



THE COOK
**POLITICAL
REPORT**
WITH AMY WALTER

Road Map to the 2026 Midterms & Beyond

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41st International Sweetener Symposium
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The opinions presented are those of the presenter only.



By 38%-59%, **Trump** approval underwater

Source: August 2026 CPR PollTracker

Military action in Iran has come at a significant political cost to Trump and Republicans

No “Rally Around the Flag” effect here:

- **Lack of perceived threat from Tehran:** prior to strikes, just 33% of voters favored military action in Iran, 49% opposed (*Feb. YouGov poll*)
- **Iran Deal skepticism:** 60% of voters believe U.S. involvement “wasn’t worth it,” 63% say they don’t expect “truce” to last (*June Reuters poll*)
- **Inflationary aftershocks:** Strait of Hormuz not just about gas prices – fertilizer, food prices too
- **Divide within the MAGA base:** just 53% of Republicans approve of MOU with Iran, vs. 81% who approve of Trump overall (*July YouGov poll*)



Trump has fallen sharply among Latinos, Independents

Electoral Subgroup	Nov. 2024 Trump %	July 2026 Approval	Difference
Whites w/ college degs.	43% 55%	37%	-6
Seniors (65+)	51% 48%	44%	-7
18-29 Year Olds	39% 58%	29%	-10
Men	55% 43%	43%	-12
Women	46% 53%	34%	-12
Republicans	95% 4%	81%	-14
Non-college whites	64% 35%	49%	-15
Hispanics/Latinos	48% 51%	33%	-15
Independents	48% 48%	26%	-22



Source: Pew Research Center Validated Voter Survey, Cook Political Report PollTracker

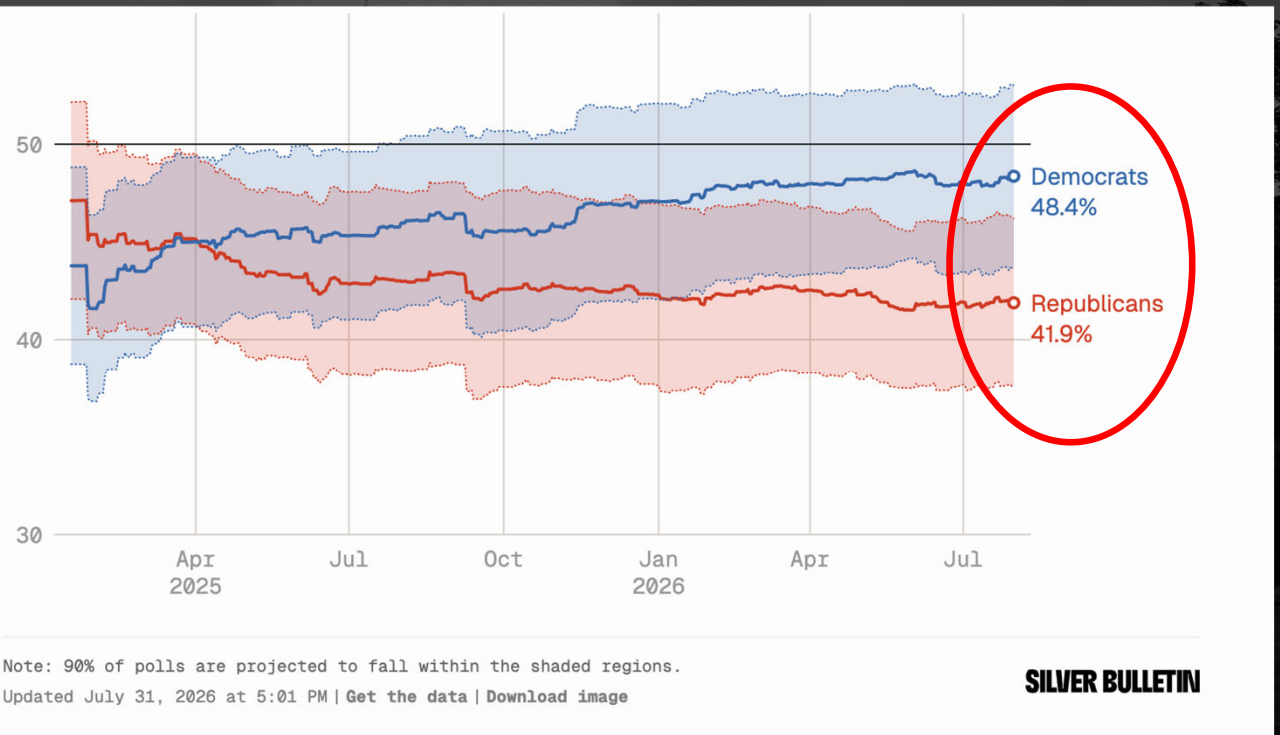
Republicans in Congress have “flexed back” at Trump, but mostly in symbolic ways



Recent moves defying the White House:

- **Venezuela:** five Senate Rs broke ranks to vote for war powers resolution to require congressional approval of further action
- **Healthcare:** 17 House Rs voted w/ Dems to extend enhanced ACA subsidies for three years
- **Appropriations:** 35 House Rs voted to override Trump's veto of flood control & pipeline projects
- **Iran:** Six Senate/House Rs broke ranks to vote for resolution to end U.S. involvement
- **“Anti-Weaponization:”** Senate Republicans demanded axing \$1.8 billion compensation fund as requirement for passing reconciliation 2.0

But, **Dems'** lead on the congressional ballot hasn't widened by as much as **Trump's** approval has fallen



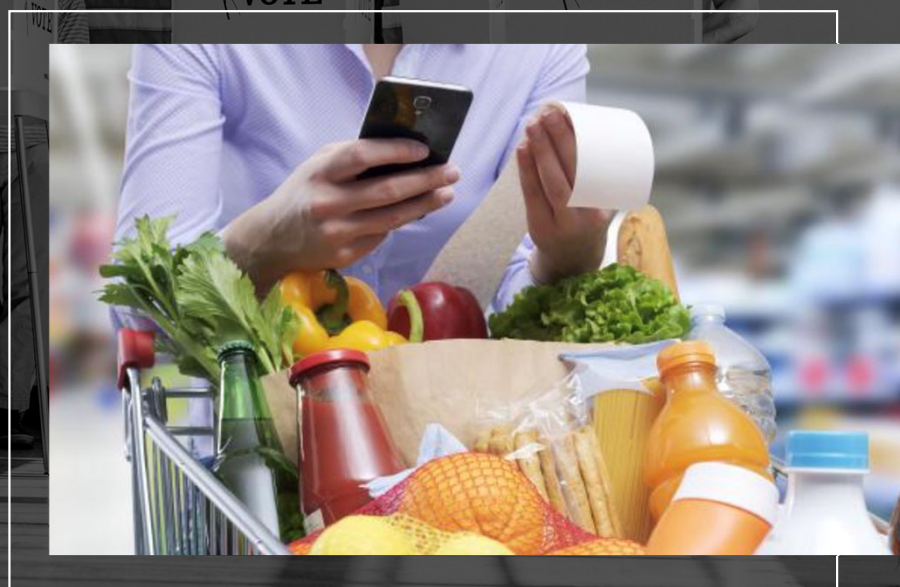
Source: Silver Bulletin July 2026 generic congressional ballot average

Three Warning Signs for Republicans in 2026



1

**Trump/GOP live &
die by voters' mood
on cost of living**



In reversal of first term, **Trump** approval on handling the economy underwater at 35%-62%



