

2018
MIDTERM
ELECTIONS



PREVIEW

NATIONAL

Congressional

The turbulent U.S. mid-term campaign season is entering the home stretch. Election Day is fast approaching as we barrel on toward November 6. Early voting has gone into full swing in most states and is projected to reach exceptional levels this election season.

The playing field in the House continues to expand as voters who had previously been on the sidelines are now entering the playing field. Political parties and independent groups are pouring large sums of money into competitive races.

With Republicans currently holding control of both chambers of Congress, the question is whether Democrats can win enough seats to take back legislative power. Such an outcome would have immediate and far-reaching implications for the President's ability to advance his political agenda and Democratic oversight of his administration. A Democratic victory in either chamber would give the party the power to open investigations into various aspects of his administration.

The "mid-term wave" - a sweeping electoral triumph that reshapes the national political map - is a recurring phenomenon in US politics. Whether such a wave will materialize in 2018 is a question that has kept journalists and political pundits talking since last spring.

Today, the Republican Party is near a modern-day high in seats in the House of Representatives, with a 241-to-194 seat majority, so it could be poised for a tumble. They must defend 25 seats where Trump finished behind Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The Senate terrain may be friendlier for Republicans, with Democrats defending 10 seats in states Trump won in 2016, but this year's political atmosphere is such that an electoral storm could be brewing.

Democrats appear to have the political wind at their back, but intervening events - like the fight over confirming Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, the migrant caravan, or the violence in Pittsburgh could reverberate through the midterm elections and shake things up. While that wind may not be of hurricane force, it is certainly in the face of Republicans.

Midterm elections are almost never good for the president's party. They are generally considered to be a referendum on the incumbent. When presidents are unpopular, voters take out their frustration on their party in Congress. If the chief executive is riding high, the party is rewarded (or, at least, not overly rebuked).

Donald Trump's approval ratings have been remarkably stable, given the tumult of his first year-and-a-half in office. He didn't have much of a "honeymoon" period following his election, so there haven't been many sharp changes. At the end of August, the president stood at 40% approval. After dipping mid-month, at the end of September the number was up to 42% - approval ratings similar to those of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama at this point in their presidencies. The Real Clear Politics average shows the President's approval rating as of October 25 at 44.4 percent. The trend is heading the right way for

Republicans and could help them in Senate races in red states and in red or “purplish-red” districts, but it would have to climb into previously uncharted territory to get out of the mid-term danger zone.

On average, first term incumbent Presidents normally lose an average of 23 seats in the first off-year election, but Democrats are facing an uphill battle this year in both chambers of Congress.

House

- All 435 seats are up for re-election
- Democrats need 24 seats to flip the House
- History suggests the GOP will struggle to maintain its majority
- Turnout is expected to be key

The Democrats have a much better chance of winning here. They need a net gain of 24 seats to win a majority. But in the last 50 years they've scored a net gain of that size only twice, in 1974 and in 2006. In the same period the Republicans have made a 24+ net gain only three times, but the most recent was in 2010, in the midterm elections of Obama's first term.

A consensus has developed among election watchers that the Democrats have already gained a solid advantage in enough districts to pick up at least a dozen seats. While some political seers envision an outcome where Republicans just barely maintain the House, many think the probability is that Democrats will win control of that chamber.

Senate

- 35 of 100 seats are up for re-election
- Democrats are defending 26 of the 35 seats
- Democrats need 2 seats to take the Senate
- Republicans have nine seats up for election and should have an easier time defending Senate majority

The Democrats face a steeper climb in the Senate because they must defend all 26 of their seats up for election and take two seats from the Republicans in order to win a majority. Several of the seats they are defending, such as in West Virginia, are in states where Trump won a large victory in the 2016 presidential race.

STATE

Thirty-six governorships and 87 legislative chambers are up for election and the stakes in the states could not be higher. Republicans have the most to lose at the state level, especially because they hold 26 of the 36 governorships up for grabs.

Republicans entered 2018 with a significant advantage after the 2010 midterms ushered in GOP control of statehouses from Arkansas to Wisconsin. But as this year's midterms approach, Democrats are hoping to ride anti-Trump sentiment in some states to big wins in key gubernatorial and state legislative races. Democrats are poised to gain 7-9 statehouses across the country, especially in the upper Midwest.

