since the party depends heavily on rural voters. Without going so far as to see it as the beginnings of a peasants' revolt, these concerns will clearly be expressed at the ballot box, probably in the form of a sanction.

In the same vein, immigration is an important, if secondary, issue in this campaign. Admittedly, only 7% of voters make it the main determinant of their vote, but 38% of Americans consider illegal immigration a major problem that the authorities must tackle. A priority for 20% of Republicans compared with only 7% of Democrats, it is an issue that has managed to galvanise the GOP's most solid base. However, this asymmetry seems to work against the president's party in this election. On the one hand, Trump's good record in this area, with apprehensions at the southwest border reduced to around 9,000 in August 2026 against nearly 250,000 at the peak of the crisis in December 2023¹²², means it is no longer an emergency. On the other hand, the debate has now shifted to the domestic front, as the havoc wreaked by ICE has continued to shock the American public. According to a count by Human Rights Watch, 52 people died¹²³ in ICE custody in the first 500 days of Trump's term, while the mortality rate in detention increased by 140% during the first year. Warrantless arrests, the detention of people with no criminal record and restrictions on legal immigration explain why the election is no longer just about the need to control entry, which is widely accepted, but about the scope and methods of the deportation campaign. This is why 54% of registered voters disapproved of the Trump administration's handling of immigration in April 2026¹²⁴. What was a Republican

¹²¹ Susannah Savage and Michael Pooler, 'The Fall of America's Farm Superpower', *Financial Times*, 21 July 2026, <https://www.ft.com/content/8aa89209-dc0b-4678-9b6a-01029398b304?syn-25a6b1a6=1>

¹²² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 'Trump Administration Delivers 16 Straight Months of Zero Releases at the Border', press release, 16 September 2026, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/national-media-release/trump-administration-delivers-16-straight-months-zero-releases>

¹²³ Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, *Dying in Detention: Rising Deaths in an Expanding US Immigration Detention System*, 25 June 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2026/06/25/dying-in-detention/rising-deaths-in-an-expanding-us-immigration-detention-system>

¹²⁴ Joseph Copeland and Alexandra Cahn, 'About Half of Americans Continue to Say Trump Administration Is Doing "Too Much" on Deportations', Pew Research Center, 4 May 2026, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/05/04/about-half-of-americans-continue-to-say-trump-administration-is-doing-too-much-on-deportations/>

advantage has thus quickly become a vulnerability that Democrats are not failing to exploit.

In Donald Trump's second term, public ethics and the integrity of elected officials are also an issue. Members of Congress who take up leadership positions achieve stock market returns up to 47 points a year higher than those of their peers¹²⁵, while there is no shortage of corruption cases, as shown by the sentencing of former Senator Bob Menendez to 11 years in prison in 2025 for selling his services¹²⁶. In this context, citizen initiatives are multiplying to force elected officials to stop holding stocks and to counter the influence of PACs, such as the *Political Integrity Project*¹²⁷, which made a name for itself on Instagram before spreading to the upper echelons of Washington, so much so that 11 elected officials and 263 candidates have signed its *Political Integrity pledge*. It should nonetheless be noted that insider trading is not limited to Republican officials. The former Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Democrat Nancy Pelosi, has been accused by her opponents of insider trading with her family. Specifically, Republicans accuse Pelosi of sharing information she has access to as a member of Congress with her family, to give them an advantage in stock trading. From 2022 to 2025, Pelosi reported \$56.9 million in transactions. The Pelosi family has made so much money on the stock market that traders have created trackers of their investments: the *Pelosi Tracker*¹²⁸. In sum, Americans are fed up with arrangements worthy of the worst banana republics and intend to restore the integrity of their elected officials, although the task is far from easy.

More a time bomb than a salient issue, health care is nonetheless making its way into the debate. This is a direct consequence of the *One Big Beautiful Bill* passed in 2025: the gains of Obamacare have never been so fragile. According to the Congressional Budget Office¹²⁹, 10 million more people will be without health

¹²⁵ Shang-Jin Wei and Yifan Zhou, "Captain Gains" on Capitol Hill', NBER Working Paper No. 34524 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2025), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w34524/w34524.pdf

¹²⁶ U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, 'Former U.S. Senator Robert Menendez Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison for Bribery, Foreign Agent, and Obstruction Offenses', press release No. 25-023, 29 January 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-us-senator-robert-menendez-sentenced-11-years-prison-bribery-foreign-agent-and>

¹²⁷ Political Integrity Project, 'Join the Movement', accessed 29 September 2026, <https://politicalintegrity.us>

¹²⁸ Annie Karni. Pelosi Resisted Stock-Trading Ban as Wealth Grew, Fueling Suspicion. New York Times. 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/15/us/politics/pelosi-stock-trading-ban.html>

¹²⁹ Congressional Research Service, Health Provisions in P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 Reconciliation Law, report No. R48633, 18 August 2025, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R48633/R48633.2.pdf

insurance by 2034, while federal health spending is expected to fall by \$1.1 trillion over ten years. Once again, the GOP is hitting its most loyal voters, since it is the remote areas that will be the first to suffer, at a time when more than 700 rural hospitals were already at risk of closure in the medium term¹³⁰. Americans are not yet at the point where astronomical medical bills would push them to overturn the table, but the issue is on people's minds.

