DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

BUCKING THE TREND?

An Analysis of the 2022 Midterm Elections

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In U.S. midterm elections, the party of the incumbent president traditionally loses seats in Congress. This rule of thumb largely applies in 2022 as well, and the Democrats will in all likelihood lose their majority in the House of Representatives.

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Nevertheless, observers believe that there will be no landslide for Republicans in 2022, and that control of the Senate could still go either way. So what happened to make 2022 an election that is unlikely to result in big Democratic losses?

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A look at the issues most important to voters shows that supporters of both parties are highly motivated to cast their ballots this year. Add to that the strong presence of former President Trump, who is changing the dynamics of the 2022 midterms.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2022 midterms are the first elections to take place after the pandemic and the attempt by former president Donald Trump to overturn his loss in the 2020 presidential election.

Historically, midterm elections have almost always brought bad results for the president's party in Congress. Since World War II, midterms have seen the president's party lose an average of three Senate seats and 22 House seats. As we currently have a 50-50 Senate, and Republicans need only five seats to retake the House majority, under normal circumstances we would be all but certain to see the 2022 midterms result in Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. And since midterms are referendums on sitting presidents, Republicans should be poised for huge gains. Biden's approval ratings are low: according to the latest Gallup polling, 56 percent of voters disagree with his performance as president, versus only 42 percent who approve. Around 80 percent of Americans say the country is on the wrong track, and 82 percent say the state of the economy is "fair" or "poor."[1]

Biden's approval rating suffered a precipitous decline with the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 and continued to sink as Democrats failed to pass their top-priority legislation, inflation soared, and gas prices rose to record levels. In the spring of 2022, Republicans enjoyed a sizable advantage on the generic ballot and some commentators were predicting that the 2022 midterms would be a red wave on the scale of 2010, when Republicans gained 63 seats in the House and six in the Senate.

But despite Biden's low ratings and the negative economic numbers, Democrats regained a narrow lead on the generic ballot during the summer and into the fall. And although polls earlier this year suggested that Republicans were much more motivated to vote in the midterms, now it appears that neither party has a particular advantage.

In these final weeks before the election, forecasters are divided on whether the political winds have turned back in the Republicans' favor. Amy Walter of the *Cook Political Report* believes that "This October… there's evidence to sug-

gest that Democrats continue to defy political gravity."[2] But the 17 October *New York Times*/Siena College poll of likely voters found a 49-45 Republican advantage, reversing what had been a one-point Democratic advantage in September.[3] The *Times* concluded that "Republicans enter the final weeks of the contest for control of Congress with a narrow but distinctive advantage as the economy and inflation have surged as the dominant concerns, giving the party momentum to take back power from Democrats in next month's midterm elections."[4]

I believe that Republicans will retake the House majority fairly easily; they need only five seats to do so and are likely to gain 30 or more, but control of the Senate could still go either way.

So what happened to make 2022 an election that is unlikely to result in big Democratic losses on the scale that might be expected given Biden's unpopularity and the state of the economy? A major factor, obviously, was the Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Other factors benefitting Democrats are falling gas prices and the legislative success of passing the Inflation Reduction Act in September. But Democrats also benefited from Trump's ubiquity in the news, particularly after the FBI's execution of a search warrant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida in pursuit of classified documents, and from the shortcomings of many of Trump's chosen Republican candidates.

Trump involved himself in this year's GOP primary contests, in a way and on a scale that has no precedent in modern American politics. He endorsed more than 200 candidates in Republican primaries, including candidates running for the Senate, House, and top state executive positions. Many of Trump's picks would have won their primaries without his endorsement, but for some his support was decisive in their victories. And the basic requirement for a Republican candi-

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1 https://news.gallup.com/poll/329384/presidential-approval-ratings-joe-biden.aspx

2 https://www.cookpolitical.com/analysis/national/national-politics/which-way-wind-blowing

3 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/us/politics/republicans-economy-nyt-siena-poll.html

4 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/us/politics/republicans-economy-nyt-siena-poll.html

date who sought Trump's endorsement was to repeat his Big Lie that Democrats stole the 2020 presidential election. According to a recent *New York Times* investigation, of the 550 Republican candidates running for the Senate, House, and the state offices of governor, secretary of state, and attorney general, over 370 have expressed doubt about the legitimacy of the 2020 election.[5]

In many cases, Trump's interference led to many significantly weaker and/or problematic candidates being chosen over candidates who would have won through a normal political process. The likely result is Republicans will lose races they otherwise would have won, turning what could have been a Republican wave election on a scale with 1994 or 2010 into a more-or- less normal result according to post-World War II standards.

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[5] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/13/us/politics/republican-candidates-2020-election- misinformation.html

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SENATE MIDTERM ELECTION PROSPECTS

Trump's Senate endorsements led to the nominations of candidates whose shortcomings have made for competitive races in what otherwise should have been easy Republican wins. Senate minority Mitch McConnell, speaking to reporters in August, acknowledged that Republicans may not flip the Senate since "candidate quality has a lot to do with the outcome."[6]

2022 may end up as a repeat of 2012, when Republicans failed to retake control of the Senate because candidates like Todd Aiken in Missouri lost in a Republican-leaning state over his comments about how women's bodies could reject pregnancies resulting from "legitimate rape." In 2022, Republicans are looking at the prospect of losing Senate races in otherwise winnable battleground states because of faulty Trump-endorsed candidates. These include:

– Georgia, where former football star Herschel Walker is now polling narrowly behind Democratic incumbent Rafael Warnock after a series of controversies and scandals, including the report that he paid for a girl-friend to have an abortion even though he advocates a nationwide abortion ban without exceptions for rape, incest, or threats to the life of the mother; this race is close enough that it could result in a run-off election, which means control of the Senate may not be settled until December;

– New Hampshire, where Democratic incumbent Maggie Hassan – who won her 2016 election by a margin of scarcely more than 1,000 votes – seems likely to prevail over the far- right Republican nominee Don Bolduc, who claimed that Trump won the 2020 election and told Hassan to "get over it" regarding the overturning of Roe;

– Pennsylvania, where Trump's pick Mehmet Oz, the ce-lebrity TV doctor, has run what by general agreement has been a terrible campaign, although he has recent-ly gained ground on John Fetterman after the Demo-cratic nominee suffered a stroke;

