



The US midterm elections

Emma Kilheaney looks at the results of the 2018 midterms

The Republicans lost control of the House but made narrow gains in the Senate in the 2018 US midterm elections (Figure 1).

The results in Congress

With two seats in the House of Representatives still undecided (GA-7 and NY-22), the Democrats have 233 seats in the House and 47 seats in the Senate (including two independents). The Republicans lost their 42-seat majority in the House, achieving 200 seats, but have 52 seats in the Senate. It was the first time since 2010 that the Democrats had secured a majority in the House. Turnout is expected to be 49.2%, the highest since 1914 when women didn't even have the vote, and up from 36.7% in 2014.

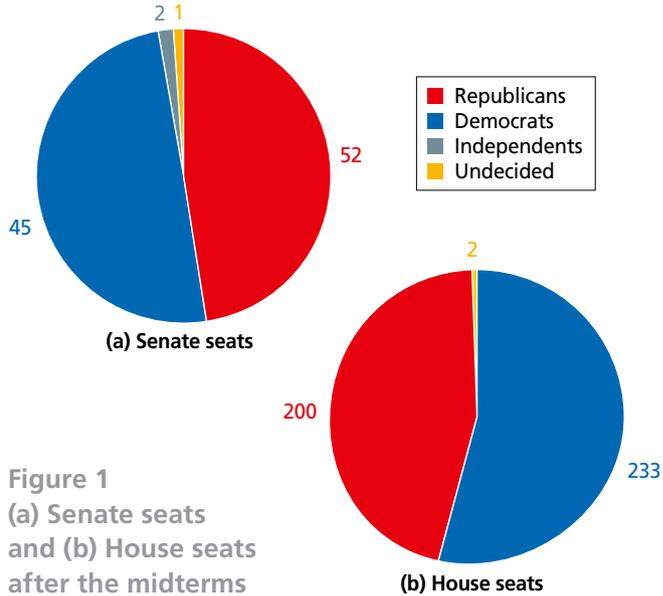


Figure 1
(a) Senate seats and (b) House seats after the midterms

Table 1 Senate seats that changed hands

State	Won	Lost	Incumbent
Indiana	M. Braun (R)	J. Donnelly (D)	J. Donnelly (D)
N. Dakota	K. Cramer (R)	H. Heitkamp (D)	H. Heitkamp (D)
Missouri	J. Hawley (R)	C. McCaskill (D)	C. McCaskill (D)
Florida	R. Scott (R)	B. Nelson (D)	B. Nelson (D)
Nevada	J. Rosen (D)	D. Heller (R)	D. Heller (R)
Arizona	K. Sinema (D)	M. McSally (R)	J. Flake (R) retired

Why the Senate results matter

- It was difficult for the Democrats to make gains in the Senate as they were defending 26 seats compared to the Republicans' nine.
- The Senate is required to confirm all judicial nominations. Senator Lindsay Graham said that the Republicans would use their enhanced position to continue to appoint more conservative judges.
- Feeling confident after his Senate victories, Trump immediately sacked his attorney general Jeff Sessions over his refusal to oversee the investigation into the Russian hacking of the 2016 presidential election.

Why the House results matter

- The Democrats will take control of the committee chairmanships, increasing the scrutiny on Trump. Nancy Pelosi said that their victory would ensure that the system of constitutional checks and balances would be restored.
- The Democrats may attempt to begin impeachment proceedings against Trump as they only need a simple majority to pass proceedings to the Senate.
- Trump will now have to work with the Democrats. He is hoping that the parties can work together on issues such as health, trade and infrastructure.
- Boundary changes in Pennsylvania meant the Democrats gained four seats from the Republicans.

What else was significant?

- In Florida ex-prisoners have been barred from voting. In 2016 this disenfranchised 23% of African Americans in the state. A ballot initiative supported by 64% of the electorate will now give 1.5 million ex-prisoners the right to vote.

- Following Trump's determination to press ahead with Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination in October 2018, record numbers of women will serve in the 116th Congress — at least 106 Democrats and 19 Republicans, with 102 sitting in the House and 23 in the Senate.
- The 116th Congress will be the most diverse ever, with two members aged only 29, plus the first two Muslim women and first two Native American women to be elected to Congress. All are Democrats. Democrat Jared Polis became the first openly gay man to be a US governor after winning Colorado.
- The Republicans lost support in suburban areas such as New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, and lost female voters, but maintained support from rural voters. Educated women were 20% more likely to vote Democrat than Republican. More than two-thirds of voters under 30 voted Democrat, more than half of white voters voted Republican, and more than three-quarters of non-whites voted Democrat. Just over half of all men voted Republican whereas 59% of women favoured Democratic candidates.
- Barack Obama lost 63 seats in the 2010 midterm elections and Bill Clinton lost 54 in 1994. Both went on to win re-election 2 years later in the presidential elections.

Questions

- 1 Were the 2018 midterm elections 'a tremendous success' for the Republicans as Trump claimed? Justify your answer.
- 2 Now that the Democrats will take control of the committee chairmanships in the House, what impact will this have on scrutiny?
- 3 Will the Democrat House begin impeachment proceedings against President Trump? Why might they be reluctant to?

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