Late arrivals at the party, AI and data centres are now at the centre of the game. This polarisation is playing out on several fronts. First, data centres weigh far too heavily on overall electricity consumption to be ignored. By 2030, they could account for up to 9% of the country's electricity consumption¹³¹, while conglomerates are emerging to meet this demand without this reduction in competition necessarily being in the taxpayer's interest, as with the proposed merger between NextEra and Dominion, announced in May 2026, which would cover 10 million customers¹³². It is therefore hardly surprising that pressure is mounting to impose on AI companies a burden commensurate with their appetite, as shown by Democratic Senator Adam Schiff's proposal to make the data centres concerned pay the full cost of their grid connection¹³³. Next, the issue came to the fore when Trump chose to make it a federal priority. As alarming warnings multiply, he has chosen to double down on optimism by maintaining that the government would not intervene to slow the development of AI¹³⁴, notably for fear of leaving the field open to China. Nature abhorring a vacuum, the Democrats have seized on the issue to set themselves up as champions of tighter control of AI, in response to the apocalyptic fears it seems to arouse. AI is thus one of those divisive issues that fuel a campaign because they stage a fierce confrontation, in this case between a techno-optimist class and a mass of people who fear being left behind, a confrontation that will reach maturity in the 2028 presidential election.

¹³⁰ Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, Rural Hospitals at Risk of Closing, July 2026, https://ruralhospitals.chqpr.org/downloads/Rural_Hospitals_at_Risk_of_Closing.pdf

¹³¹ Sarah J. Smith et al., United States Data Center Energy Usage Report: 2025 Update, report No. LBNL-2001758 (Berkeley, CA: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, June 2026), <https://eta.lbl.gov/publications/united-states-data-center-energy-2025>

¹³² James Fontanella-Khan and Oliver Barnes, 'NextEra Strikes Megadeal with Dominion to Create \$420bn US Utility', Financial Times, 18 May 2026, <https://www.ft.com/content/a17f615a-cf05-4079-92a8-a8ab6370ae98?syn-25a6b1a6=1>

¹³³ Office of U.S. Senator Adam Schiff, 'Sen. Schiff Unveils Major Legislation to Ensure Fair and Affordable Energy Costs for Americans Amid Data Center Buildouts', press release, 18 May 2026, <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/news/press-releases/news-sen-schiff-unveils-major-legislation-to-ensure-fair-and-affordable-energy-costs-for-americans-amid-data-center-buildouts/>

¹³⁴ Donald J. Trump, Executive Order No. 14318, 'Accelerating Federal Permitting of Data Center Infrastructure', 23 July 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/accelerating-federal-permitting-of-data-center-infrastructure/?query=11-page=75>

Ultimately, these *midterms* are being fought over concrete issues, as close as possible to the everyday concerns of the American people, and leave little room for the cultural issues that dominated barely ten years ago.

III) ELECTIONS AND THE FORCES AT PLAY

A) THE KEY STATES

On 3 November, Americans will therefore vote in two elections and, for those living in one of the 36 states holding gubernatorial races, in three. Each of these contests matters in its own right. The Senate and House of Representatives elections will determine how strong a legislative counterweight the executive faces. In concrete terms, if the Republican Party keeps its majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Trump administration will be able to roll out its political agenda for another two years and Donald Trump will confirm his standing as the most powerful figure in American politics. If, however, the Democratic Party wins a majority in one or both chambers, a balance of power will take hold and this legislative counterweight will hamper the implementation of the MAGA agenda until 2028. The Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Hakeem Jeffries, has already stated that in the event of a Democratic victory there would be immediate investigations into corruption in the Trump administration¹³⁵. As we explained earlier, the US Senate holds legislative power (passing laws, amending the federal budget), powers of appointment and ratification (confirming the president's nominations of Supreme Court justices, cabinet members, ambassadors, etc., as well as international treaties concluded by the president), judicial power (trying impeachment cases) and investigative power (the well-known Senate committees). The House of Representatives also holds legislative power (passing and amending laws), oversight power (voting the federal budget and monitoring government agencies) and exclusive powers (originating legislation on the US federal budget, initiating *impeachment* proceedings, and electing the American president if no candidate wins an absolute majority).

¹³⁵ Paletta, D. Davis, M. (2026). Top Democrat Targets Supreme Court for Changes. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/top-democrat-targets-supreme-court-for-changes-60b455ad?mod=djemPolitics>

Finally, the gubernatorial elections in 36 American states will shape local politics, but also the balance of power between each governor and the White House. If the Republican Party wins governorships, the MAGA administration will be able to influence local politics, particularly with regard to control of the electoral process, since it is the governor who has the power to certify an election with his or her signature. Having as many Republican governors as possible will also allow Donald Trump to exert political influence. If, on the other hand, the Democratic Party prevails in the gubernatorial races, the MAGA administration will face counterweights at local level, as illustrated by the recurring showdowns between California governor Gavin Newsom and Donald Trump.

The key states for the 2026 midterm elections are therefore as follows: 1. The Senate: Maine, Texas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Iowa, Ohio (special election), Nebraska and Alaska, as well as North Carolina, Georgia and Kansas, where Le Millénaire's forecast nonetheless sees a clear favourite.

Republicans currently hold 53 seats in the Senate. For the Democrats to retake control of the chamber, they need to win seats in four states while holding on to their own most vulnerable ones. They would need to win at least 51 seats, because in an evenly split Senate (50-50), Vice President JD Vance would cast a vote in favour of the Republicans (*tie-breaking vote*). Five of the most closely fought Senate races are taking place in states that Trump won by double digits in 2024 (Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio and Texas). This means that to win the Senate, the Democrats must prevail on Republican turf¹³⁶. The Democratic Party's advantage is the tradition whereby the party in power loses seats in the midterm elections.