The policy implications are huge affecting everything from economics to health care. What's more the long-term control of state governments and Congress are at stake as whoever controls the statehouses will also control the next redistricting process.

MWFPA STATES

ILLINOIS

In addition to electing representatives in the U.S. House, Illinois voters will also choose a governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, comptroller and treasurer. State senators and representatives will also be elected.

U.S. Senate Illinois

The state's senators are Richard J. Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, both Democrats. There is no U.S. Senate election in Illinois this year.

U.S. House Illinois

Illinois has 18 House seats, 11 of which are held by Democrats and seven by Republicans. There are four seats that the Cook Political Report (one of the trusted standards in determining the state of play in House and Senate races) rates as competitive: the sixth, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth.

6th Congressional District

This district is one of the battlegrounds where the Democratic fight for control of the House will play out and, based on 2016 presidential performance, looks like Democrats' best pickup opportunity. Clinton carried the district by 7 points. The Cook Political Report has rated this race as leaning Democratic while other pundits have rated it a tossup.

Republican Peter Roskam, the incumbent, has easily taken the past six elections in the district. But Hillary Clinton also won here in 2016. Roskam's opponent, clean energy entrepreneur Sean Casten, has staunchly criticized Trump.

12th Congressional District

Incumbent Republican Mike Bost is considered the most threatened of Illinois' seven Republican representatives. He is being challenged by Democrat Brendan Kelly. Several recent polls ahead of the Nov. 6 election show Bost leading Kelly by one percentage point while other polls have shown Bost up by nine. Election prognosticators rate this race a tossup or tilting slightly to Bost. Quite likely this is the type of race where Democrats need to win for a majority in the House and would likely win in a Democratic wave.

The largely rural district went for Trump in 2016 by a margin of 14.8 points and Bost too won by more than 14 points. Still, Democrat Tammy Duckworth carried the district in her winning Senate bid in 2016. The Cook Political Report has this race as leaning Republican.

13th Congressional District

Illinois' 13th Congressional District covers a large swath of the central part of the state. U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis is among the Democrat's targets this election and he faces Springfield Democrat Betsy Dirksen Londrigan.

Trump won the 13th Congressional District by six percentage points in 2016 while Davis won a third term by 19 points. Still some pundits feel it's the kind of seat that could be problematic for Republicans in a blue wave environment. The Cook Political Report rates this one as leaning Republican.

14th Congressional District

Trump carried the 14th District by only 4 points, but this rural and suburban area north and west of Chicago has long had a Republican bent, though no longer by much. Republican Rep. Randy Hultgren, who has represented the 14th since 2011, is running against Democrat Lauren Underwood. If elected, Underwood, who is African-American, would be the first woman and first minority to represent the predominantly white district, which includes swaths of farmland and upscale subdivisions. The Cook Political Report rates this a tossup.

Governor

Republican Governor Bruce Rauner takes on billionaire businessman JB Pritzker. Rauner was elected 50-46 percent in 2014 over embattled Democratic Governor Pat Quinn. However, Rauner struggled in this year's GOP primary against state Rep. Jeanne Ives who embodied conservative criticism against the governor.

It's clear that Rauner has problems within the Republican base, a dynamic that a statewide GOP candidate can ill afford. In 2016, Republican Sen. Mark Kirk ran for re-election but got in trouble with grassroots Republicans by opposing Trump and lost to Democratic Rep. Tammy Duckworth 55-40 percent.

The Cook Political report rates this one as likely Democrat. The Real Clear Politics average of three polls shows a 15.7 point lead for Pritzker earlier in the campaign.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Pritzker (D)	Rauner (R)	Spread
RCP Average	6/9 - 9/29	--	--	43.7	28.0	Pritzker +15.7
The Simon Poll/SIU*	9/24 - 9/29	715 LV	3.7	49	27	Pritzker +22
NBC News/Marist*	8/12 - 8/16	734 RV	4.4	46	30	Pritzker +16
WeAskAmerica	6/9 - 6/11	600 LV	4.0	36	27	Pritzker +9

State Legislature

In the 2016 elections, the Democratic majority in the Illinois House decreased from 71-47 to 67-51. Republicans need to gain 10 seats in 2018 to take control of the chamber. Democrats need to gain four seats to have a three-fifths majority that can override gubernatorial vetoes.