– Arizona, where Republican nominee Blake Masters has tried to retreat from his previous hardline stances on abortion and election denialism and has fallen behind Democratic incumbent Mark Kelly in both polls and fundraising;

– Nevada, where election denier Adam Laxalt is locked in a virtual tie with Democratic incumbent Catherine Cortez Masto in a state where the Hispanic vote is in flux; and

– Ohio, where "Hillbilly Elegy" memoirist J. D. Vance be-came a Trump convert to win the GOP nomination and, while favored to win against Democratic chal-lenger Tim Ryan, has underperformed relative to the state's Republican lean in presidential elections

On the other hand, Democrats have also squandered winna-ble elections by nominating unsuitable candidates. The best example is in Wisconsin, where incumbent Republican Sena-tor Ron Johnson once was thought to be the most endan-gered Republican in this cycle. The Democrats, however, nominated Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes despite his clear vulnera-bilities particularly on the issue of crime. Barnes gave anti-po-lice interviews to Russian-sponsored media sources and has endorsed ending cash bail nationally.[7] These positions are playing badly as the campaign season has coincided with the trial of an inmate who was released on a low bail and then drove a car into a Christmas parade in Waukesha, killing six.

Control of the Senate will be determined by which party wins the tossup states of Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Neva-da. Polling is close in a few other states, but at this point it's expected that Democrats will win tight races in Arizona, New Hampshire, and Colorado (where Democratic incum-bent Michael Bennett is being challenged by moderate Re-publican Joe O'Dea), while Republicans are favored to win in Ohio, Wisconsin, Florida (where incumbent GOP Sen. Marco Rubio is being challenged by former police chief Val Dem-ings), and North Carolina (where far-right Republican Rep. Ted Budd faces off against the Democratic candidate, for-mer state supreme court chief justice Cheri Beasley).

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6 https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2022-election/mcconnell-says-re-publicans-may-not-win-senate-control-citing- candidate-rcna43777

7 https://www.nationalreview.com/2022/10/after-five-cops-were-murdered-in-dallas-mandela-barnes-gave-a-jaw- dropping-anti-po-lice-interview-to-russian-state-tv/

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HOUSE MIDTERM ELECTION PROSPECTS

3.1 DEMOCRATS

As with the Senate races, many of the House Republican and Democratic candidates in the most competitive seats are the product of the fault lines that run through both parties as well as the strategies that leadership of each party has attempted to use to maximize their chances of victory.

On the Democratic side, moderates for the most part came out the victors in their rivalries with the progressives. The progressives mounted a number of primary challenges to incumbent moderates but achieved only one significant victory, with the Biden-backed Kurt Schrader falling to Jamie McLeod-Skinner in OR-05. But progressives defeated moderates in several open-seat contests in predominantly blue areas, which means that the progressives likely will increase their share of the Democratic caucus, particularly if moderates do badly in the battleground districts this cycle. Among these likely incoming progressives will be Delia Ramirez in IL-03, Summer Lee in PA-12, and Greg Cesar in TX-35.

Democratic progressive-moderate tensions likely would be muted to some extent in a Republican-majority Congress. But progressives in that scenario likely would push for Democrats to be a more oppositional minority party and would demand that Biden be more aggressive in issuing executive orders to protect abortion rights and deal with climate change.

Progressives generally have failed to achieve their highest legislative priorities in the Biden administration, losing high-profile battles on the Build Back Better climate bill and voting rights reform, both of which were backed by the Biden administration but couldn't clear moderate opposition in the Senate. More recently, progressives lost to moderates as the House passed a new police funding bill that progressives had stalled for months. House Progressive Caucus chair Pramila Jayapal claimed – in the *Wall Street Journal* of all places – that progressives were responsible for passage of the Inflation Reduction Act.[8] The slimmed-down version of Build Back Better did indeed address some progressive priorities: climate action, tax increases on the wealthy, extended health care coverage, and cost subsidies for consumers of prescription drugs and energy. Jayapal also laid out the progressive agenda for the Democratic Party going forward, including universal childcare, home care for people with disabilities, affordable housing, Medicare expansion, and "immigrant justice."[9]

However, the reality is that the progressives' strategy of mobilization instead of persuasion has failed. And many of the progressives' slogans and catchphrases have become electoral liabilities for the Democrats. The midterms will reveal whether the Democrats have been able to address the electoral damage they suffered in the 2020 congressional elections from Republican charges that the party as a whole supported deeply unpopular positions on socialism, defunding the police, permissiveness on crime and disorder, open borders, the teaching of Critical Racial Theory and other forms of race essentialism in the schools, free speech and cancel culture, and gender radicalism – issues that have alienated increasing numbers of socially conservative Hispanic and black voters.

Democratic strategist Ruy Teixeira, for one, believes that Democrats face long-term electoral liabilities as the two parties switch their electoral bases, with Democrats becoming the party of urban college-educated professionals and Republicans the party of the working class. As he puts it, "Democrats' uncompetitiveness among white working-class voters and among voters in exurban, small town and rural America puts them at a massive disadvantage given the structure of the American electoral system… Democrats have failed to develop a party brand capable of unifying a dominant majority of Americans behind their political project. Indeed, the current Democratic brand suffers from multiple deficiencies that make it somewhere between uncompelling and toxic to wide swathes of American voters who might potentially be their allies."[10] Teixeira recommends that the Democrats move to the center on

8   https://www.wsj.com/articles/progressive-activists-are-the-dem-ocratic-party-biden-inflation-reduction-act-build-back-better-bill-agenda-gop-grass-roots-networks-protests-11660940242

9   https://www.wsj.com/articles/progressive-activists-are-the-dem-ocratic-party-biden-inflation-reduction-act-build-back-better-bill-agenda-gop-grass-roots-networks-protests-11660940242

10 https://theliberalpatriot.substack.com/p/does-the-abortion-issue-mean-democrats

cultural issues, promote an abundance agenda aimed at increasing opportunity and prosperity for working-class Americans, and embrace patriotism rather than a reflexively critical view of America's sins and shortcomings.[11]