2. The House of Representatives: Iowa 1, Iowa 2, Wisconsin 3, Texas 23, Texas 34, Texas 35, Florida 9, Florida 22, North Carolina 1, North Carolina 11, Virginia 1, Pennsylvania 10, Pennsylvania 8, New York 17, Michigan 7, Michigan 4, Michigan 10, Arizona 1, Colorado 8.

¹³⁶ Taheri, M. (2026). Democrats Lead Republicans in 5 States Trump Won by Double Digits: Map. Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/democrats-lead-republicans-in-5-states-trump-won-by-double-digits-map-12382151>

As we explained earlier, in the 2026 *midterms* the Democrats are trying to win back a majority. They need only win three seats to retake the House of Representatives (218 seats are needed for a majority) and four to retake the Senate (51 seats are needed for a majority).¹³⁷ The Republicans, on the other hand, can lose no more than two seats if they are to keep their majority in the House, and three in the Senate thanks to the Vice President's casting vote.

3. The gubernatorial races: Wisconsin, Iowa, Oregon, Colorado, Ohio, Georgia, Nevada and Alaska.

The question that now arises is this: why are these states considered key, and not others? A multitude of factors explain this, and they vary according to the specific context of each state.

A first factor is linked to gerrymandering. As discussed above, since returning to power in January 2025, the Trump administration has waged a fierce redistricting battle in order to help Republican candidates win in the key states. In response, the Democrats have also redrawn electoral maps in the states where they are in power, as in California for example. American states normally redraw their electoral districts every ten years, since districts must have equal populations. However, some states have begun redistricting mid-decade (before the ten-year deadline) in order to give a political advantage to one party in particular¹³⁸. This redistricting has pushed districts once solidly anchored on the Republican or Democratic side towards the opposing camp. In Florida's 9th district, for example, the Democratic incumbent Darren Soto faces a difficult election because the Republicans initiated a redistricting. As a result, a historically heavily Puerto Rican and Democratic district now takes in populations that lean more Republican. Another example is North Carolina's 1st district, where Don Davis, the Democratic incumbent, must deal with the consequences of redistricting.

¹³⁷ Ballotpedia. (2026). United States Congress elections, 2026. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Congress_elections,_2026
Ballotpedia. (2026). United States Senate elections, 2026. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_elections,_2026

¹³⁸ Harvard Kennedy School. (2026). Explainer: What's happening with gerrymandering in the United States, and who will "win" the redistricting battle?. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/democracy-governance/explainer-whats-happening-gerrymandering-united>

A second factor concerns the profile of candidates who act as a deterrent. In Texas's 23rd district, the Republican Party candidate Brandon Herrera is a divisive figure in a state that is leaning increasingly Democratic. First, because of his professional background: he is a firearms entrepreneur and a content creator known as "*The AK Guy*". Second, because of videos containing references to Nazism and the Holocaust, as well as sexist remarks, which have resurfaced. In the same state but in the Senate race, it is the Republican candidate Ken Paxton who divides opinion, following a controversy over claims that he stole a pen worth \$1,000 in 2012¹³⁹. In North Carolina's 11th district, the Republican Party candidate Jennifer Balkcom also had to replace her predecessor, Chuck Edwards, who abruptly withdrew from the race in early August after an ethics report.

A third factor is linked to the demographic shifts that are tipping states. Although Michigan's Muslim population is estimated at only 2-3%, it is a significant factor in the rise of the Egyptian-American Democratic candidate Abdul El-Sayed¹⁴⁰. Pennsylvania's 7th district, for its part, illustrates the growing importance of the Hispanic population, estimated at 19 to 23% of the district's population; accordingly, the campaign of the Democrat Bob Brooks has teamed up with Voto Latino (an NGO that encourages Latinos to vote) to mobilise this electorate in his favour¹⁴¹. The same applies in Colorado's 8th district, where the Democratic Party hopes to flip this Republican district. The district is nearly 40% Hispanic, and the Democratic candidate Manny Rutinel is trying to win these voters over¹⁴².

A fourth parameter is the consequences of the policies pursued by Donald Trump. First, on the economic situation. As we explain above, Donald Trump was elected on the promise of ushering in a return to the *Golden Age of America*, yet when it comes to the reality of Americans' economic lives, this does not appear to be materialising. The high price of petrol is the indicator to watch, and

¹³⁹ Ken Paxton. (2026). Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/Ken_Paxton

¹⁴⁰ Schmad, R. (2026). El-Sayed's liberal agenda clashes with Muslim voters who back him anyway: 'Male version' of Ilhan Omar. Fox news. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/el-sayeds-liberal-agenda-clashes-muslim-voters-who-back-him-anyway-male-version-ilhan-omar>

¹⁴¹ NBC Philadelphia. Economy takes focus as candidates court Latino voters in Lehigh Valley. <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/economy-takes-focus-as-candidates-court-latino-voters-in-lehigh-valley/4457504/> Voto Latino. (2026). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1958261568911671>