Consumer confidence down 32% since November 2024 – and hit an *all-time* low in May 2026 (*University of Michigan/Conference Board, CPR PollTracker*)

Trump Affordability Agenda: no substitute for a fully open Strait of Hormuz

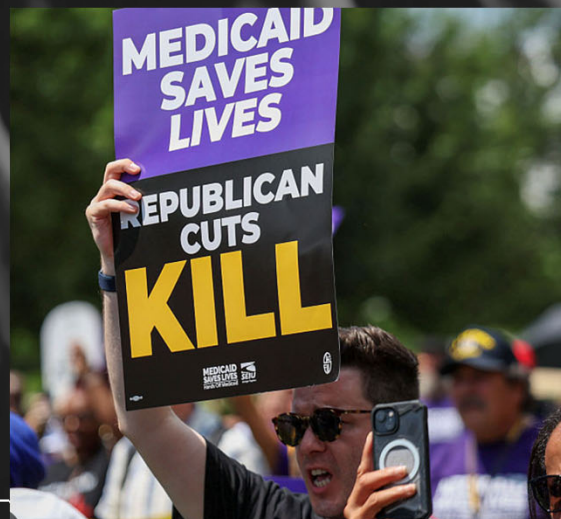
Broad Strokes of admin's pitch to voters:

- **Trump Accounts:** \$1,000 Treasury deposits for children born 2025-2028 (part of OBBBA)
- **"Tariff Dividends:"** \$2,000 checks to all but highest-income Americans (highly unlikely)
- **Credit Card Interest Rates:** call for a one-year 10% cap (unlikely to pass Congress)
- **Prescription Drugs:** deal with Pharma for discounts via TrumpRx, but most ineligible
- **Fuel prices:** gas tax holiday, Jones Act waiver
- **Bipartisan Housing Act:** cuts regulations to spur new construction (but Trump didn't sign)



2

Healthcare provisions of
Trump reconciliation bill
play into **Dems'** hands



Trump 2.0: OBBBA's health provisions a tough sell

Reconciliation bill's healthcare implications:

- **Work requirements:** starting in 2027, adults must work or volunteer 80 hours per month to maintain Medicaid/SNAP eligibility
- **Deep cuts:** \$800B in Medicaid cuts by capping provider tax/matching funds, CBO projects up to 11M could lose coverage
- **Not addressed:** Enhanced ACA subsidies expired at the end of 2025, premiums could rise 110%+ for most marketplace enrollees



A few **Trump** positions popular, but **Dems** poised to harness anger over health costs, Iran War

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NBC NEWS

DECISION 2024

CBS NEWS POLL | YouGov

Quinnipiac
UNIVERSITY / Poll

AtlasIntel

Trump stance...		Favor	Oppose
Ban transgender athletes from women's sports		64%	26%
Deport immigrants living in U.S. illegally		54%	43%
Make 2017 tax cuts permanent in OBBBA		50%	48%
Use military force to overthrow Nicolas Maduro		40%	45%
Tactics used by Immig. & Cust. Enforcement (ICE)		37%	51%
Decision to go to war with Iran		30%	64%
Decrease federal spending on Medicaid		29%	62%
Let enhanced Obamacare (ACA) subsidies expire		28%	68%

3

Partisan engagement
gap benefitted **Trump** in
2024 but could boost
Democrats in 2026

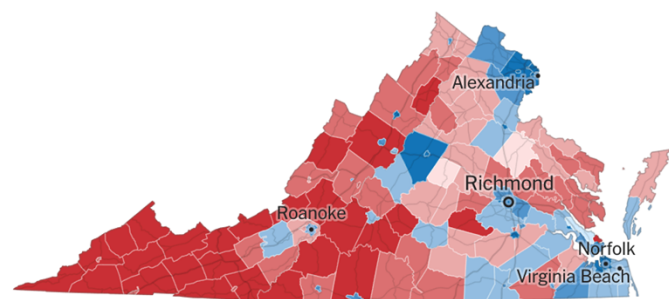
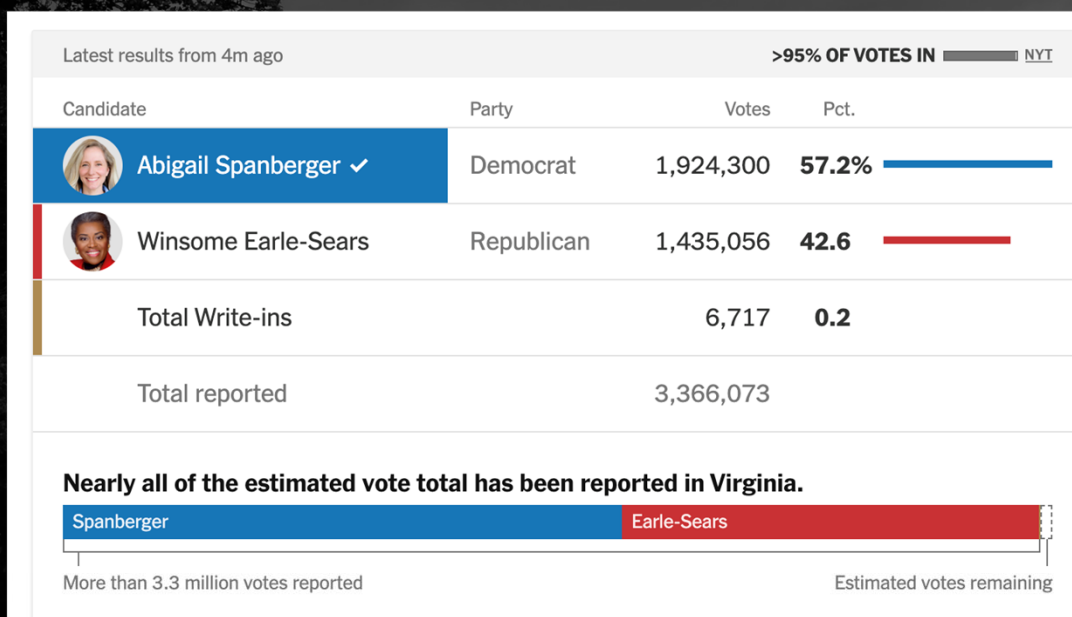


Dem Discontent vs. MAGA Malaise?



Just 30% of voters have positive view of the Democratic Party, but 74% of **Dems** say they're "extremely motivated" to vote in 2026, vs. 61% of **Republicans** (May 2026 CPR Battleground poll)

November: Virginia governor results



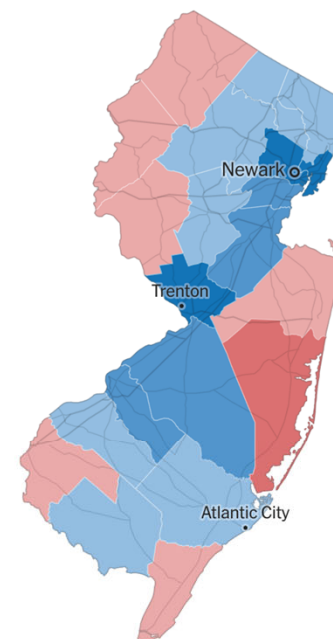
Spanberger captured 83% of Harris's 2024 vote total, **Earle-Sears** won just 69% of Trump's

November: New Jersey governor results

Latest results from 2:34 PM ET

>95% OF VOTES IN 

Candidate	Party	Votes	Pct.
 Mikie Sherrill ✓	Democrat	1,830,620	56.5% 
 Jack Ciattarelli	Republican	1,392,697	43.0 
Total reported		3,242,563	



Sherrill captured 83% of Harris's votes,
Ciattarelli won just 71% of Trump's

December: Tennessee 7th special election results

WINNER ✓

Matt Van Epps, a Republican, wins the Seventh District special election in Tennessee.