A total of 39 seats out of the Senate's 59 are up for election in 2018. In 2016, the Democratic majority in the Illinois Senate decreased from 39-20 to 37-22. Republicans need to gain eight seats to take control of the chamber. Democrats need to hold at least 36 seats to maintain a three-fifths majority that can override gubernatorial vetoes. Of the 39 seats up in 2018, 21 are controlled by Democrats and 18 are controlled by Republicans.

However, with Rauner facing a rough reelection battle and talk of a blue wave -- this doesn't look like the year for Republicans to make significant gains in either chamber.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota has an open race for governor and both U.S. Senate seats are on the ballot. There are a handful of highly competitive U.S. House races, which could also play a critical role in the Democrats' push to win a House majority. Control of the State Legislature is also up for grabs on November 6 and all but one statewide constitutional office is open.

U.S. Senate Minnesota

In Minnesota's special election for U.S. Senate, incumbent Democratic Sen. Tina Smith is favored, but polling for this race has been much closer than for the 'regular' Senate election held by fellow Democrat Amy Klobuchar.

Smith was appointed to the Senate last year to replace Al Franken. She appears to be in a secure position to win her seat outright. As evidenced below, the Real Clear Politics four poll average shows Smith up by 9.5 percent – 48.3 to 38.8. Cook has this one as leaning toward the Democrats.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Smith (D)	Housley (R)	Spread
RCP Average	8/17 - 10/17	--	--	48.3	38.8	Smith +9.5
Star Tribune/Mason-Dixon*	10/15 - 10/17	800 LV	3.5	47	41	Smith +6
NBC News/Marist	9/30 - 10/4	637 LV	4.9	54	38	Smith +16
KSTP/SurveyUSA	9/6 - 9/8	574 LV	4.9	48	39	Smith +9
Suffolk*	8/17 - 8/20	500 LV	4.4	44	37	Smith +7

Senator Amy Klobuchar, a possible future presidential candidate, continues to lead over challenger Jim Newberger. The Real Clear Politics five poll average shows Klobuchar up 22.4 percent – 55.2 to 32.8. The Cook report places this one in the Democrats column.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Klobuchar (D)	Newberger (R)	Spread
RCP Average	8/8 - 10/17	--	--	55.2	32.8	Klobuchar +22.4
Star Tribune/Mason-Dixon*	10/15 - 10/17	800 LV	3.5	56	33	Klobuchar +23
NBC News/Marist	9/30 - 10/4	637 LV	4.9	63	33	Klobuchar +30
KSTP/SurveyUSA	9/6 - 9/8	574 LV	4.9	53	38	Klobuchar +15
Suffolk*	8/17 - 8/20	500 LV	4.4	54	34	Klobuchar +20
Emerson	8/8 - 8/11	500 LV	4.6	50	26	Klobuchar +24

U.S. House Minnesota

Minnesota Democrats hope to stop the GOP from flipping two of its seats (the 1st and 8th districts) in which an incumbent is not running. Both congressional seats are open by way of outgoing Reps. Tim Walz and Rick Nolan. Both districts went for Trump by 14 percentage points.

1st Congressional District

The race between Republican Jim Hagedorn and Democrat Dan Feehan, an Army combat veteran and former Department of Defense official, is expected to be one of the nation's most closely watched political contests of the midterm elections. The southern Minnesota district may be one of the more vulnerable Democratic seats in Congress, according to the Cook Political Report, which rates the race a toss-up. Incumbent U.S. Rep. Tim Walz left the seat to run for governor.

Hagedorn is making his third straight bid for the seat. He came within 3,000 votes of defeating Walz in 2016.

Tariffs have been an issue of concern during the campaign. Feehan says Congress needs to take a stronger stance on trade and restore the market for soybean and pork producers. Hagedorn is no fan of the tariffs, but he said the president's policy is a necessary correction to trade imbalances as long as it has been given time to work but is ultimately temporary.