Something close to this agenda is being advanced by many of the moderate Democrats who are most in danger in this cycle, many of whom were elected in suburban swing districts in the 2018 blue-wave election. They are also leaning hard on the abortion issue in the wake of the Dobbs decision, and several have benefited from favorable redistricting. Among these vulnerable front- line Democrats are Cindy Axne (IA-03), Steven Horsford (NV-04), Dan Kildee (MI-08), Tom Malinowski (NJ-07), Tom O'Halleran (AZ-02), and Abigail Spanberger (VA-07). It was Spanberger who, in the wake of the 2020 losses among Democratic moderates, was recorded in a closed-door caucus of House Democrats telling her colleagues that "We want to talk about funding social services, and ensuring good engagement in community policing, let's talk about what we are for. And we need to not ever use the words 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again. Because while people think it doesn't matter, it does matter. And we lost good members because of it… If we are classifying Tuesday as a success from a congressional standpoint, we will get [expletive] torn apart in 2022."[12]

3.2 REPUBLICANS

The fault line among Republicans is more serious than the division between moderate and progressive Democrats, because it reflects a split within the conservative movement itself as opposed to the usual Democratic tensions between the party's coalitional groups. Donald Trump's populism and anti-democratic impulses have set parts of the conservative movement against its more traditional pro-business and Reaganite elements, and this split is reflected in the Republican Party as well. It also pits Trump against the Republican Party's leadership, particularly including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

Trump meddled as freely in House Republican primaries as he did in Senate contests, but a recent *New York Times* article related how McCarthy's affiliated super PAC, the Congressional Leadership Fund, and other allied funding organizations spent freely in an attempt to defeat some of the Trumpiest candidates, both in safe Republican districts as well as in swing districts where a hardliner was unlikely to win. McCarthy was successful in many of these cases. In numerous safe Republican districts, McCarthy beat back primary candidates endorsed by the House Freedom Caucus (HFC), the most disruptive and pro-Trump faction in Congress. In NC-11, for example, McCarthy-affiliated forces in the GOP primary defeated HFC member Madison Caw-

thorn, a Trump-endorsed lawmaker who had claimed that his Republican colleagues engaged in cocaine-fueled orgies.[13] In FL-11, McCarthy's groups defended Rep. Daniel Webster against a challenge from Laura Loomer, an online agitator who described herself as being "pro- white nationalism" and a "proud Islamophobe."[14] McCarthy's other successful defenses of candidates and incumbents in safe Republican seats like Nicholas Langworthy (NY-23), Cory Mills (FL-07), Mark Amodei (NV-02), Michael Guest (MS-03), and Morgan Luttrell (TX-08). McCarthy also defended David Valadao (CA-22), one of the ten House Republicans who voted for Trump's second impeachment; Valadao's Trumpier challenge almost certainly would have lost what is an increasingly blue district.

However, McCarthy and his allies failed to prevent the defeat of another Republican who voted for Trump's impeachment, Rep. Jamie Herrera-Beutler (WA-03), at the hands of Joe Kent; he has said he will oppose McCarthy as speaker, denies the legitimacy of the 2020 election, and denounced the legal actions against January 6 insurrectionists as "banana republic stuff."[15] McCarthy also failed to prevent the primary victory in NC-01 of Sandy Smith, who has faced domestic violence charges, or Kelly Cooper in AZ-04, who has promised to seek the release of those arrested for storming the Capitol on January 6, or Brandon Williams in NY-22, who has suggested that it may be better to sacrifice the life of a pregnant woman in favor of her unborn child.

Other potentially winnable races in purple districts that Republicans seem likely to lose include John Gibbs in MI-03, J. R. Majewski in OH-09, and perhaps Sarah Palin in Alaska-00. The Michigan seat was held by Rep. Peter Meijer, another moderate Republican who had voted to impeach Trump, and Gibbs was one of several election deniers whose primary campaigns received major funding from the House Democrats' congressional campaign organizations, on the grounds that extremists in swing districts will be easier for them to defeat in the general election. However, such actions make it unlikely that Republicans will challenge a president from their party in any future circumstances, and strongly suggests that Democrats do not believe their own rhetoric about election denialism as an existential threat to American democracy.

3.3 DIVERSE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

Another critical component of McCarthy's efforts to shape the composition of the incoming House Republican delegation has been candidate recruitment, particularly of minorities. There will be 67 black, Latino, Asian, or Native American Republican candidates on the ballot in November. The incoming class will almost certainly be the most diverse Re-

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11 https://theliberalpatriot.substack.com/p/does-the-abortion-issue-mean-democrats

12 https://wjla.com/news/local/house-democrats-blame-losses-on-polls-message-even-trump-11-06-2020

13 https://www.politico.com/news/2022/03/29/cawthorn-orgies-freedom-caucus-00021548

14 https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/19/politics/laura-loomer-donald-trump-florida/index.html

15 https://twitter.com/joekent16jan19/status/1439302000894566402

publican class in history, although the delegation will still be predominantly white and male. While people like me have been advocating for such recruitment for years, we have more traction now largely because in the 2020 elections, nearly every battleground district that the Republicans flipped was won by a woman or person of color. This year, in what the Cook Political Report judges to be the 30 most competitive districts, at least half of the Republican candidates are women or minorities.[16]

The Republican leadership is currently trying to broaden the party's appeal by recruiting more diverse candidates, through means that have included devolving the candidate search process away from DC-based consultants to district-based talent searchers as well as more aggressive outreach particularly to Hispanic voters. Although the Hispanic vote still strongly favors Democrats overall, Democratic margins among Hispanics are likely to continue to erode. Many Hispanic voters are low-wage earners and inflation – particularly in the form of soaring rents and rising gas and grocery prices – takes more of their paychecks proportionally. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-25), who helped with Latino Republican candidate recruitment, told the *New York Times* that more candidates were moved to run this year by those kitchen-table issues, as well as by "a surge of migrants in heavily Latino border districts and a growing sense that the Democrats were now the party of the educated elite, he said."[17]

Among these Republican candidates of color are Jennifer-Ruth Green in IN-01, a black and Asian woman and an Air Force veteran; Allan Fung in RI-2, an Asian American; Lori Chavez- DeRemer in OR-05, who if elected would be the first Hispanic woman elected to Congress from Oregon; Wesley Hunt in TX-38 and John James in MI-10, who are likely to win their elections and in so doing would double the number of African-American Republicans in the House; and Mayra Flores in TX-34, who made national headlines this summer when she won a special election and thereby became the first Republican to win the district in 150 years.

2020 was the so-called "Republican Year of the Woman," with record numbers of Republican women elected to office. This year is likely to maintain those numbers rather than build upon them. Among all Republican candidates who advanced to the general election this year, 20 percent are women compared to 22 percent in 2020.

