# POLITICAL ISSUE PROFILE:
# What Are The 2026 US Midterms?

## WHAT IS HAPPENING?

On Tuesday 3 November, elections were held across the United States to choose the 120th Congress, that will serve to represent the citizens of the United States, make laws, and scrutinise the President. While the full election results will take several days, it is clear that the Democrats, the opposition party to Donald Trump's Republicans, will replace the Republicans as the majority party in both chambers.



## WHAT ARE MIDTERMS?

These are elections at the midpoint of a president's four-year term for the House of Representatives and the Senate. They determine which political party controls the *legislative* (law making) branch of the US *federal* (national) government.

These elections decide the make-up of both the House of Representatives, where all 435 seats are up for election because representatives serve fixed, two-year terms and the Senate, where senators serve staggered six-year terms, meaning roughly one-third of the chamber—35 of the 100 seats—are up for election. Across the fifty states, 36 are also having elections for state governor, and numerous local elections. Historically, midterms see lower voter turnout than presidential elections and the result usually favours the party not in the White House.

It is projected that the result will be a "blue wave" (significant Democratic gains) in the House and Senate. *NBC News* has projected that Democrats will achieve 255 in the House (with Republicans having 180 seats) and 53 in the Senate. Democrats have won significant key races in Texas, Michigan, Kansas and Ohio, all states that went Republican in the 2024 presidential race. Democrats have also won key governor races, including many in states for the first time in decades. This means that for 2027-2029, there will be divided party control between the White House and Congress, causing *gridlock* (lack of agreement), between the competing agendas of President Trump and the Democratic Congress.

## WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN ISSUES?

- Voters face high costs for groceries, fuel, housing and healthcare.
- President Trump's war with Iran has dramatically increased energy and gas prices.
- New trade tariffs by President Trump have increased prices on household goods for American consumers.
- Republicans support harsh border crackdowns, while critics highlight the controversial strategies of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers working under Trump's direction.
- Communities are fighting the rapid construction of local AI data-centres across the US.
- Polls show widespread voter concern over the conduct of politicians and the state of democracy.

## DISCUSSION:

*Given that midterms historically see lower voter turnout than presidential elections, does a midterm truly reflect the democratic will of the people?*

*Is it a good idea to have a President's power dependent on the balance of power in Congress?*

*To what extent were these elections about Trump?*

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