¹⁴² Solomon, R. Kim, C. (2026). In Colorado's 8th Congressional District, Hispanic voters will decide one of the most competitive races in the U.S. CPR News. <https://www.cpr.org/2026/06/29/hispanic-voters-colorado-8th-congressional-district/>

in September 2026 it reached a national average of \$4.48 a gallon. Americans' economic difficulties are rebounding on the Republican Party, which is held responsible. In Iowa's 1st district, Mariannette Miller-Meeks's seat is under serious threat because of high petrol prices. The same goes for the Senate race in Iowa: although Ashley Hinson is backed by Donald Trump, she has publicly admitted that tariffs are increasing the economic pressure on Iowa families, and above all on farmers. In Kansas, the incumbent Republican senator Roger Marshall faces a difficult re-election. To set himself apart, he has publicly distanced himself from some of Donald Trump's threats, notably the threat to ban US sales by the Canadian aircraft manufacturer Bombardier, which employs more than 1,200 people in Kansas. **Next, the war in Iran launched by Donald Trump in 2026 is another source of discontent.** It has had a cataclysmic effect within the electoral coalition that brought Trump to power in 2024.¹⁴³ In Ohio, the Republican senator Jon Husted, appointed in January 2025 to succeed JD Vance and a candidate in the special election, has distanced himself from the Trump administration by stating that the war 'needs to come to an end as quickly as possible' in order to bring petrol prices down. **In addition, the construction of data centres and an ambitious AI policy are dividing local communities.** In New York's 17th district, Michael Lawler, the Republican candidate for re-election, faces the Democrat Cait Conley, who has made the construction of data centres a campaign argument against the Republican Party. In Michigan's 7th district, the Democrat William Lawrence, a former member of the Democratic Socialists of America, has also made it a campaign argument, saying he would work for a national moratorium on the construction of data centres.

Finally, the fight against the alleged corruption of the Trump administration is a mobilising argument. Democrats such as Rebecca Cooke, in Wisconsin's 3rd district, have made it a campaign theme.

A fifth factor is linked to the momentum of the Democratic Party. In Texas, James Talarico is the prime illustration, with his profile as a Democrat carrying a populist platform that mobilises both blue-collar workers and moderates¹⁴⁴. In

¹⁴³ Jon Husted for Senate. (2026). <https://www.jonhustedforsenate.com/news/> Politico. (2026). Sen. Jon Husted: Iran war 'needs to come to an end as quickly as possible'. <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/09/22/jon-husted-iran-war-quick-end-trump-01088614>

¹⁴⁴ James Talarico. (2026). Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/James_Talarico

Alaska, the Democratic Senate candidate Mary Peltola enjoys unrivalled standing among Indigenous communities thanks to her background as a former tribal judge. In North Carolina, it is the Democratic Senate candidate Roy Cooper who, with his profile as a former governor and a fixture of the political landscape since the 1980s, is making life difficult for the Republicans.

It should be stressed that the factors described above do not offer an exhaustive explanation of whether or not a state is key. They are rather indicators that help to understand why an election is close in one state and not in another.

B) THE STRATEGY WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY TO WIN THE 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

We touched on this in the introduction, but the Republican Party's momentum is far from ideal. On 3 November, the GOP will need the support of the MAGA base, but also of voters outside President Trump's base, many of whom are deeply unhappy with the economic situation and the war against Iran. Moreover, Trump's new vulnerability in 2026 appears to be white working-class voters. An analysis of polling data by the *New York Times* in June 2026 reveals a reversal among white working-class voters regarding the president's handling of the economy. The renowned American newspaper reports that 44% of white voters without a college degree said they were more inclined to vote for a Democratic congressional candidate in November 2026, compared with only 30% on the eve of the 2018 midterm elections¹⁴⁵. These midterm elections will also test the loyalty of the Hispanic electorate. These voters backed firmness on immigration and security, not ICE roughing people up. All the more so because it is not only the base that is cracking, but also the MAGA media machine, with right-wing influencers split between fervent defenders of the 47th president and the disillusioned¹⁴⁶. Despite these alarming signs for the MAGA administration, a paradox seems to be emerging in Donald Trump's second term. As we analysed in chapter I, Trump still holds an iron grip on his most loyal supporters, even as

¹⁴⁵ Cohn, N. (2026, 13 June). Trump's big new vulnerability in 2026: Blue-collar White voters. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/13/us/politics/trump-white-working-class-voters-economy.html>

¹⁴⁶ Thompson, S. A. (2026, 31 July). The MAGA media machine is fracturing. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/31/us/politics/trump-iran-economy-media-critics.html>

his overall popularity declines¹⁴⁷. The question we are therefore asking is this: what strategy will he adopt to mobilise his base and attract moderate voters?

A first strand of the Republican strategy to win the midterm elections is to portray the Democratic Party as crazy and its ranks as full of communist extremists. Since the end of the summer, we have noted that the Trump administration has stepped up its allusions to the danger of communism in the United States of America. On Wednesday 23 September 2026, for example, the Trump administration launched a new television campaign featuring President Donald Trump denouncing communism and socialism¹⁴⁸. In addition, the MAGA high command is taking advantage of the rise of the Democratic Party's left wing to warn against potential anti-capitalist and liberty-threatening measures should the Democrats win the elections. JD Vance, for instance, made the following remarks:

'The midterm elections present a very clear choice: crazy vs common sense. Democrats are fighting to open our borders, raise your taxes, and allow criminals to roam free on our streets. Republicans are fighting for an America we can all be proud of'¹⁴⁹.

A second part of the strategy is to constantly remind voters of Joe Biden's disastrous term. As *The Sacramento Bee* pointed out on 22 September 2026, Trump had mentioned Joe Biden nearly 900 times since January 2026 (an average of three times a day). This strategy aims to keep voters' attention on the past rather than on the current administration's low approval ratings¹⁵⁰.