As a cofounder and political director of Republican Women for Progress (RWFP), we equip and support Republican women to running for elected office at the local, state, and federal level. Since its founding in 2017, we seek to improve the GOP by (in the words of our website) "ensuring the full spectrum of Republican women's voices are represented in the media, developing and supporting the pipeline of Republican women who want to lead and run for office, and refocusing the GOP on proper governance and policy." The word "moderation" has become too confusing in the present political context to mean anything, but generally we seek Republican women candidates whose principles and policies reflect what we call "our vision for a modern 'Big Tent' Republican party which upholds the values of small government and fiscal conservatism while being socially inclusive."[18]

Prior to 2016, there was very little organized activity on the Republican side dedicated to recruiting and supporting women candidates. In 1997, Republican women in the House established Value in Electing Women (VIEW) PAC, which was one of the first PACs to specifically help Republican female candidates for the House and Senate.[19] For the 2018 cycle, Rep. Elise Stefanik (NY-21) – who is now the third-ranking Republican in the House – launched E-PAC to support women candidates, and her organization has made a significant impact in improving the win rate for the candidates they endorse.[20] While there more PACs and organizations focused on building a pipeline for Republican women, there is still nothing on the scale of EMILY's List on the Democratic side.

For this cycle, RWFP plans to release our Women to Watch list later this month where we will endorse and support several incumbents alongside numerous first-time candidates for the U.S. Senate and House. In the Senate, we anticipate supporting: Tiffany Smiley in Washington, who's opposing incumbent Sen. Patty Murray, Katie Britt in Alabama, who's running for an open seat, and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (AK), who faces Trump backed Kelly Tshibaka under Alaska's ranked choice voting system. In the House, we anticipate supporting incumbents like Nancy Mace (SC- 03), Young Kim (CA-40), Maria Salazar (FL-27), and Marianette Miller-Meeks (IA-2). As well as candidates like Jen Kiggans, who's running against Rep. Elaine Luria (D-VA-2), Lisa Scheller, who's running against Rep. Susan Wild (D-PA-7), Ester Joy King, who's running for an open seat in IL-17, and the previously mentioned, Jennifer Ruth Green, who's running for an open seat in IN-1.

It's worth noting that while our theory is that electing greater numbers of women and minorities to office eventually will move the GOP toward becoming a more serious governing party, in the short term many such candidates are extremely Trumpy and/or ideologically extreme. Several of the Republican women candidates that we support are more conservative and outspoken on cultural issues, particularly with regard to the teaching of gender and racial ideology in the schools, than would have been the case a few years ago. But we still believe that these candidates are serious about governing and will be able to collaborate with Democrats, at least on certain policy issues.

16 https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings/house-race-ratings

17 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/11/us/politics/republicans-house-black-latino-asian.html

18 https://www.gopwomenforprogress.org

19 https://viewpac.org/about/

20 https://elevate-pac.com/

3.4 THE ABORTION ISSUE

The election outcomes have been particularly difficult to predict this year, not only because of continuing problems with polling that have led to serious underestimations of Republican voter turnout but also because of the unknown impact of the unprecedented fact of the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe. Abortion had for decades been a reliable way to motivate the Republican base and Republican politicians were able to oppose abortion without turning off critical swing voters, particularly college-educated suburban women, precisely because the seemingly settled fact of abortion rights made the prospect of overturning Roe seem abstract and unlikely to these voters. Now, with the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision, the Republican Party is in the proverbial position of the dog who has caught the car. Having achieved one of its highest goals of recent decades, the GOP will need to search for new issues that can resonate with the base in a similar way.

And, even on the abortion issue, it was much easier for Republican candidates pre-Dobbs to proclaim themselves "pro-life" than it is now for them to determine exactly what restrictions on abortion should be enacted. Polls consistently have shown that while Americans strongly favor restrictions on abortion rights in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy, there is also strong support for at least some degree of access to abortion in the earlier part of pregnancy. An early August referendum in Kansas, generally considered to be a conservative state, saw voters reject by a sizable 59–41 margin a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have declared that there was no right to an abortion in the state. An estimated one-third of Trump voters favor some degree of abortion access, and there is little support among Republican electeds for the proposed federal 15-week abortion ban proposed by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), let alone the nationwide ban supported by conservative activists.

It's unclear, however, exactly how the Dobbs decision will translate into electoral outcomes. The Republican Party has long been losing support among women voters, and it's likely that Dobbs will widen this gender gap. Female voters, particularly in the 18-40 age demographic, strongly support at least some degree of access to abortion. In at least some states, female registration surged after the Dobbs decision, particularly in states where abortions became illegal after the Dobbs decision (including Idaho, Louisiana, and Wisconsin), while in Kansas women constituted 70 percent of new voter registrations after Dobbs.[21] Moreover, Democrats outperformed Joe Biden's showing in four of the five special congressional elections since the Dobbs ruling, winning unexpected victories in NY-19 and Alaska's at-large district.[22]

In response, many Republican candidates have moderated their previous positions on abortion restriction (particularly in the cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother), or at any rate have removed strident pro-life language from their campaign websites. Even the Republican National Committee is being very quiet about the issue. There has been little of the triumphant celebration that might have been expected in the wake of such a long-sought victory.

But abortion is just one of the issues on which both parties are essentially talking past each other in this election. A recent Public Opinion Strategies poll for NBC News found that the Republican Party has all-time high advantages on the economy, crime, and border security, while Democrats have all-time advantages on abortion and significant advantages on climate change and gun control.[23]

As a result, each party is playing to its perceived strengths and has little to say about issues where the other party has the advantage. While the country has been trending in this direction with increased partisan polarization, this nonetheless marks a departure from past electoral patterns. John Zogby, a well-known pollster, pointed out that in the past both parties usually agreed on what the important issues of the day were: "There was a common set of issues with different approaches. This is an election about different realities."[24]

3.5 WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A 2023 REPUBLICAN MAJORITY IN ONE OR BOTH HOUSES

The Republican caucus in both houses of Congress in the next term will be even more conservative and Trumpian-populist than the current caucus. A recent *New York Times* article noted that "some of the most savvy and experienced legislators on the Republican side" are leaving the Senate this year, including Nebraska's Ben Sasse (who's retiring with four years remaining in his term to become president of the University of Florida) as well as Ohio's Rob Portman, Missouri's Roy Blount, North Carolina's Richard M. Burr, Pennsylvania's Pat Toomey, and Alabama's Richard Shelby. Their successors will for the most part be not only less experienced but also more partisan and less inclined to challenge Trump in any way.[25]