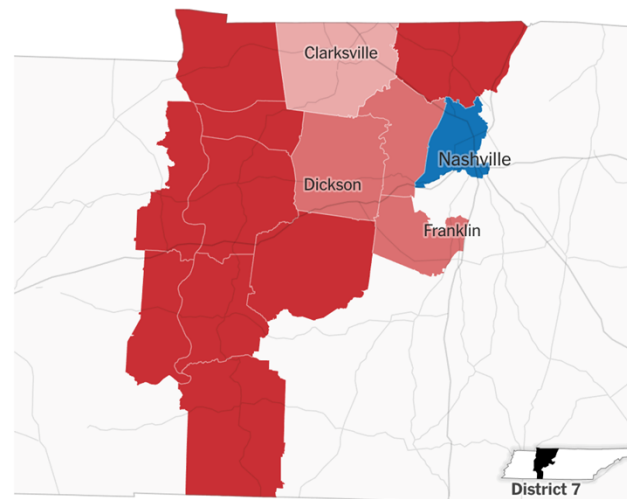
Race called by The Associated Press.



Latest results from Dec. 9

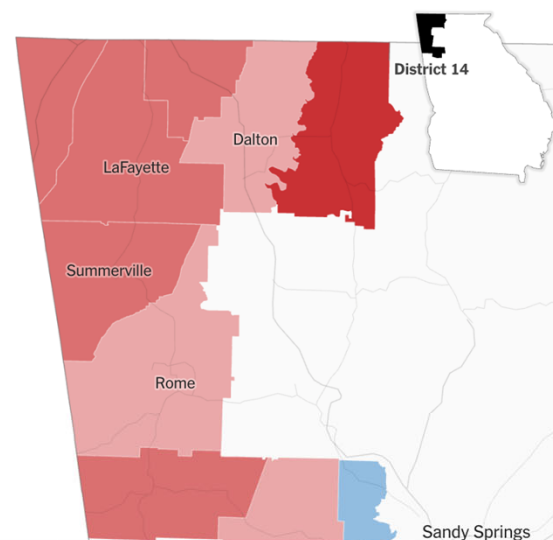
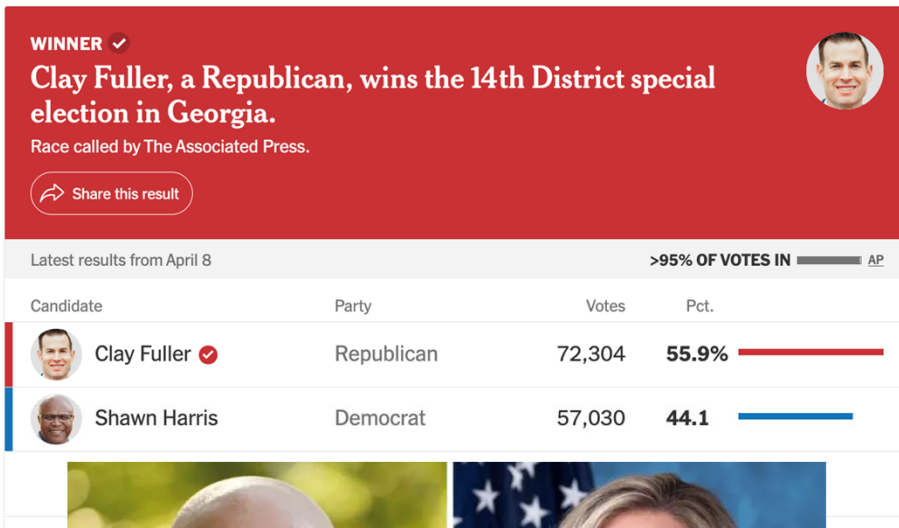
VOTE TOTALS CERTIFIED ✓

Candidate	Party	Votes	Pct.
 Matt Van Epps ✓	Republican	97,034	53.9%
 Aftyn Behn	Democrat	81,109	45.1



Behn captured 64% of Harris's votes,
Van Epps won just 48% of Trump's

April: Georgia 14th special election results



Harris captured 41% of Harris's votes,
Fuller won just 30% of Trump's

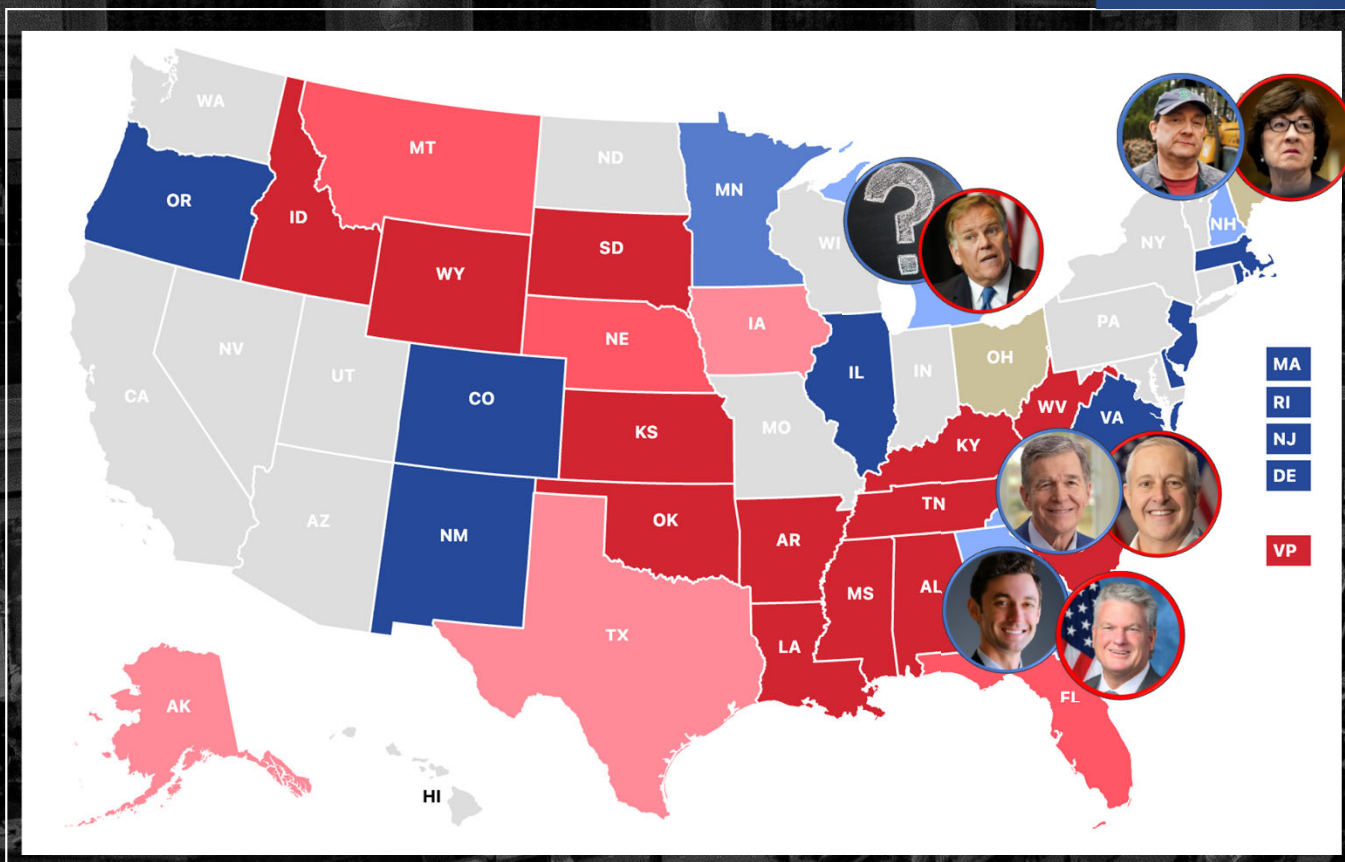
But geography and
money could insulate
Senate (and maybe
House) Republicans