Trump won the 1st District by a 14 point margin two years ago.

2nd Congressional District

Democrat Angie Craig is challenging GOP Rep. Jason Lewis. The former executive at a medical device company lost to the Republican representative by about 2 percentage points in 2016. Craig has both raised and spent more money than Lewis in the race so far. The Cook Political Report places this race in the leaning Democratic column.

3rd Congressional District

Incumbent GOP Rep. Erik Paulsen is taking on Democratic businessman Dean Phillips. Cook rates this race as leaning Democrat.

Paulsen is considered a moderate Republican who didn't support Trump in 2016. The Third Congressional District went for Hillary Clinton in 2016 but voted Paulsen in as well.

Polling is looking good for Phillips; two polls released in early/mid-September had him leading Paulsen by double digits. A SurveyUSA poll released in late September showed the race narrowing, with Phillips in a 5-point lead.

7th Congressional District

This congressional district is considered likely to vote with 14-term incumbent Democrat Collin Peterson, but Donald Trump won here by 31% in 2016, his largest margin of victory in any district that elected a Democrat to Congress. According to Cook though, this race is likely to go to the Democrats. Real Clear Politics ranks this race as leaning Democratic.

Republican Dave Hughes is again running against Peterson, which he did during a close 2016 race when the 7th District Democrat retained his seat with 52 percent of the vote to Hughes' 47 percent.

8th Congressional District

Another of the most vulnerable Democratic seats is Minnesota's 8th Congressional District in the northeast corner of state. Voters there have picked a candidate from the state's Democratic Party for decades. But Rep. Rick Nolan is leaving and Republicans see real opportunity with Pete Stauber, a retired police commander, former professional hockey player and county commissioner. No

battleground district swung more from Barack Obama to Donald Trump. Republicans have one of their best pick-up opportunities here. The Cook Political Report rates this race as leaning Republican.

Stauber's Democrat opponent, Joe Radinovich, is a 32-year-old former state representative, first elected to the Minnesota House at 26.

Governor

Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton is not seeking a 3rd term. While the race leans Democratic, it is no sure thing. Republican Jeff Johnson, a Hennepin County commissioner who is making his second attempt at running for governor, had gained ground with about two weeks until Election Day.

Tim Walz, the Democrat candidate represented southern Minnesota when he served in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Real Clear Politics average of four polls shows Walz ahead by 8.8 points. Similar polling has led the Republican Governors Association's to cancel its planned \$2.3 million expenditure on Johnson's behalf—in effect, writing off his chances of winning the election. However, a new Minneapolis Star-Tribune/MPR News Minnesota poll shows Walz holding a tight lead of 45 percent to 39 percent over Johnson with 4 percent of voters supporting minor party candidates and 12 percent undecided.

This has led some analysts to pronounce Johnson to be within striking distance of Walz. Cook categorizes this race as likely going to the Democrats.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Walz (D)	Johnson (R)	Spread
RCP Average	8/17 - 10/17	--	--	48.3	39.5	Walz +8.8
Star Tribune/Mason-Dixon	10/15 - 10/17	800 LV	3.5	45	39	Walz +6
NBC News/Marist	9/30 - 10/4	637 LV	4.9	55	38	Walz +17
KSTP/SurveyUSA	9/6 - 9/8	574 LV	4.9	47	40	Walz +7
Suffolk*	8/17 - 8/20	500 LV	4.4	46	41	Walz +5

State Legislature

The Senate is evenly split, 33-33, with one vacant seat created by Republican Michelle Fischbach's resignation to take the post of lieutenant governor. Prior to Fischbach's departure, Republicans controlled the Senate by one vote, 34-33. Democrats now have an unexpected chance to turn the Senate blue by flipping just one seat.

The special election created by Fischbach's departure in Senate District 13 is what puts the Senate in play (otherwise, there are no Senate elections this year — the next regular Senate elections are in 2020).

The Republican candidate for this Senate seat, Jeff Howe, is a three-term state representative. He's running against Democrat Joe Perske, a Stearns County commissioner and former mayor of Sartell. The race is taking place in the heart of Trump country: He beat Clinton here 64-30 in 2016.