Of the ten House Republicans who voted for Trump's second impeachment in 2021, just two are still running for reelection this fall, with the others having either been defeated in their primaries (like Liz Cheney (WY-00) or Peter Meijer (MI-03)) or having retired or at least opted out of running in

21 https://www.forbes.com/sites/katharinabuchholz/2022/08/31/dobbs-decision-sets-off-wave-of-female-voter-registration-infographic/?sh=4b9b6d962b54

22 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/24/upshot/midterms-elections-republicans-analysis.html

23 https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/first-read/poll-gop-winning-economy-immigration-democrats-are-ahead-abortion-heal-rcna48297

24 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/16/us-midterms-republicans-democrats-major-issues

25 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/14/us/politics/senate-sasse-retirements-midterms.html

2022. The two remaining are Dan Newhouse (WA-04) and David Valadao (CA-22); Newhouse almost certainly will be reelected but Valadao's election is a tossup. Dusty Johnson (SD-00) is one of the few other Republican legislators who incurred Trump's wrath (in his case by voting for the January 6 commission) and is still expected to be reelected in 2022.

Trump's influence will only increase when he announces his candidacy for President, which I fully expect he will do after the midterms. Being a candidate provides him two important tools. First, the ability to continue to political fund raising, which he has previously used to pay his legal bills. Second, the opportunity to cast his mounting legal troubles as a political "witch hunt" and sway public opinion in such a way to prosecuting him might pose serious political issues. It's possible that a Republican failure to retake the Senate majority will result in some criticism of Trump's pushing weak candidates on the party, but the odds of any real rebellion against Trump's domination seem unlikely, at least until and unless Florida governor Ron DeSantis or other potential 2024 Republican presidential aspirants declare their candidacies.

Trump's continuing presence in the daily headlines – and his likely return to Twitter, whether or not Elon Musk acquires the company – will seriously complicate Republicans' attempt to govern. Although both Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy are in favor of building governable conferences, and are both implicitly opposed to Trump's model of division and chaos, they have taken different strategies in terms of laying out an agenda. McConnell has publicly opposed the plan released by Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), the current chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Scott's twelve-point "Rescue America" plan, released in February, was a highly ideological document that, among other provisions, called for a federal minimum income tax that would have raised taxes on millions of working families. McConnell evidently feels that it is better not to commit to any agenda than to have an unpopular and internally divisive one.[26] McCarthy, on the other hand, published his "Commitment with America" legislative agenda (modeled after Newt Gingrich's 1994 "Contract with America") because he believes Republicans will need to demonstrate a capacity to govern in the next Congress if they are to win in 2024. The report highlights the three major Republican campaign issues – public safety, the economy, and immigration – on which there's the greatest consensus among most factions in the party while playing down Trump-style election denialism. At the same time, the agenda has more in the way of slogans than details and offers little specificity about the kinds of policies or programs the Republicans would advance.[27]

However, McCarthy will have his hands full in trying to build a governable conference. Most of his members will have little experience as successful legislators; at least half of the conference will have never served in a Republican majority. Despite McCarthy's efforts to marginalize firebrands in the primaries, many will be elected and are likely to vote against McCarthy as speaker in favor of Freedom Caucus cofounder Rep. Jim Jordan (OH-04) or some other more aggressively Trumpist figure.

McCarthy has been cultivating the likes of Jordan and incendiaries like Rep. Marjorie Taylor- Greene (GA-14) to secure his election as speaker, but the price for this has been the mainstreaming of figures like Greene within the Republican conference and the likely appointment of Jordan and more extreme members as committee chairmen in the new Congress. Taylor-Greene told a reporter that McCarthy would have little choice but to adopt her "a lot more aggressive" approach toward punishing Biden and Democrats: "I think that to be the best speaker of the House and to please the base, he's going to give me a lot of power and a lot of leeway. And if he doesn't, they're going to be very unhappy about it."[28]

It will be very difficult if not impossible for McCarthy to resist demands for performative acts of base-pleasing partisanship that will make it much more difficult for him to pass legislation, particularly with any degree of Democratic cooperation. And the impossibility of satisfying some of the most extreme demands from within his conference will put him in the same position as previous Republican speakers John Boehner and Paul Ryan, which led to their resignations.

Many within the Republican caucus are eager to launch investigations into the Biden administration, and particularly the president's son Hunter and other family members. Jordan has vowed to launch investigations into the administration's Covid-19 pandemic response – with a focus on health official Anthony Fauci – if Republicans retake the House. Others itch to hold hearings on the 2017-19 Special Investigation which culminated in the Mueller Report (which Republicans cast as a partisan witch hunt against then-President Trump); the 2020 election results; the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan; and Alejandro Mayorkas' policies with regard to the southern border as secretary of Homeland Security.

Some House Republicans want to fulfill the party's commitment to banning abortion nationwide, while Freedom Caucus member Rep. Chip Roy (TX-21) has advocated withholding federal funds as leverage for policy priorities, a tactic that previously resulted in government shutdowns.

Outgoing anti-Trump Rep. Adam Kinzinger (IL-16) has predicted that Taylor-Greene and her allies will pressure McCarthy into "demand[ing] an impeachment vote on President Biden every week ... I think it'll be a very difficult majority for [McCarthy] to govern unless he just chooses to go

26 https://rescueamerica.com/12-point-plan/
27 https://www.republicanleader.gov/commitment/

28 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/magazine/marjorie-taylor-greene.html

absolutely crazy with them. In which case you may see the rise of the silent, non-existent moderate Republican that may still exist out there, but I don't know."[29]

However, there will still be governing-minded Republicans in both houses of Congress. They make up the constituency for what my Niskanen Center colleague Matthew Yglesias calls "the Silent Congress." In an article co-written with Simon Bazelon, he argued that significant cooperation across the aisle still takes place in Congress, but mainly on issues that don't attract much public attention. Congress deadlocks on the most controversial, intensely newsworthy issues because the media spotlight forces politicians into performative partisanship and makes compromise impossible. But the "Secret Congress" can still come together on low-profile legislation that slips under the media radar because such agreement "isn't seen as conceding ground to the other side. No Republican congressman is going to be primaried for voting for the low-salience *Endless Frontiers Act*, because it doesn't count as 'giving Biden a win.'"[30]

Behind-the-scenes negotiations during this congressional term led to passage of bills that funded infrastructure, reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act, strengthened gun safety, boosted funding for zero-carbon energy research, and made Juneteenth into a national holiday. Such negotiations will still take place in the next Congress if Republicans win a majority in one or both houses, but there will be fewer Republicans who may be willing to challenge the leadership and/or the base on certain issues.