Senate: **53R-47D**,
with both parties
defending two highly
competitive states

Key battleground states:

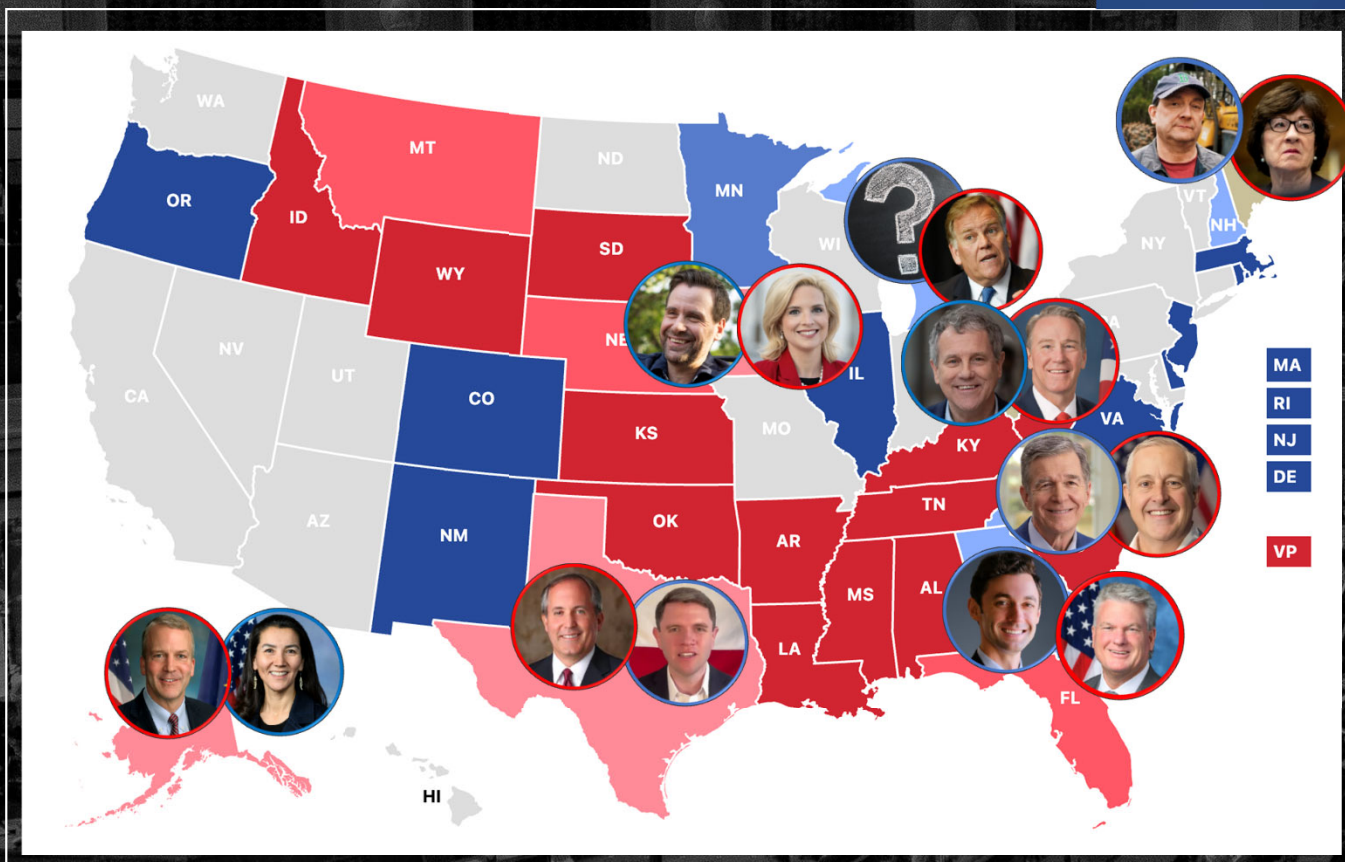
Maine (Collins)
North Carolina (OPEN)
Georgia (Ossoff)
Michigan (OPEN)



Senate: To win control, **Dems** would need to reach into pro-**Trump** states

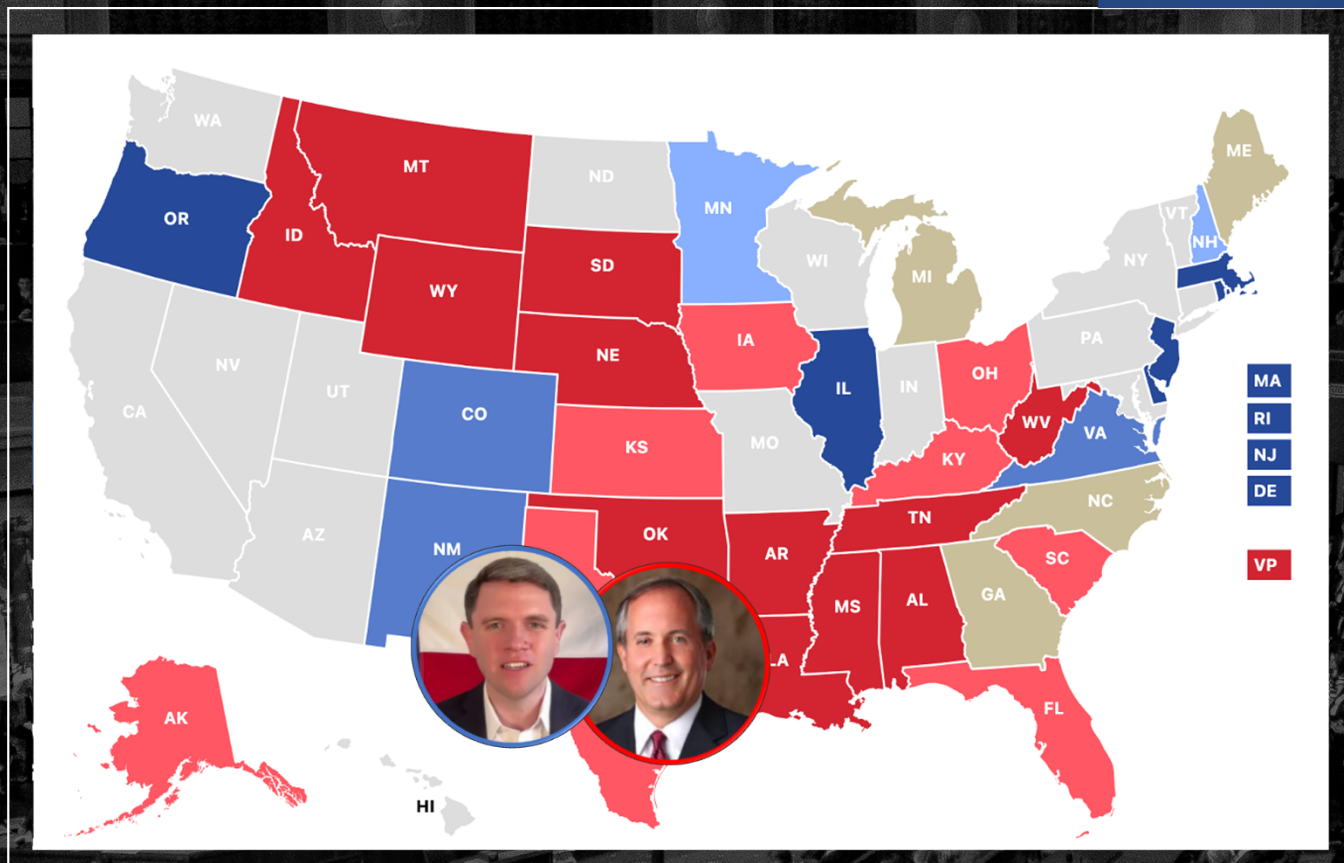
Key Dem “reach” states:

Alaska (Sullivan)
Iowa (OPEN)
Ohio (Husted)
Texas (OPEN)



Texas: Cornyn's primary defeat gives Dems a rare opening

Ken Paxton (R) vs.
James Talarico (D)



Maine: Will Collins withstand a post- Platner Dem reset?

Sen. Susan Collins (R)
Troy Jackson (D)



Michigan: Good or Bad Use of AI?

Mike Rogers (R)

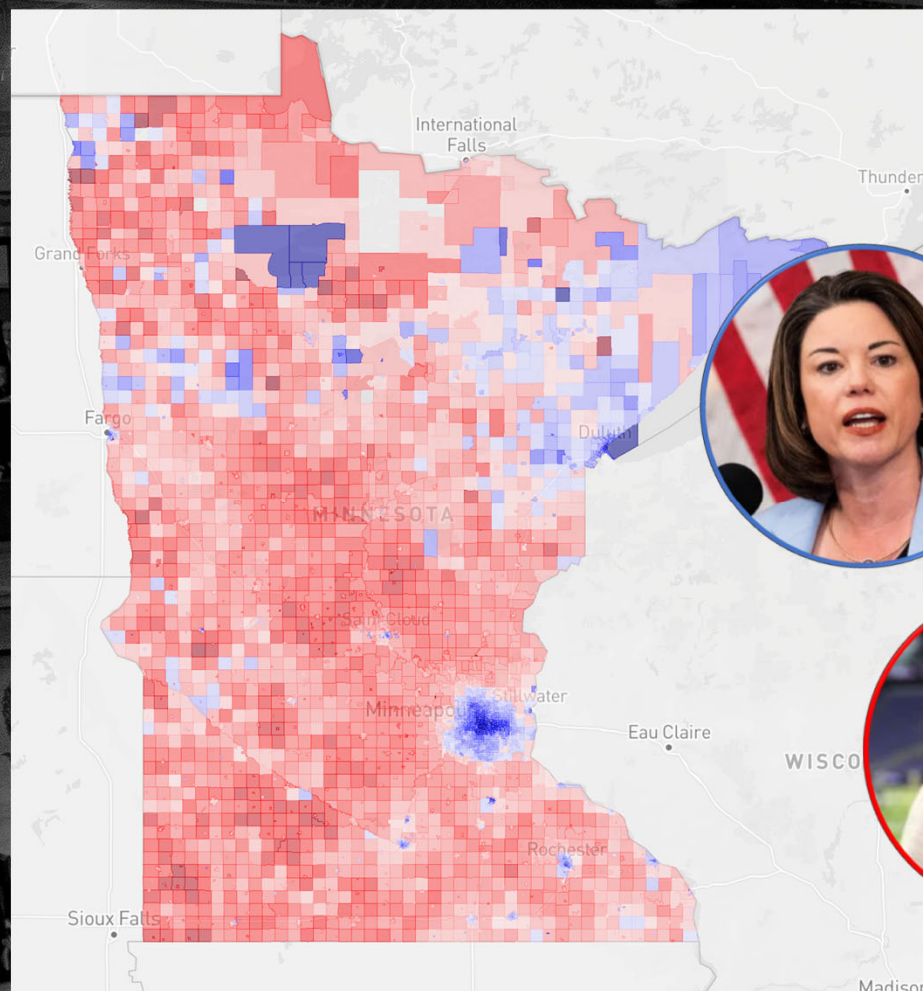
Abdul El-Sayed (D)
Haley Stevens (D)



Spotlight: Minnesota Senate

Angie Craig (DFL)
Peggy Flanagan (DFL)

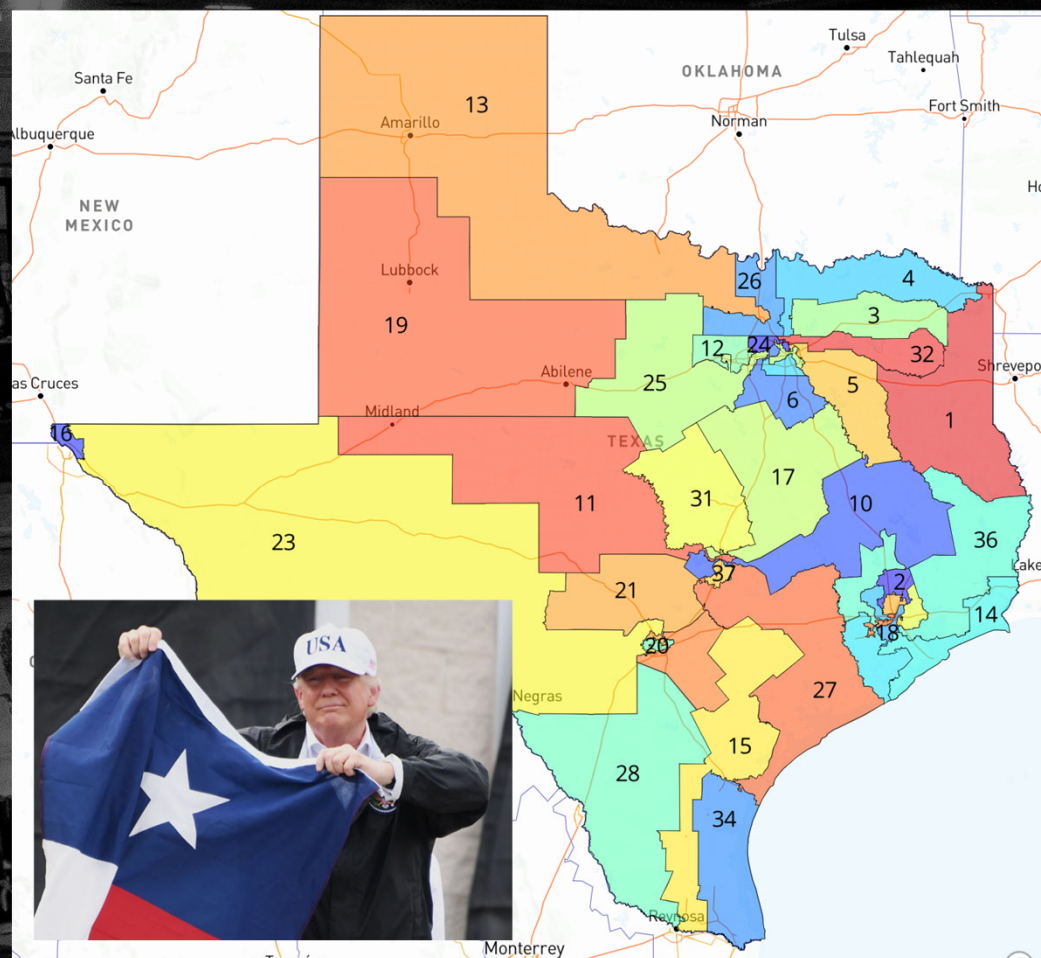
Michele Tafoya (R)
Royce White (R)
Adam Schwarze (R)