The third strand of the Republican strategy is to mobilise the Republicans' substantial war chest, notably through super PACs. At the end of August, the super PAC MAGA Inc reported a total of \$415.8 million in cash. Donald Trump has

¹⁴⁷ Kilgore, E. (2026). Polls show Trump's MAGA base is all he has left. *Intelligencer*. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/polls-show-trumps-maga-base-is-all-he-has-left.html>

¹⁴⁸ Green, E. (2026). Trump administration launches pro-Trump TV ad ahead of midterms. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/09/24/trump-administration-midterm-tv-ads-01091499>

¹⁴⁹ Vance, J. D. [@JDVance]. (2026). The midterm elections present a very clear choice: crazy vs common sense. Democrats are fighting to open our borders, raise your taxes, and allow criminals to roam free on our streets. Republicans are fighting for an America we can all be proud of. [Post]. X. <https://x.com/jdvance/status/209566204626824850>

¹⁵⁰ Erickson, B., Holland, S., & Sullivan, A. (2026, 21 September). *Trump's favorite 2026 campaign target is Biden: nearly 900 mentions and counting*. *Sacramento Bee*. <https://www.sacbee.com/news/nation-world/world/article317320594.html>

said he wants to deploy \$400 to \$500 million from MAGA Inc. to help candidates across the country¹⁵¹. For his part, Elon Musk had already poured \$276 million into the *midterms* as of 12 October 2026 to help the Republicans keep their majority in the Senate¹⁵².

The fourth approach is to personalise the election around Donald Trump. Donald Trump is the conservative figure who managed to unite a heterogeneous coalition of voters (white workers, young people, Hispanics, etc.) around himself in order to retake the White House in 2024. He is therefore once again betting on himself for the 2026 midterm elections. At a rally in South Carolina, he said he wanted voters to act as if his name were on the ballot on 3 November.

A fifth strand of the Republican strategy is to occupy the media space on issues where the Republican Party is regarded as credible, notably immigration. Between January and June 2026, Republicans and the organisations supporting them had already aired nearly 300 ads nationwide referring to immigration¹⁵³. This strategy is all the more necessary because Trump needs to make voters forget certain measures seen as pointless and damaging to candidates' credibility, such as the executive order seeking to rename Lake Ontario 'Lake America'¹⁵⁴.

The sixth strand of the Republican strategy to win the midterm elections will have been to hold in Dallas the first midterm convention in the history of the Republican Party. The aim of the convention is to present a GOP united across candidates, leadership and donors. Vice President JD Vance, several of the main Republican leaders in the House of Representatives and the Senate, such as Mike Johnson, and the Senate Majority Leader, John Thune, all spoke. The aim was also to generate enthusiasm among supporters of the MAGA movement, who

¹⁵¹ Fountain, L. (2026). *Much of Trump's promised midterm election spending has yet to surface, new filing shows*. CNBC. <https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/21/trump-maga-midterm-spending-war-chest.html>

¹⁵² Leary, A., Linskey, A., & Mattioli, D. (2026, 13 August). *How Trump and Elon Musk rekindled their relationship*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/politics/trump-elon-musk-relationship-d4b57ce6> Schleifer, T. (2026). *Inside Elon Musk's \$276 Million Midterm Rescue Mission for Republicans*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/12/us/politics/elon-musk-midterms.html>

¹⁵³ Bustillo, X. (2026, 17 July). *Republican campaigns see immigration as a winning issue for midterms*. KPBS Public Media. <https://www.kpbs.org/news/politics/2026/07/17/republican-campaigns-see-immigration-as-a-winning-issue-for-midterms>

¹⁵⁴ Davis, M. (2026). *On the Shores of Trump's Lake America, It's Still Lake Ontario*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/on-the-shores-of-trumps-lake-america-its-still-lake-ontario-582333ab>

tend to turn out in presidential elections but less so in midterm elections. At this convention, Donald Trump also promised that if the Republicans won the House and the Senate, he would pay every adult citizen of the United States of America a \$5,000 dividend. It is a risky pledge, given that for 245 million Americans aged 18 and over, it would cost around \$1.2 trillion, for a federal budget of close to \$7 trillion.

Let us now turn to the Democratic Party's strategy.

C) THE DEMOCRATS IN BATTLE ORDER

Everything is on the table for the Democrats. After a good year of lethargy spent licking the wounds of the 2024 defeat, the party appears to be on a rather favourable campaign trajectory for the 2026 *midterms*.

Admittedly, speaking of 'the party' as a monolithic bloc is somewhat misleading. Unlike the Republican Party, uniformly united by the charismatic figure of Donald Trump, the Democrats are divided. From healthcare to immigration to their stance on Israel, nothing seems able to bring them into agreement. The trouble is that the times leave them no choice. Many of their voters are genuinely convinced that the occupant of the White House is seeking to seize power, and they therefore expect their elected representatives to show a minimum of fighting spirit and coordination. Despite their differences, each of the currents that coexist within the party is therefore ready to bury the hatchet in order to face the common adversary. It must be said that the GOP has helped them a great deal in this endeavour, since its missteps on the national stage make it a perfect scapegoat, so much so that even the reddest parts of the country are no longer out of reach. As a result, the handicap of ideological disunity between centrist Democrats and socialist Democrats has, in a sense, been temporarily offset by the unpopularity of the Trump administration, which gives the Democrats favourable campaign momentum.