It will be particularly interesting to see whether, or to what extent, McCarthy, as speaker, would attempt a rapprochement with the business community. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), which is one of the largest lobbying groups in the country, has long enjoyed a collaborative working relationship with Republican Party leaders. Yet it has come under increasing criticism from Trump and his wing of the GOP. Last year, the Chamber found itself at odds with McCarthy and other Republicans for contributing to Democrats[31], and recently, the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) called on Republican Members to shun businesses perceived of being "left-leaning".[32] Some Republicans are said to be planning to launch investigations of the Chamber and some of its largest member corporations if they retake the House.[33]

McCarthy may not want to push the Chamber all the way over into the arms of the Democrats, but this would be a likely result of adopting a punitive approach to corporate

America, which was pioneered by Trump and significantly boosted Florida governor Ron DeSantis' popularity with the GOP base after he took revenge on the Disney Corporation for its criticism of the so- called "Don't Say Gay" bill.

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29 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/20/adam-kinzing-er-republicans-impeach-biden-every-week

30 https://www.slowboring.com/p/the-rise-and-importance-of-secret

31 https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/17/cham-ber-of-commerce-democrats-trump/

32 https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-house-republicans-unveil-agenda-ahead-nov-8-elections-2022-09-23/

33 https://theintercept.com/2022/09/19/house-republicans-cham-ber-commerce/

4

STATE-LEVEL MIDTERM ELECTION PROSPECTS

There are 36 elections for governor in 2022, featuring 15 Republican incumbents, 13 Democratic incumbents, five open Republican-held governorships, and three open Democrat-held governorships. Only about half of these three dozen elections, however, are even considered to be competitive.

Several governorships could change hands this election, resulting in considerably different policymaking outcomes in those states. As with the House and Senate, Trump's interference in the Republican gubernatorial primaries will cost the GOP winnable offices. Among these are:

– Massachusetts, where Republicans chose Trump-backed state legislator and election denier Geoff Diel instead of businessman Chris Doughty, a moderate in the mold of the enormously popular outgoing Republican governor Charlie Baker; in this deep-blue state, Diel will almost certainly lose to Democratic nominee Maura Healey, who would become the first woman and openly gay person to govern Massachusetts;

– Maryland, another deep-blue state where (as in Massachusetts) the Trump-backed candidate Dan Cox – a "stop the steal" rally attendee backed by $1.16 million in Democratic spending will lose to Democratic nominee Wes Moore; the GOP base chose not to try to replicate the success of outgoing moderate Republican governor Larry Hogan, whose preferred candidate was state commerce secretary (and moderate) Kelly Shultz;

– Pennsylvania, where the Republican nominee is election denier Doug Mastriano; a more conventional Republican candidate would have had much better odds of defeating Democratic candidate Josh Shapiro;

– Michigan, where Republican candidate (and election denier) Tudor Dixon has underperformed in the race against incumbent Democratic governor Gretchen Whitmer

However, far-right Arizona Republican gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake is performing unexpectedly well against Democratic nominee Katie Hobbs despite this being a swing state. Lake brings celebrity to her candidacy by virtue of having been a former news anchor in the state. If she wins, she undoubtedly will be among the most mediagenic Trumpian stars of the GOP along with Florida's DeSantis.

In Oregon, Republican nominee Christine Drazan may win despite a four-decade record of Democrat dominance in the state; Democrats will be splitting their votes between the party's nominee Tina Kotek and third-party candidate Betsy Johnson. Outgoing Democratic governor Kate Brown is widely unpopular for her perceived mishandling of the issues of homelessness and rising crime.

One of the highest-profile governor's race is in Georgia, which is a rematch of the 2018 race that pitted Republican Brian Kemp (the current incumbent) against Stacey Abrams, the well-known African-American voting rights activist. Kemp is among the few active Republicans whose political future seeming has not been harmed by taking a public stand against Donald Trump; in 2020 Kemp resisted Trump's pressure to overturn the election results in the state. Kemp turned back his 2022 Trump-backed primary challenger, former senator David Perdue, and now seems likely to defeat Abrams in the general election. Kemp is widely seen as a competent steward of Georgia's economy, while Abrams' refusal to concede defeat in the 2018 election makes her the favorite example of Republican election deniers who claim that "both sides" engage in the practice.

Kemp's popularity also helped his secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, to pull out an unexpected primary win against Trump-backed candidate Jody Hice, a former member of the Freedom Caucus. Prior to 2020, secretaries of state races received little national attention or money, but that changed after the 2020 election when Trump pressured Raffensperger (in a telephone call that was recorded and released to the media) to "find" him 11,000 votes and reverse Biden's victory in the state.[34] In many states, the secretary of state is the chief election official, and in 2022 a number of Trump-backed election deniers are running for the office, several of them in critical battleground states. These include Jim Marchant in Nevada, Kristina Karamo in Michigan, Mark Finchem in Arizona, and Kim Crockett in Minnesota.

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34 https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/532433-trump-asked-georgia-secretary-of-state-to-find-116k-ballots/

If any of these, or other election deniers, win in 2022, they would be in a position to interfere with the 2024 elections by changing the rules to make it harder to vote, allowing endless audits and recounts of election results, refusing to sign off on election results, or sowing distrust in the electoral process.

The 2022 midterm outcomes for state legislative races may also have a real impact on the 2024 elections. A *New York Times* analysis found that 44 percent of Republicans in critical swing-state legislatures used the power of their offices to try to discredit or overturn the 2020 presidential election results.[35] More election deniers are likely to be elected in this cycle.