House (220R-215D):
Fate of GOP majority
depends on money & mid-
decade redistricting war



Henry Cuellar (TX-28)
Vicente Gonzalez (TX-34)



Meet the California “Gavin-Mander”

**Five Republican
seats in deep trouble:**

CA-01 (Vacant)
Kevin Kiley (CA-03)
David Valadao (CA-22)
Ken Calvert (CA-41)
Darrell Issa (CA-48)



Not to be outdone, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a new map targeting four Democratic seats

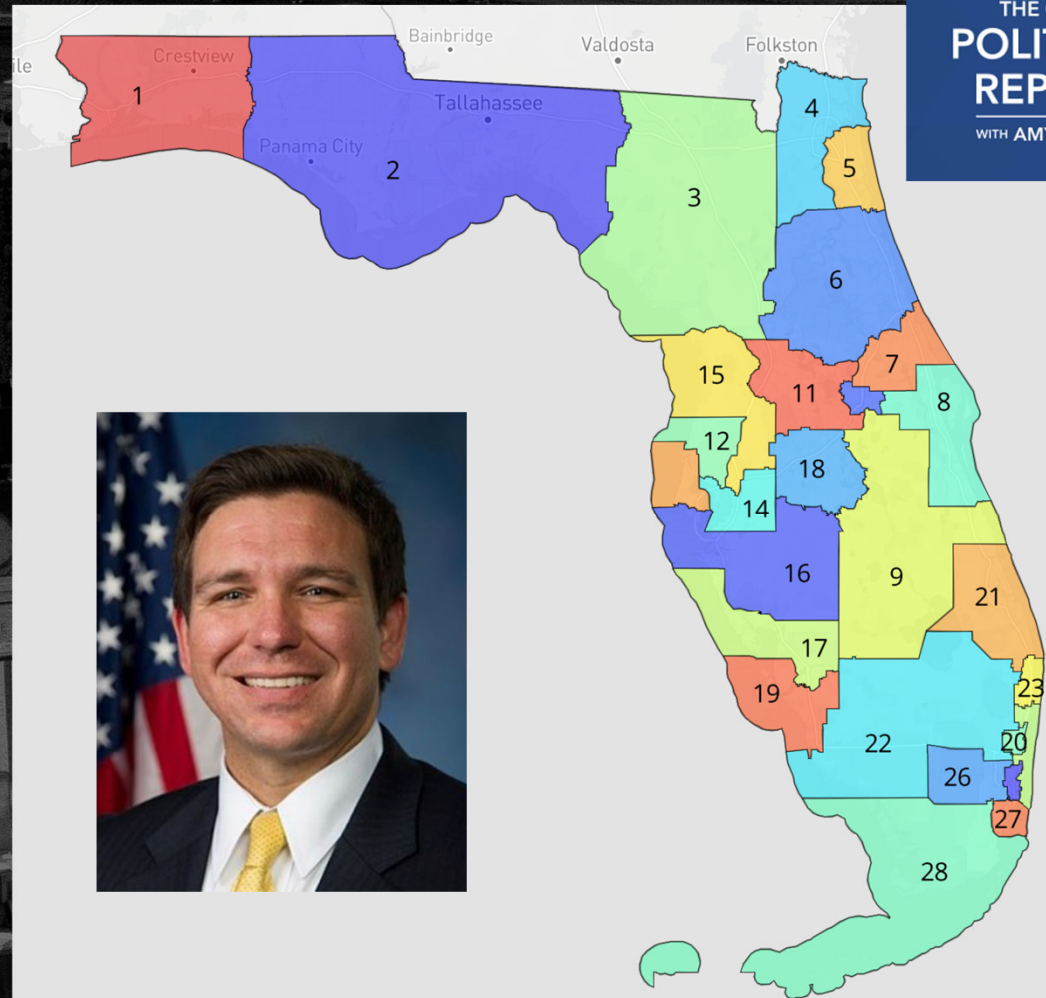
Four Dem seats in deep trouble:

Darren Soto (FL-09)

Kathy Castor (FL-14)

Jared Moskowitz (FL-23)

Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-25)



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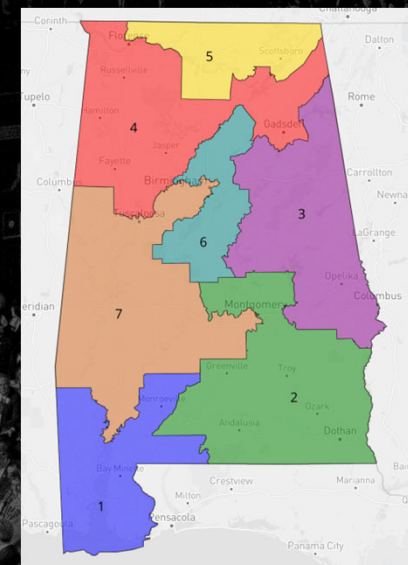
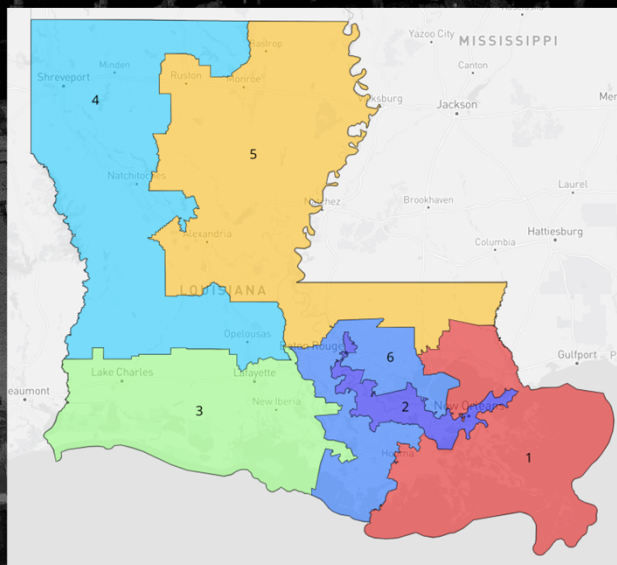
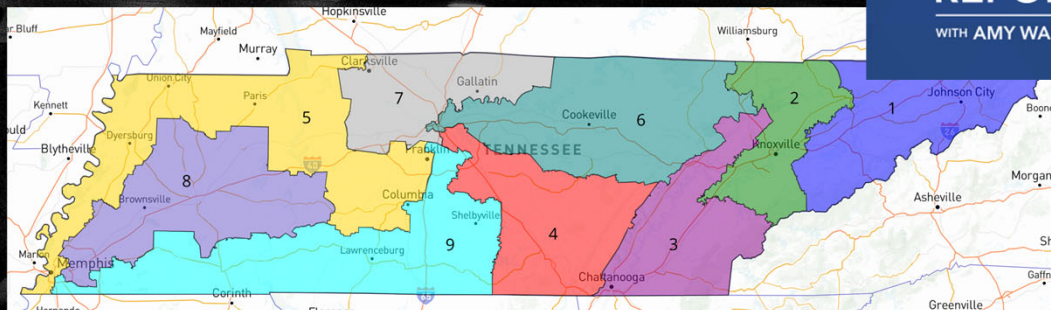
And, Supreme Court VRA ruling spurring elimination of Black majority seats across the Deep South