To analyse a strategy, it is often useful to look at how it has changed over time. In 2026, the Democrats are wearing new clothes, which means they have put away

their old shirts. On the one hand, there is no longer any question of hammering home at every turn that Trump deprived American women of the right to abortion at federal level. That rhetoric did not survive 2024, quite simply because it did not win the Democrats any votes, even among an audience sensitive to these issues. Indeed, Arizona did enshrine the right to abortion in its Constitution with 62% of the vote, while Trump carried the state on the same ballot with 52%¹⁵⁵. The cause of reproductive rights has the wind in its sails, but it does not win elections. Gun control and the fight against racism, two other perennial themes of Democratic campaigns, have suffered the same fate. On the other hand, the party now owns up to its past mistakes, which suggests that its soul-searching has reached maturity. Seeing Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the epitome of the DSA, admit that ‘Woke 1.0 was crazy’¹⁵⁶ shows real political acumen. Without renouncing her left-wing convictions, she acknowledges the mistakes of her strategy. There is indeed no point in persisting with cultural progressivism when 66% of Americans want athletes to compete in categories matching their sex at birth¹⁵⁷, *a fortiori* when one is in opposition. Nor does this in any way prevent the party from continuing to champion ambitious public policies, notably on healthcare and the distribution of wealth. In reality, the Democrats clearly understood that their brand had become toxic, with only 34% favourable opinions in 2025¹⁵⁸, the lowest since 1992. From then on, all the Democrats had to do was change tack to find a second wind, and Trump gave them precisely that opportunity.

Despite their latent lack of cohesion, the Democrats have agreed on a handful of issues that are fuelling their campaign momentum. What these have in common is obvious: a refocusing on everyday concerns, first and foremost purchasing power. There are many reasons for the emergence of this theme (see II.C.), but the Democrats’ advantage on it is surprising. Thus, 35% of voters say they trust the Democrats more to contain the cost of living, against only 24% for

¹⁵⁵ Arizona Secretary of State, State of Arizona Official Canvass: 2024 General Election, November 5, 2024, 2 December 2024, https://apps.azsos.gov/election/2024/ge/canvass/20241105_GeneralCanvass_Signed.pdf

¹⁵⁶ Mike Zapler, ‘“Woke 1 Was Crazy”: AOC Seeks Do-Over on 2020-Era Rhetoric’, Axios, 12 August 2026, <https://www.axios.com/2026/08/12/aoc-democratic-socialists-2028>

¹⁵⁷ Pew Research Center, ‘Americans Have Grown More Supportive of Restrictions for Trans People in Recent Years’, 26 February 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/02/26/americans-have-grown-more-supportive-of-restrictions-for-trans-people-in-recent-years/>

¹⁵⁸ Jeffrey M. Jones, ‘Democrats Regain Advantage in Party Affiliation’, Gallup, 31 July 2025, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/692978/democrats-regain-advantage-party-affiliation.aspx>

the Republicans¹⁵⁹, even though inflation in the Biden years was precisely what propelled Trump to power. It must be said that the Democrats have conducted a skilful charm offensive with the public, issuing reassuring statement after reassuring statement. The *Battleground Issue Tracker*¹⁶⁰, published by the Cook Political Report, speaks volumes here. This year, candidates in races rated *Toss-up* or *Lean*, in other words those who need to broaden the Democrats' usual electoral base, have made purchasing power their main driver. To this are added, notably, healthcare and corruption, two other issues on which the Democrats appear more credible. Combined, these three themes account for more than 120,000 cumulative thematic mentions in the competitive districts alone. In another line of electoral rhetoric, the Democrats are promising a shower of impeachment proceedings against the most prominent members of the Trump administration. While the idea of a third impeachment of the American president has few takers, the prospect of going after Hegseth or Kennedy, two controversial figures, seems far more enticing. According to *The Atlantic*¹⁶¹, summoning them before a hostile House could produce a positive sequence for the Democrats while allowing them to paint these officials as guilty of gross incompetence, enough to motivate their base to go to the polls. In the same vein, the Democrats are capitalising on the war in Iran and positioning themselves as the party of peace, as shown by their revolt against the \$1 trillion defence bill in July¹⁶², at a time when 61% of Americans disapprove of the conflict¹⁶³. Finally, the offensive against data centres is gaining ground. Treating them as a sort of golden calf to be torn down at all costs, the Democrats openly adopt a populist tone on the subject. In Ohio, Sherrod Brown has thus made it the cornerstone of his message by calling his opponent Jon Husted 'the face of data centers', a line that largely explains the success of his campaign¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁹ AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, The September 2026 AP-NORC Center Poll, September 2026, <https://apnorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/September-2026-Topline-Parties.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ The Cook Political Report, 'Battleground Issue Tracker: Powered by AdImpact', accessed 3 October 2026, <https://www.cookpolitical.com/toolbox/battleground-issue-tracker/2026>

¹⁶¹ Matt Viser, 'Here's Who Democrats Want to Impeach Next', *The Atlantic*, 2 October 2026, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/10/democrats-trump-congress-investigations/688811/>

¹⁶² Lisa Mascaró, 'Senate Democrats Block \$1 Trillion Defense Bill in Protest over Iran War', *Associated Press*, 14 July 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/senate-defense-bill-iran-war-fe6f7d37197f8e04dbe12dcec390aad2>