Further, the conservative majority on the Supreme Court may rule in favor of the so-called independent state legislature theory in the upcoming case *Moore v. Harper.* If the Court does so rule, state legislatures would have nearly unfettered authority over federal elections within the states, which would give them a pathway to overruling the popular vote in presidential elections by refusing to certify the results and sending their own slates of electors instead. And, the *Times* observes, "Republicans have complete control over legislatures in states that have a total of 307 electoral votes – 37 more than needed to win a presidential election. They hold majorities in several battleground states, meaning that if the Supreme Court endorsed the legal theory, a close presidential election could be overturned if just a few states assigned alternate slates of electors."[36]

The ultimate significance of the 2022 midterms will not be merely which party gained advantage in the two houses of Congress or various state offices. Its significance may, in hindsight, be whether it brought into office sufficient numbers of Trump-supporting election denialists to overthrow the democratic outcome of the 2024 elections.

35 https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/05/22/us/politics/
state-legislators-election-denial.html

36 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/10/us/politics/su-
preme-court-state-legislature-elections.html

APPENDIX

Competitive Race Projections from Cook Political Report (as of 17 October 2022)

■ **Democrats**   ■ **Republicans**

SENATE		
DEMOCRATS (14 held seats)		
Solid D		**Rival candidate**
California	Alex Padilla	Mark Meuser
Connecticut	Richard Blumenthal	Leora Levy
Hawai	Brian Schatz	Bob McDermott
Illinois	Tammy Duckworth	Kathy Salvi
Maryland	Chris Van Hollen	Chris Chaffee
New York	Chuck Schumer	Joe Pinion
Oregon	Ron Wyden	Joe Rae Perkins
Vermont (open)	(D Peter Welch)	Gerald Malloy
Washington	Patti Murray	Tiffany Smiley
Lean D		
Arizona	Mark Kelly	Blake Masters
Colorado	Michael Bennet	Joe O'Dea
New Hampshire	Maggie Hassan	Don Bolduc
Tossup		
Georgia	Rafael Warnock	Herschel Walker
Nevada	Catherine Cortez-Masto	Adam Laxalt
REPUBLICANS (21 held seats)		
Solid R		**Rival candidate**
Alaska	Lisa Murkowski	Pat Chesbro; R: Kelly Tshibaka
Alabama (open)	(Katie Britt)	Will Boyd
Arkansas	John Boozman	Natalie James
Iowa	Charles Grassley	Michael Franken
Idaho	Mike Crapo	David Roth
Indiana	Todd Young	Thomas McDermott Jr.
Kansas	Jerry Moran	Mark Holland
Kentucky	Rand Paul	Charles Booker
Louisiana	John Kennedy (*)	(*)
Montana (open)	(Eric Schmitt)	Trudy Busch Valentine
North Dakota	John Hoeven	Katrina Christiansen
Oklahoma	James Lankford	Madison Horn
Oklahoma (open)	(Markwayne Mullin)	Kendra Horn
South Carolina	Tim Scott	Krystle Matthews
South Dakota	John Thune	Brian Bengs
Likely R		
Utah	Mike Lee	(I) Evan McMullin
Lean R		
Florida	Marco Rubio	Val Demings
North Carolina (open)	(Ted Budd)	Cheri Beasley
Ohio (open)	(J. D. Vance)	Tim Ryan
Tossup		
Pennsylvania (open)	(Mehmet Oz)	John Fetterman
Wisconsin	Ron Johnson	Mandela Barnes

HOUSE – Competitive races

DEMOCRATS

Likely D (14 Dem, 0 Rep)		Rival candidate
Arizona-04	Greg Stanton (D+2)	Kelly Cooper
California-09	Josh Harder (D+5)	Tom Patti
Colorado-07 (open)	(D+4) Brittany Petersen	Erik Aadland
Connecticut-02	Joe Courtney (D+3)	Mike France
Georgia-02	Sanford Bishop Jr. (D+3)	Keith West
Illinois-06	Sean Casten (D+3)	Keith Pekau
Illinois-11	Bill Foster (D+5)	Catalina Lauf
Illinois-14	Lauren Underwood (D+4)	Scott Gryder
Maryland-06	David Trone (D+2)	Neil Parrott
North Carolina-06	Kathy Manning (D+4)	Christian Castelli
New Jersey-03	Andy Kim (D+5)	Bob Healey
New Jersey-05	Josh Gottheimer (D+4)	Frank Pallotta
New Mexico-03	Teresa Leger Fernandez (D+4)	Alexis Martinez Johnson
Pennsylvania-12 (open)	(D+8) Summer Lee	Michael Doyle
Lean D (15 Dem, 2 Rep)		
California-47	Katie Porter (D+3)	Scott Baugh
California-49	Mike Levin (D+3)	Brian Maryott
California-05	Jahana Hayes (D+3)	George Logan
Illinois-13 (open)	(D+3) Nikki Budzinski	Regan Deering
Michigan-03 (open)	(D+1) (Hillery Schotten	John Gibbs
Michigan-08	Dan Kildee (R+1)	Paul Junge
North Carolina-01 (open)	(D+2) Donald Davis	Sandy Smith
New Hampshire-02	Annie Kuster (D+2)	Bob Burns
Nevada-04	Steven Horsford (D+3)	Sam Peters
New York-03 (open)	(D+2) Robert Zimmerman	George Devolder-Santos
New York-04 (open)	(D+5) Laura Gillen	Anthony D'Esposito
New York-17	Sean Patrick Maloney (D+3)	Michael Lawler
New York-18	Pat Ryan (D+1)	Colin Schmitt
Ohio-09	Marcy Kaptur (R+3)	J. R. Majewski
Oregon-04 (open)	(D+4) Val Hoyle	Alek Sharlatov
Texas-28	Henry Cuellar (D+3)	Cassy Garcia
Virginia-07	Abigail Spanberger (D+1)	Yesli Vega
Democrat tossup (21 Dem, 0 Rep)		
Alaska-00	Mary Peltola (R+8)	Sarah Palin; R: Nicholas Begich
California-13 (open)	(D+4) Adam Gray	John Duarte
Illinois-17 (open)	(D+2) Eric Sorensen	Esther Joy King
Indiana-01	Frank J. Mrvan (D+3)	Jennifer-Ruth Green
Kansas-03	Sharice Davids (R+1)	Amanda Adkins
Maine-02	Jared Golden (R+6)	Bruce Poliquin
Michigan-07	Elissa Slotkin (R+2)	Tom Barrett
Minnesota-02	Angie Craig (D+1)	Tyler Kistner
New Hampshire-01 (even)	Chris Pappas	Karoline Leavitt
Nevada-01	Dina Titus (D+3)	Mark Robertson
Nevada-03	Susie Lee (D+1)	April Becker
New York-19 (open) (even)	Josh Riley	Marcus Milinaro
Ohio-13 (open)	(R+1) Emilia Sykes	Madison Gesiatto Gilbert
Oregon-05 (open)	(D+2) Jamie McLeod-Skinner	Lori Chavez DeRemer
Oregon-06 (new seat)	(D+4) Andrea Salinas	Mike Erickson
Pennsylvania-07	Susan Wild (R+2)	Lisa Scheller
Pennsylvania-08	Matt Cartwright (R+4)	Jim Bognet
Pennsylvania-17 (open) (even)	Christopher Deluzio	Jeremy Shaffer
Rhode Island-02 (open)	(D+4) Seth Magaziner	Allan Fung
Virginia-02	Elaine Luria (R+2)	Jen Kiggans
Washington-08	Kim Schrier (D+1)	Matt Larkin