Three Dem seats effectively
eliminated for 2026:

Shomari Figures (AL-02)

Cleo Fields (LA-06)

Steve Cohen (TN-09)



Redistricting Scorecard: **GOP** poised to net 5-6 seats

New Map	Dem Shift	GOP Shift
Texas	-3.5 Seats	+3.5 Seats
California	+4.5 Seats	-4.5 Seats
North Carolina	-0.5 Seats	+0.5 Seats
Utah	+1 Seat	-1 Seat
Ohio	-0.5 Seats	+0.5 Seats
Florida	-3 Seats	+3 Seats
Tennessee	-1 Seat	+1 Seats
Louisiana	-1 Seat	+1 Seat
Alabama	-1 Seat	+1 Seat
Missouri	-1 Seat	+1 Seat
<i>Potential Net Result</i>	<i>-6 Seats</i>	<i>+6 Seats</i>



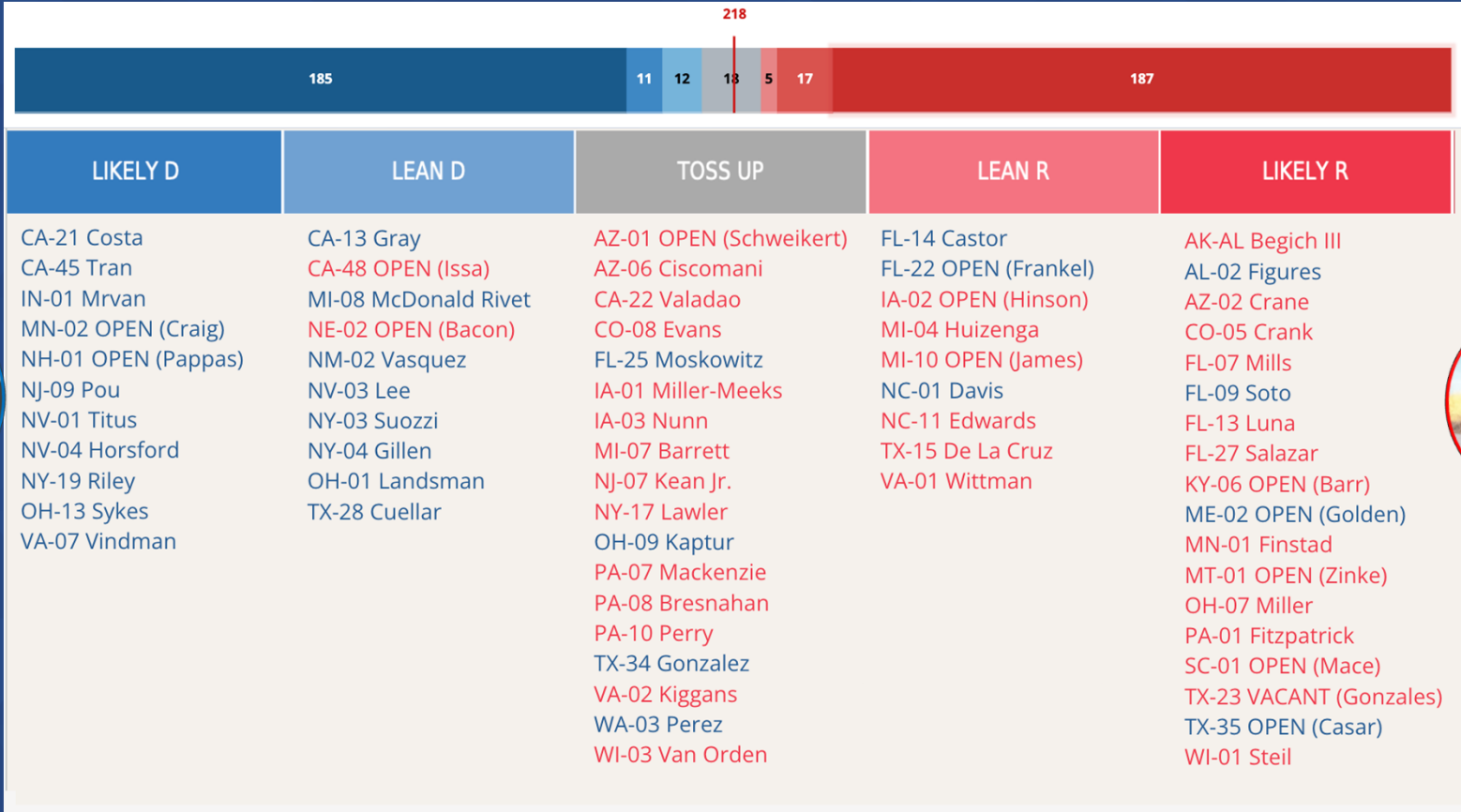
Money: **GOP** in better financial shape vs. 2018 and poised to go nuclear on **Dems** in attack ads

Could GOP dollars help mitigate losses?

- **New MAGA Inc. PAC:** \$401MM on hand, thanks to OpenAI's president, et. al. – but how much will it actually spend in 2026?
- **DNC cash woes:** RNC held \$125M to -\$4M cash advantage over the DNC as of June
- **SCOTUS decision:** benefits GOP by ending coordinated spending limits between parties & candidates, erasing Dem small dollar edge
- **Focus on DSA/socialism:** can GOP link mainstream Dems to far-left candidates?



2026 House Ratings: Dems modest favorites for control



**Rep. Marcy
Kaptur (D)**
Ohio's 9th



**Rep. Gabe
Evans (R)**
Colorado's 8th

Mass exodus: Get ready for historic House turnover



**Rep. Jared
Golden (D)**
Maine's 2nd

Democratic Seats (23)

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	REASON	RATING
CA-11	Nancy Pelosi	Retiring	Solid D
CA-26	Julia Brownley	Retiring	Solid D
CA-38	Linda Sánchez	Running in CA-41	Solid D
FL-24	Frederica Wilson	Retiring	Solid D
IL-02	Robin Kelly	Ran for Senate	Solid D
IL-04	Chuy García	Retiring	Solid D
IL-07	Danny Davis	Retiring	Solid D
IL-08	Raja Krishnamoorthi	Ran for Senate	Solid D
IL-09	Jan Schakowsky	Retiring	Solid D
MA-06	Seth Moulton	Running for Senate	Solid D
MD-05	Steny Hoyer	Retiring	Solid D
ME-02	Jared Golden	Retiring	Likely R
MI-11	Haley Stevens	Running for Senate	Solid D
MN-02	Angie Craig	Running for Senate	Likely D
NH-01	Chris Pappas	Running for Senate	Likely D
NJ-12	Bonnie Watson Coleman	Retiring	Solid D
NY-07	Nydia Velázquez	Retiring	Solid D
NY-12	Jerry Nadler	Retiring	Solid D
PA-03	Dwight Evans	Retiring	Solid D
TN-09	Steve Cohen	Retiring	Solid R
TX-09	Al Green	Running in TX-18	Solid R
TX-30	Jasmine Crockett	Ran for Senate	Solid D
TX-32	Julie Johnson	Running in TX-33	Solid R
TX-35	Greg Casar	Running in TX-37	Likely R