¹⁶³ Steven Shepard and Andrew Daniller, 'Americans Broadly Disapprove of U.S. Military Action in Iran', *Pew Research Center*, 25 March 2026, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2026/03/25/americans-broadly-disapprove-of-u-s-military-action-in-iran/>

¹⁶⁴ Nicol Turner Lee and Darrell M. West, 'Why Data Centers Are a Top Issue in the 2026 Midterms', *Brookings Institution*, 25 August 2026, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-data-centers-are-a-top-issue-in-the-2026-midterms/>

Harder to substantiate, the Democrats are parading their moral superiority. The record of recent months is harsh for the Republicans, particularly in light of two personal trajectories: those of Graham Platner¹⁶⁵ and Max Miller¹⁶⁶. One is an oyster farmer running for the Senate in Maine; the other is a pure product of the Republican establishment seeking re-election in Ohio. The first withstood several scandals but was forced to throw in the towel when rape allegations came to light; the second is accused by his ex-wife, in court proceedings, of domestic violence that prosecutors did not pursue for lack of sufficient evidence, and a former partner has sought a restraining order against him, yet he has retreated into a besieged citadel and refuses to withdraw his candidacy. Both face serious allegations given the offices they aspire to, but they have not suffered an equivalent sanction. This is far from an isolated case, since the GOP has a growing number of scandal-hit candidates, with Mike Collins and Ken Paxton at the forefront, and this is not without electoral consequences. Indeed, a study of incumbent representatives involved in scandals between 1980 and 2010¹⁶⁷ showed that they underperformed by four points on average, which suggests that questionable integrity can indeed tip a close race. Accordingly, the Democrats' strategy is to capitalise on the rejection of *data centres*, the war in Iran, the economic situation and suspicions of corruption in the Trump administration to depict a country adrift in the hands of an oligarchic caste, and then to cast themselves as the last line of defence. All in all, this is classic, but the method has proved its effectiveness, and the shift away from the progressive fads of the 2020s can do no harm. Thus, in the 2026 *midterms*, the Democratic Party's momentum owes more to the unpopularity of the Trump administration than to support for an ideological project it carries or for the Democratic Party itself.

To complement this national enthusiasm, the Democrats are deploying solid tactics. On the financial side, they are managing to raise astronomical sums to take the fight to the key states, led by Texas, Georgia and North Carolina. Of the 10 Senate candidates who have raised the most money, eight are Democrats,

¹⁶⁵ Jessica Piper and Adam Wren, 'Exclusive: Woman Who Dated Graham Platner Says He Sexually Assaulted Her', Politico, 6 July 2026, <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/07/06/graham-platner-sexual-assault-allegation-00987737>

¹⁶⁶ Ken Thomas and Philip Wegmann, 'Domestic Abuse Allegations Shake Ohio Congressman's Re-Election Bid', The Wall Street Journal, 2 August 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/domestic-abuse-allegations-shake-ohio-congressmans-re-election-bid-7a4653a5>

¹⁶⁷ Denise-Marie Ordway, 'More News Coverage, More Money: How Donors Respond to Sex Scandals among Congress Members', The Journalist's Resource, 12 June 2019, <https://journalistsresource.org/politics-and-government/congress-scandal-election-research/>

with a combined total of \$347 million¹⁶⁸. As for the risk of being outflanked on the left, the Democrats seem to have struck a balance between the necessary activist revolt and a disorder that could weaken their electoral structure. The case of Francesca Hong is emblematic here¹⁶⁹. A candidate in the Democratic primary for governor, she had the poor taste to declare that she did not really like Thanksgiving, a surprising way to win over the residents of a state that voted for Trump in 2024. Before she had time to understand what was happening to her, the outgoing governor, who had promised not to intervene and who nonetheless leans left, deployed his political machine to bring back David Crowley, who had dropped out a few weeks earlier, mobilise his activist network and make sure that the darlings of the left, notably Bernie Sanders, would not come to her rescue. The result is spectacular: back in the race at the last minute, Crowley won with 39.8% of the vote, 0.4 points ahead of Hong (39.4%). In short, the leading figures of the American left have clearly understood that renewing New York's political class by bringing progressive figures to the fore and sending radicals into Republican territory are two very different things; the Democratic *Tea Party* stops where its electoral viability ends. Above all, the Democrats have made a string of high-quality recruitments. Three of their candidates have already won an election in the state they intend to flip, which means they enjoy the name recognition and activist structure needed to prevail, increasing their chances of victory accordingly. In North Carolina, Roy Cooper has already posted North Korean-style scores, with 100% of the vote in 2012¹⁷⁰ (the GOP had not even bothered to field an opponent, so hopeless was the contest), and he won twice while Trump was carrying the state¹⁷¹. The same logic applies to Sherrod Brown, a true steamroller who has served as Ohio Secretary of State, representative and then senator¹⁷². Mary Peltola completes this trio, although her career is less impressive since she has only won Alaska twice, in 2022¹⁷³, helped notably by a

¹⁶⁸ Federal Election Commission, 'Raising: By the Numbers', accessed 3 October 2026, <https://www.fec.gov/data/raising-bythenumber/s/>

¹⁶⁹ Kellen Browning and Julie Bosman, 'Hong's Defeat in Wisconsin Shows the Limits of the Progressive Movement', The New York Times, 12 August 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/12/us/elections/david-crowley-wisconsin-governors-primary.html>