Pundits feel the Democrats are in a good position to pick up seats in the Minnesota House of Representatives on Election Day, but face a steep climb to flip the chamber from Republican control.

Republicans have a 77-57 majority heading into the election. But a dozen of those seats are in suburban districts carried by Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Those seats, along with a handful of others that Donald Trump won by thin margins, are the Democrats' main targets. They need to pick up 11 seats to take control of the House, which they last held in 2013-14.

Meanwhile, the GOP is taking aim at seven House Democrats who were elected in districts that Trump won.

The bottom line: Democrats will have to unseat almost all the Republicans holding Clinton seats plus hold onto every one they've got now to take over.

WISCONSIN

The mid-term election in Wisconsin features races for the Governor's office, lieutenant governor and attorney general, as well as a U.S. Senate seat, the entire U.S. House delegation, half of the state Senate and the entire 99-seat State Assembly.

Four of Wisconsin's five Republican U.S. House members are running for re-election this year: Jim Sensenbrenner, Sean Duffy, Glenn Grothman and Mike Gallagher. The fifth, House Speaker Paul Ryan, has announced his retirement.

While the First Congressional District seat held by Ryan is considered in play, voters in each of Wisconsin's five GOP congressional districts voted for Republican Donald Trump for president in 2016, by anywhere from 10 to 20 points. The four GOP congressional incumbents up for re-election won their own races in 2016 by 20 to 37 points. However, there is some GOP concern with the 6th Congressional District in east-central Wisconsin where Grothman has struggled to raise funds for his campaign against a better financed opponent.

Democrats Mark Pocan, Ron Kind and Gwen Moore face no or minimal competition in this election.

U.S. Senate Wisconsin

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is one of 10 Senate Democrats facing re-election this year in a state Trump carried two years ago. Still, she appears relatively safe. The president won her state by less than a percentage point.

Baldwin is the last big GOP target in a state where Republicans now dominate the State Legislature, hold five of eight U.S. House seats, and have won the last three elections for governor and the most recent contests for U.S. Senate and president. She faces Leah Vukmir, a conservative state senator favored by the state's Republican establishment.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Baldwin (D)	Vukmir (R)	Spread
RCP Average	8/18 - 10/7	--	--	52.3	41.7	Baldwin +10.6
Marquette	10/3 - 10/7	799 LV	3.9	53	43	Baldwin +10
NBC News/Marist	9/30 - 10/3	571 LV	4.8	54	40	Baldwin +14
Suffolk	8/18 - 8/24	500 LV	4.4	50	42	Baldwin +8

According to the Real Clear Politics three poll average, Baldwin has a commanding 10.6 point lead over Vukmir. Cook views this race as likely going to the Democrats.

U.S. House Wisconsin

1st Congressional District

The only congressional seat in Wisconsin that experts cite as among the 30 or 40 most vulnerable GOP seats in the country is House Speaker Paul Ryan's. An open seat with no incumbent is usually harder for any party to defend.

On the GOP side, former Ryan aide Bryan Steil is running and has received the House speaker's endorsement. Randy Bryce, a union ironworker and first-time candidate, carries the Democrat banner. This district is a traditionally Republican seat: it voted for Trump 52 percent to 42 percent in 2016 and for the Mitt Romney/Paul Ryan ticket 52 percent to 47 percent in 2012. The Cook Political Report rates this race as leaning Republican.

6th Congressional District

Some election followers believe incumbent Glenn Grothman could face a difficult race in this rural-suburban district in northeastern Wisconsin. He's a two-term incumbent in a district that backed Trump by a 17-point margin and hasn't elected a Democrat since the 1960s. Democratic challenger Dan Kohl, the nephew of former Sen. Herb Kohl, has outraised and outspent Grothman during the campaign. Still, the Cook Political report places this contest in the likely Republican column.