Republican Seats (39)

DISTRICT	INCUMBENT	REASON	RATING
AL-01	Barry Moore	Running for Senate	Solid R
AZ-01	David Schweikert	Running for Governor	Toss Up
AZ-05	Andy Biggs	Running for Governor	Solid R
CA-48	Darrell Issa	Retiring	Lean D
FL-02	Neal Dunn	Retiring	Solid R
FL-11	Daniel Webster	Retiring	Solid R
FL-16	Vern Buchanan	Retiring	Solid R
FL-19	Byron Donalds	Running for Governor	Solid R
GA-01	Buddy Carter	Running for Senate	Solid R
GA-10	Mike Collins	Running for Senate	Solid R
GA-11	Barry Loudermilk	Retiring	Solid R
IA-02	Ashley Hinson	Running for Senate	Likely R
IA-04	Randy Feenstra	Running for Governor	Solid R
KY-04	Thomas Massie	Lost primary	Solid R
KY-06	Andy Barr	Running for Senate	Solid R
LA-05	Julia Letlow	Running for Senate	Solid R
MI-10	John James	Running for Governor	Lean R
MO-06	Sam Graves	Retiring	Solid R
MT-01	Ryan Zinke	Retiring	Likely R
NE-02	Don Bacon	Retiring	Lean D
NV-02	Mark Amodei	Retiring	Solid R
NY-21	Elise Stefanik	Retiring	Solid R
OK-01	Kevin Hern	Running for Senate	Solid R
SC-01	Nancy Mace	Running for Governor	Solid R
SC-05	Ralph Norman	Running for Governor	Solid R
SD-AL	Dusty Johnson	Running for Governor	Solid R
TN-06	John Rose	Running for Governor	Solid R
TX-02	Dan Crenshaw	Lost Primary	Solid R
TX-08	Morgan Luttrell	Retiring	Solid R
TX-10	Michael McCaul	Retiring	Solid R
TX-19	Jodey Arrington	Retiring	Solid R
TX-21	Chip Roy	Running for Attorney General	Solid R
TX-22	Troy Nehls	Retiring	Solid R
TX-23	Tony Gonzales	Dropped out	Likely R
TX-38	Wesley Hunt	Ran for Senate	Solid R
UT-01	Blake Moore	Running in UT-02	Solid D
WA-04	Dan Newhouse	Retiring	Solid R
WI-07	Tom Tiffany	Running for Governor	Solid R
WY-AL	Harriet Hageman	Running for Senate	Solid R

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**Rep. Don
Bacon (R)**
Nebraska's 2nd

Aggies to Watch: leaders in line & members at risk

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Current GOP Chairs

John Boozman (AR)
Senate Ag Chair

G.T. Thompson (PA)
House Ag Chair



Potential Dem Chairs

Cory Booker (NJ)
(Klobuchar exiting)

Shontel Brown (OH)
(Craig exiting)



Ag Republicans at Risk

Vulnerable GOP:

Zach Nunn (IA-03)
Rob Bresnahan (PA-08)
Derrick Van Orden (WI-03)



Ag Democrats at Risk

Vulnerable Dems:

Don Davis (NC-01)
Kristen M. Rivet (MI-08)
Adam Gray (CA-13)



**2026 Governors: 18
GOP, 18 Dem—held
up for grabs, with six
at high risk of flipping**

Dem-held Toss Up/Lean R seats:

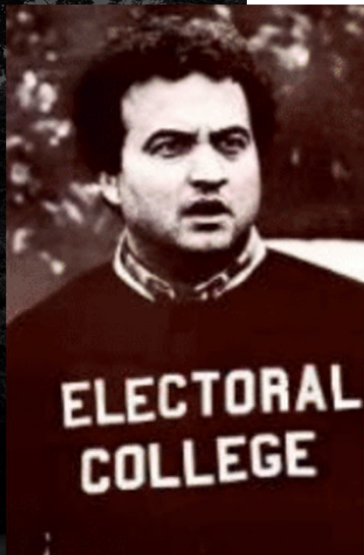
Kansas (OPEN, Kelly)
Wisconsin (OPEN, Evers)

GOP-held Toss Up seats:

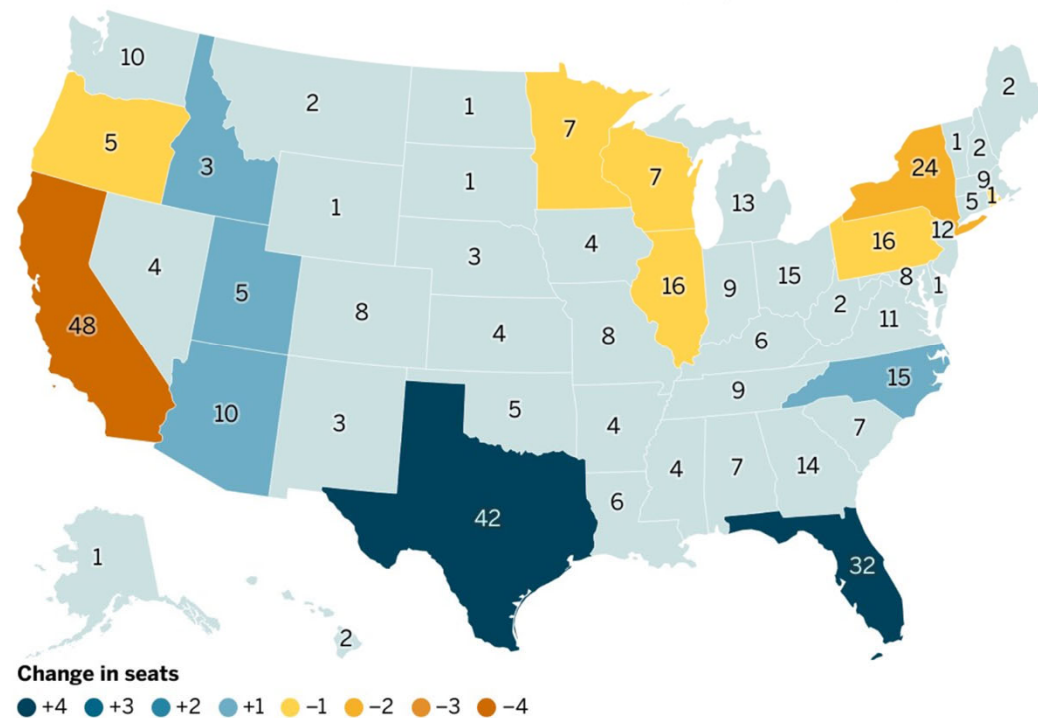
Georgia (OPEN, Kemp)
Iowa (OPEN, Reynolds)
Nevada (Lombardo)
Ohio (OPEN, DeWine)



Looking ahead: Dems have a big math problem



2030 Congressional Reapportionment (2-year trend)



Questions?

IF YOU HIT THIS SIGN,
YOU WILL HIT THAT BRIDGE