REPUBLICANS		
Likely R (8 Rep, 4 Dem)		**Rival candidate**
California-03 (open)	(R+4) Kevin Kiley	Kermit Jones
California-40	Young Kim (R+2)	Asif Mahmood
Florida-13 (vacant)	(R+6) Anna Paulina Luna	Eric Lynn
Florida-15 (new seat)	(R+4) Laurel Lee	Alan Cohn
Iowa-02	Ashley Hinson (R+4)	Liz Mathis
Michigan-10 (open)	(R+3) John James	Carl Marlinga
Minnesota-01	Brad Finstad (R+7)	Jeff Ettinger
Montana-01 (new seat))	(R+6) Ryan Zinke	Monica Tranel
New York-02	Andrew Garbarino (R+3)	Jackie Gordon
New York-11	Nicole Malliotakis (R+6)	Max Rose
Tennessee-05 (open)	(R+9) Andy Ogles	Heidi Campbell
Texas-15 (open)	(R+1) Monica De La Cruz	Michelle Vallejo
Lean R (6 Rep, 5 Dem)		
Arizona-02	Tom O'Halleran (R+6)	Eli Crane
Arizona-06 (open)	(R+3) Juan Ciscomani	Kirsten Engel
California-41	Ken Calvert (R+3)	Will Rollins
California-45	Michelle Steel (D+2)	Jay Chen
Florida-27 (even)	Maria Elvira Salazar	Annette Tadeo
Iowa-01	Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R+3)	Christina Bohannan
Iowa-03	Cindy Axne (R+3)	Zach Nunn
New Jersey-07	Tom Malinowski (R+1)	Thomas Kean Jr.
New York-01 (open)	(R+3) Nicholas LaLota	Bridget Fleming
Washington-03 (open)	(R+5) Joe Kent	Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Wisconsin-03 (open)	(R+4) Derrick Van Orden	Brad Pfaff
Republican tossup (10 Rep, 0 Dem)		
Arizona-01	David Schweikert (R+2)	Jevin Hodge
California-22	David Valadao (D+5)	Rudy Salas
California-27	Mike Garcia (D+4)	Christy Smith
Colorado-08 (new seat) (even)	Barbara Kirkmeyer	Yadira Caraveo
North Carolina-13 (open)	(R+2) Bo Hines	Wiley Nickel
Nebraska-02 (even)	Don Bacon	Tony Vargas
New Mexico-02	Yvette Herrell (D+1)	Gabriel Vasquez
New York-22 (open)	(D+1) Brandon Williams	Francis Conole
Ohio-01	Steve Chabot (D+2)	Greg Landsman
Texas-34 (merged seat)	(D+9) Mayra Flores	Vicente Gonzalez Jr.

GOVERNORS – Competitive races

DEMOKRATEN momentan 16 Posten		
Likely D		**Rival candidate**
Connecticut	Ned Lamont	Bob Stefanowski
Michigan	Gretchen Whitmer	Tudor Dixon
Minnesota	Tim Walz	Scott Jensen
Pennsylvania (open)	Josh Shapiro	Doug Mastriano
Lean D		
Maine	Janet Mills	Paul LePage
New Mexico	Michelle Lujan Grisham	Mark Ronchetti
Democratic tossup		
Kansas	Laura Kelly	Derek Schmidt
Nevada	Steve Sisolak	Joe Lombardo
Oregon (open)	Tina Kotek	Christine Drazen; (I) Betsy Johnson
Wisconsin	Tony Evers	Tim Michels

REPUBLICANS (20 held seats)		
Solid R		**Rival candidate**
Massachusetts (open)	Maura Healey	Geoff Diehl
Maryland (open)	Wes Moore	Dan Cox
Likely R		
Alaska	Mike Dunleavy	Les Gara
Florida	Ron DeSantis	(C) Charlie Crist
Oklahoma	Kevin Stitt	Joy Hofmeister
Texas	Greg Abbott	Beto O'Rourke
Lean R		
Georgia	Brian Kemp	Stacey Abrams
Republican tossup		
Arizona (open)	Kari Lake	Katie Hobbs

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BUCKING THE TREND?

An Analysis of the 2022 Midterm Elections

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The 2022 midterms are the first elections to take place after the pandemic and the attempt by former president Donald Trump to overturn his loss in the 2020 presidential election. They are seen not only as a referendum on Democratic President Joe Biden and his narrow congressional majority, but also as a test of sentiment for the political and social situation in the United States in the face of multiple crises. Historically, midterm elections have almost always brought bad results for the president's party in Congress. As we currently have a 50-50 Senate, and Republicans need only five seats to retake the House majority, under normal circumstances we would be all but certain to see the 2022 midterms result in Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. But why are most observers not expecting a Republican landslide?

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The dynamics of the 2022 midterms are shaped by overlapping and, in some cases, conflicting developments. While high inflation, the impression of a cooling economy and low approval ratings for President Biden are playing into the hands of Republicans, there are other factors that give Democrats a tailwind in the election campaign this year, such as the question of abortion access and the successful passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. But a key motivating factor for Democratic voters could come from someone who is not even on the ballot: Donald Trump. The former President involved himself in this year's GOP primary contests, in a way and on a scale that has no precedent in modern American politics.

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The author points out that Trump's interference in the candidate selection process and their broad endorsement of Trump's „Big Lie" of stealing the 2020 election will likely cost Republicans seats they could have won. At the same time, the Republican party has become more diverse in terms of race and gender. Finally, the author gives a preview of what might be expected from a Republican congressional majority in 2023.

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