¹⁷⁰ North Carolina State Board of Elections, '11/06/2012 Official General Election Results: Statewide: Council of State', accessed 3 October 2026, https://er.ncsbe.gov/?contest=0&county_id=0&election_dt=11%2F06%2F2012&office=COS

¹⁷¹ North Carolina State Board of Elections, 'US President and NC Governor', accessed 3 October 2026, <https://www.ncsbe.gov/results-data/election-results/us-president-and-nc-governor>

¹⁷² Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 'Brown, Sherrod (1952-)', accessed 3 October 2026, <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/B000944>

¹⁷³ Alaska Division of Elections, State of Alaska 2022 General Election: Election Summary Report (Official Results), 30 November 2022, <https://www.elections.alaska.gov/results/22GENR/ElectionSummaryReportRPT.pdf>

fratricidal three-way race among Republicans. The fact remains that these strong local dynamics are a decisive factor in the election. In a word, the Democrats are falling short neither on form nor on substance; their strategy and their tactics have held up well so far.

It is tempting to see the myriad factions that coexist within the Democratic Party as a vulnerability. While the MAGA line dominates the Republican Party, the ideological differences between the centrist and socialist wings of the Democratic Party would seem to work against it. In a presidential year, coherence and clarity of message do indeed come first, but the *midterms* are a sum of more than 500 elections, which is why adapting the rhetoric to each electorate is rather a strength. In reality, the Democratic Party has never been so threatening, because it has never embraced its diversity so fully. It needs pastors who are sticklers for religion to win over the depths of Kansas, teachers who are uncompromising on immigration to hope to flip Texas, independent mechanics whose populism would make the New York elite blanch to needle the GOP in Nebraska, old party grandees in office for 40 years to keep delivering wealthy Rhode Island, an Alaska Native (Yupik) woman who publicly turns down Kamala Harris's support to win back Alaska, a sharp-tongued academic to take the fight to Montana, and a former Paralympic athlete to play basketball with Obama in Iowa; the American political structure is such that a party cannot shut itself away in its own comfortable little lane. This spread brings several advantages. Obviously, it attracts media attention, which makes it possible to regain control of the overall narrative and to cut short the caricatures that portray the Democrats as an urban party speaking only to the winners of globalisation. More importantly still, it forces the GOP to play defence on its ancestral lands. Thus the *Senate Leadership Fund*, the Republicans' main Senate super PAC, has suspended the \$18 million of spending planned in North Carolina and reserved nearly \$8.2 million of advertising in Kansas¹⁷⁴, resources that will not be devoted to defending a seat in a *swing state* won by Trump. That is the real value of this tactic: pushing the GOP to spread itself thin. It remains to be ensured that this diversity does not descend into cacophony, at the risk of losing the next presidential election.

¹⁷⁴ Siobhan Hughes and Marianne LeVine, 'Deep-Pocketed GOP Group Exits North Carolina Senate Race', The Wall Street Journal, 2 October 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/deep-pocketed-gop-group-exits-north-carolina-senate-race-7d1cd8f3>

In 2005, the chairman of the *Democratic National Committee*, Howard Dean, urged the Democrats to adopt a 50-state strategy¹⁷⁵. His ambition at the time was to fight the Republicans in every corner of the country so as not to cede them a single village and, by extension, to maximise the party's representativeness. More than 20 years later, his call is finally finding the echo it deserves; taking the fight everywhere and using every means available is, in short, the Democrats' strategy for these midterms. It is something of a blue cascade pouring across the country; it remains to be seen whether it will turn into a tidal wave.

CONCLUSION

For now, two hypotheses are credible as to the outcome of the *midterms*. In the first, the rejection of Trump is confirmed, the blue wave does materialise and the Democrats win the Senate and the House of Representatives. Le Millénaire's forecasting model, however, makes an intermediate scenario more likely: as of 20 October 2026, it gives the Democrats a 72.8% chance of winning the House, but only 30.2% for the Senate. In the second, the polls were wrong, Democratic momentum was overestimated, the MAGA base and moderates turn out and the Republican Party wins the elections. This second scenario would in a sense be a reverse replay of the 2022 midterms, when the red wave never materialised because of the last-minute mobilisation of the Democratic electorate. A detailed analysis of the electoral hypotheses will be the subject of a second note, in which we will build our analyses using Le Millénaire's forecasting model. For now, the only certainty is that, whatever the result, it will shape the strategy each party adopts for the 2028 presidential election.

To say that America is at a crossroads would be an exaggeration; to consider these *midterms* like any others would be a failure of judgement. These elections are clearly an ordeal for the American nation. An ordeal, of course, because these are dark times and there is no shortage of reasons for concern; it is an anxious nation that goes to the polls. But an ordeal above all because these elections will be gruelling. Analysing this election from France is necessary in order to fully

¹⁷⁵ Democratic National Committee, 'DNC and ASDC Announces "Organize Everywhere, Win Anywhere" Strategy: Largest-Ever Monthly DNC Investment into Democratic State and Territory Parties', press release, 24 April 2025, <https://democrats.org/dnc-and-asdc-announces-organize-everywhere-win-anywhere-strategy-largest-ever-monthly-dnc-investment-into-democratic-state-and-territory-parties/>

understand the tectonic forces at work there, which are weakening national cohesion. For the 2026 *midterms* are the next episode in a battle for America's identity. On one side, a Trumpist America seeking to pursue its second conservative revolution; on the other, a Democratic America oscillating between centrism and socialism under the influence of a growing left wing.

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