Governor

Wisconsin Republican Governor Scott Walker is seeking his third term. The governor, who survived a rare recall election in 2012, faces a difficult environment again this year. As Jennifer Duffy of the Cook Political Report noted, "Governors races are not immune to midterm election trends. Just as the party in power loses seats in the U.S. House and Senate, it also loses gubernatorial seats." Walker himself has warned of a "blue wave" in his state after several special elections that were alarming for Republicans. One such election saw a Democrat take a state Senate seat where Trump had prevailed by 17 points and had been held by Republicans for 17 years.

The gubernatorial race is tight with Democratic candidate and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers holding a nominal 3.6 point lead on Walker according to the Real Clear Politics average. Evers had been up by seven points in previous polling. Political prognosticators, including Cook, have rated the Wisconsin governor's race a toss-up.

Poll	Date	Sample	MoE	Evers (D)	Walker (R)	Spread
RCP Average	8/18 - 10/7	--	--	48.3	44.7	Evers +3.6
Marquette*	10/3 - 10/7	799 LV	3.9	46	47	Walker +1
NBC News/Marist	9/30 - 10/3	571 LV	4.8	53	43	Evers +10
Suffolk	8/18 - 8/24	500 LV	4.4	46	44	Evers +2

Attorney General

Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel is seeking a second term and faces Democrat Josh Kaul, a former federal prosecutor and first-time candidate who is the son of former Wisconsin AG Peg Lautenschlager.

There is little polling available in this race leading observers to speculate that Schimel's success or failure could be closely tied to Walker's. From their perspective, a Walker win would provide a boost to Schimel.

State Legislature

Republicans hold a slim 18-15 Senate majority, while their majority in the State Assembly is more substantial, 64-35. Half of the State Senate - 17 out of the 33 seats (comprising odd-numbered senate districts) are up for election. Thirteen Senate seats are considered in play this election, including eight Republican seats. A flip of two Senate seats would give Democrats an inroad to power and creating a firewall against the initiatives of Governor Walker should he be reelected.

All 99 Assembly seats are up for election in 2018 but, despite that all but insurmountable Republican majority, there is the possibility of some modest losses. Democrats are contesting more seats in the Assembly than Republicans. There are 31 Assembly districts in which Democrats either are running unopposed or face no Republican opponent, compared to eight such districts for Republicans. Assembly Democrats have not picked up an Assembly seat in eight years over four election cycles so the party may be due for a win or two.

State Senate

State Senate District 1

Democrat Caleb Frostman will try to keep the seat he won in a June special election. To do this he must again defeat Republican Rep. Andre Jacque on November 6 when voter turnout will be much higher than in the June special election when he defeated Jacque. Then Frostman bested Jacque by less than 3 percentage points.

The election of Frostman marked the first time a Democrat has been elected to represent Wisconsin's 1st State Senate District in more than 40 years in a district that voted for Trump by 17 percentage points two years ago.

A handful of interest groups spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the special election, mostly in support of Frostman, and it is expected that large amounts of campaign cash will again flow into this election.

Every scenario involving the Democrats taking control of the Wisconsin State Senate assumes Frostman wins again.

State Senate District 17

GOP Sen. Howard Marklein is seeking a second term in the southwest Wisconsin district Trump won in 2016 by 9 points. Marklein, a certified public accountant, faces Democrat and organic farmer Kriss Marion who gained notoriety by successfully suing for the right to sell homemade cookies without state regulation.

She faces an uphill battle but the district does lean moderate. Voters sent Republican Dale Schultz to the Senate for 23 years until he ran afoul of Governor Walker for voting against legislation to modify Wisconsin's labor laws and decided not to seek re-election in 2014.

This district was a top target for the Democrats in 2014, but Marklein won by 10 points. Still it is viewed as one of the most competitive of any of the Senate races.

State Senate District 19

Trump won this district by 7 points and it is currently represented by Wisconsin State Senate President Roger Roth. Democrat Lee Snodgrass will face the incumbent.

Snodgrass is chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Outagamie County and director of communications for the Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes. She is undertaking her first run for public elected office.



The Midwest Food Products Association represents the business interests of the region's dynamic food products industry. The association lobbies on legislative and regulatory matters; promotes safe food processing practices; investigates new technologies; funds industry research; and plans industry events. It represents over 100 processing facilities in Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota.