

Inside Elections

with
Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

AUGUST 14, 2025

VOLUME 9, NO. 15

Parties Engage in Redistricting Arms Race

By Jacob Rubashkin

In a typical decade, every state redraws its congressional map just once, following the decennial Census. While isolated court rulings may result in a handful of new maps after that, the life expectancy of a congressional district is generally 10 years.

That conventional wisdom is being tested like never before as President Donald Trump pushes for an aggressive redraw of Texas' 38-district strong congressional map, a move that could trigger an unprecedented mid-decade gerrymandering arms race between the two parties and scramble the battle for the House of Representatives next year. Democrats currently need a net gain of just 3 seats to retake control of the House. But in practice, the party will need greater gains thanks to a flurry of GOP redistricting efforts.

While Texas was the first to pursue a redraw, Democratic leaders in California have moved to counter the effects of a new Texas map. Republican states such as Florida, Indiana, and Missouri are coming under pressure to redraw their maps to bolster the House GOP as well. While no state has officially implemented a new map, more than 100 districts across the country could be affected when the dust settles.

The latest developments come as Ohio, too, will redraw its map, thanks to its convoluted redistricting laws. And lingering court cases could force new maps in Utah and Louisiana.

The best case redistricting scenarios for each party look like Republicans gaining a significant advantage in 14 seats they don't currently hold, and Democrats gaining a significant advantage in seven seats they don't currently hold, giving Republicans an overall net advantage relative to the current state of play.

But redrawing a seat to favor one party doesn't guarantee victory. Factors including candidate quality and the national political environment still apply to redrawn districts.

Texas

Everything is bigger in Texas, including the redistricting drama. More than two decades after Texas Republicans launched a controversial

Continued on page 5

2026 House Ratings

Toss-Up (3D, 8R)

AZ 6 (Ciscomani, R)	MI 7 (Barrett, R)	VA 2 (Kiggans, R)
CA 13 (Gray, D)	NC 1 (Davis, D)	
CA 45 (Tran, D)	NE 2 (Open; Bacon, R)	
CO 8 (Evans, R)	NY 17 (Lawler, R)	
IA 1 (Miller-Meeks, R)	PA 7 (Mackenzie, R)	

Tilt Democratic (7D)

CA 47 (Min, D)
ME 2 (Golden, D)
MI 8 (McDonald Rivet, D)
NM 2 (Vasquez, D)
NY 4 (Gillen, D)
TX 34 (Gonzalez, D)
WA 3 (Perez, D)

Tilt Republican (5R)

AZ 1 (Schweikert, R)
MI 10 (Open; James, R)
NJ 7 (Kean Jr., R)
PA 10 (Perry, R)
WI 3 (Van Orden, R)

Lean Democratic (16D)

CA 21 (Costa, D)	NV 1 (Titus, D)
CA 27 (Whitesides, D)	NV 3 (Lee, D)
CA 49 (Levin, D)	NV 4 (Horsford, D)
CA 9 (Harder, D)	NY 19 (Riley, D)
FL 23 (Moskowitz, D)	NY 3 (Suozi, D)
IN 1 (Mrvan, D)	TX 28 (Cuellar, D)
MN 2 (Open; Craig, DFL)	VA 7 (Vindman, D)
NH 1 (Open; Pappas, D)	
NJ 9 (Pou, D)	

Lean Republican (5R)

CA 22 (Valadao, R)
CA 40 (Kim, R)
CA 41 (Calvert, R)
IA 3 (Nunn, R)
PA 8 (Bresnahan, R)

Likely Democratic (8D)

CA 25 (Ruiz, D)	PA 17 (Deluzio, D)
IL 17 (Sorensen, D)	
MI 3 (Scholten, D)	
NH 2 (Goodlander, D)	
NY 18 (Ryan, D)	
NY 22 (Mannion, D)	
OR 5 (Bynum, D)	

Likely Republican (11R)

AK AL (Begich, R)	PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)
AZ 2 (Crane, R)	TX 15 (De La Cruz, R)
CA 3 (Kiley, R)	VA 1 (Wittman, R)
CO 5 (Crank, R)	WI 1 (Steil, R)
FL 13 (Luna, R)	
IA 2 (Hinson, R)	
MI 4 (Huizenga, R)	

Pending New Map (3D)

OH 1 (Landsman, D)	Solid	181	176
OH 9 (Kaptur, D)	Likely/Lean/Tilt	21	31
OH 13 (Sykes, D)	Total	202	207
	Toss-up		11
	Ohio map TBD		15
	Needed for majority		218

*Takeovers in Italics. # moved benefiting Democrats. * moved benefiting Republicans*

CALENDAR

Sept. 9	Virginia's 11th District Special General Election
Sept. 23	Arizona's 7th District Special General Election
Oct. 7	Tennessee's 7th District Special Primary Elections
Nov. 4	Texas' 18th District Special Primary Election

Ohio Senate: Brown Decision Shifts Race Out of Solid

By Nathan L. Gonzales & Jacob Rubashkin

Former Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown plans to run against GOP Sen. Jon Husted in the 2026 Ohio Senate race, according to Jeremy Pelzer of Cleveland.com.

Brown's entry would give Democrats their top potential recruit, since Brown has been elected statewide five times in the Buckeye State. That's good news for the party, which needs a net gain of four seats to reclaim control of the Senate next year.

Recruiting Brown is an essential step in the Democratic path to the majority, since it helps expand a difficult Senate map. But it's not a guarantee of success. Brown, 72, just lost re-election by nearly 4 points to Republican Bernie Moreno, and Donald Trump finished ahead of Kamala Harris by 11 points, proving that winning statewide in Ohio is difficult for any Democrat anymore.

According to Inside Elections' Baseline, a typical statewide Republican has a 10-point advantage, 54-44 percent in Ohio. And Brown had a Vote-Above-Replacement score of 2 in 2024, meaning he outperformed a typical Democratic candidate by 2 points. In 2018, Brown's VAR score was 9.3, but that was with a sizable spending advantage against a flawed GOP opponent when the statewide Baseline was a more narrow 8.5 points.

But with a recently former senator running, Republicans have to take the race seriously now and will have to spend time, money and energy defending the seat. We're changing our Inside Elections rating to Lean Republican. Even though Brown just lost, the midterm environment will likely be better for Democrats overall, setting up a close contest.

The 2026 race is to fill the remainder of the term. Husted was appointed to the seat by GOP Gov. Mike DeWine when Sen. JD Vance became vice president. So the winner of this race will have to run again in 2028.

Husted, 57, hasn't been elected statewide on his own since his 2014 re-election as Secretary of State, when he earned a 7.4 VAR against Democrat Nina Turner in what turned out to be a good Republican year in President Barack Obama's second midterm. Husted was elected lieutenant governor on a ticket with DeWine in 2018 and 2022.

Axios previously reported that Brown was interviewing campaign managers.

2026 Senate Ratings

Toss-up (3)

MI Open (Peters, D)

Ossoff (D-Ga.)

NC Open (Tillis, R)

Tilt Democratic (0)

Tilt Republican (1)

Collins (R-Maine)

Lean Democratic (1)

NH Open (Shaheen, D)

Lean Republican (1)

Husted (R-Ohio)#

Likely Democratic (1)

MN Open (Smith, DFL)

Likely Republican (2)

Ernst (R-Iowa)

Cornyn (R-Texas)

Solid Democratic (9)

IL Open (Durbin, D)

Booker (D-N.J.)

Coons (D-Del.)

Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)

Lujan (D-N.M.)

Markey (D-Mass.)

Merkley (D-Ore.)

Reed (D-R.I.)

Warner (D-Va.)

Solid Republican (17)

AL Open (Tuberville, R)

KY Open (McConnell, R)

Capito (R-W.V.)

Cassidy (R-Lou.)

Cotton (R-Ark.)

Daines (R-Mont.)

Graham (R-S.C.)

Hagerty (R-Tenn.)

Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)

Lummis (R-Wyo.)

Marshall (R-Kan.)

Moody (R-Fl.)

Mullin (R-Okla.)

Ricketts (R-Neb.)

Risch (R-Idaho)

Rounds (R-S.D.)

Sullivan (R-Ak.)

*Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans*

For a party looking for a fresh face after their aging president was defeated for re-election, Democrats' chances of winning a Senate majority depend on the quality and performance of older candidates. Brown is 72 years old. In North Carolina, former Gov. Roy Cooper is 68. And in Maine, Gov. Janet Mills, who has not announced a challenge to Sen. Susan Collins, is 77.



Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

810 7th Street NE, Washington, DC, 20002
202-546-2822



Nathan L. Gonzales
Editor & Publisher
nathan@insideelections.com
@nathanlgonzales



Jacob Rubashkin
Deputy Editor
jacob@insideelections.com
@jacוברubashkin



Bradley Wascher
Contributing Analyst
bradley@insideelections.com
@bradwascher

Nathaniel Rakich
Contributing Analyst
@baseballot

Will Taylor
Production Artist
will@insideelections.com

Stuart Rothenberg
Senior Editor
stu@insideelections.com

@InsideElections facebook.com/InsideElections YouTube.com/@InsideElections

Copyright 2025, Inside Elections LLC. All rights reserved.

Report Shorts

Alabama Senate. GOP Rep. Barry Moore entered the open seat race to replace GOP Sen. Tommy Tuberville, who is running for governor. Moore joins state Attorney General Steve Marshall and potentially others in the race. Inside Elections did an initial deep dive into the race in the June 20 issue. Solid Republican.

Alabama's 1st District. Former Rep. Jerry Carl is set to announce his candidacy for the open seat created by Barry Moore's Senate bid. Carl lost to Moore 52-48 percent in a 2024 GOP primary after a court-forced redistricting pitted the two incumbents against each other. Since Carl has already represented more than half of this southern Alabama district previously, he'd start as the early favorite to win this iteration of the seat without Moore in the race. Trump received 77 percent in the district in 2024, so the Republican primary is the most important race. Solid Republican.

California Governor. Former Vice President Kamala Harris is not running for governor, but plenty of other candidates are. On the Democratic side, former Rep. Katie Porter, former congressman/former HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, state Senate President Toni Atkins, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, former state controller Betty Yee and others are running. Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, political consultant Steve Hilton and others are running on the Republican side.

One recent poll showed more than a third of the electorate was undecided and no candidate received as much as 20 percent. In California, all candidates run together in the primary and the top two, regardless of party, move on to the general election. Solid Democratic.

Georgia Senate. Rep. Mike Collins is in, along with former Tennessee football coach Derek Dooley, who has the backing of Gov.



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Jon Ossoff

Brian Kemp. Dooley is the son of legendary Univ. of Georgia head football coach Vince Dooley and Barbara Dooley, who ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 2002. State Insurance Commissioner John King dropped out and will run for re-

election. Rep. Buddy Carter is in the GOP Senate race as well. The winner will face Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff in one of the most competitive races in the country. Toss-up.

Georgia Governor. Former DeKalb County CEO Mike Thurmond entered the race on the Democratic side, joining former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, state Sen. Jason Esteves, and state Rep. Derrick Jackson. President Donald Trump endorsed Lt. Gov. Burt Jones in the Republican race, giving him a prized asset against state Attorney General Chris Carr. But Carr defeated a Trump-endorsed candidate in his 2022 race. This primary could get more complicated if Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who publicly would not go along with Trump's attempt to find votes in the 2020 election, joins the GOP race. Battleground.

Georgia's 10th District. State Rep. Houston Gaines is in the race to replace Mike Collins, who is running for the Senate, but there's still time for other candidates to join. Trump finished ahead of Harris, 60-39 percent in the 2024 presidential race, so the GOP primary is the race to watch. The district extends from some eastern Atlanta exurbs to Athens, home of the University of Georgia. Solid Republican.

Iowa Senate. Jackie Norris, First Lady Michelle Obama's former chief of staff, and Paralympian/state Rep. Josh Turek joined an already crowded Democratic field to take on GOP Sen. Joni Ernst. Already running are professional baseball pitcher/state Rep. J.D. Scholten, state Sen. Zach Wahls and veteran/local chamber of commerce executive director Nathan Sage. Norris is also the Des Moines School Board Chair and wife of John Norris, who ran unsuccessfully for Iowa's 4th District in 2002 and for governor in 2018. Iowa votes Republican in normal circumstances but the race could get more competitive. Likely Republican.

North Carolina Senate. Unsurprisingly, but after deadline of the last issue, former Gov. Roy Cooper entered the race and is the likely Democratic nominee. As expected, former Rep. Wiley Nickel dropped

Continued on page 4

2026 Governor Ratings

Battleground

Democratic-held (8D)

Hobbs (D-Ariz.)
Hochul (D-N.Y.)
Shapiro (D-Penn.)
Evers (D-Wisc.)
KS Open (Kelly, D)
ME Open (Mills, D)
MI Open (Whitmer, D)
NM Open (Lujan Grisham, D)

Republican-held (3R)

Lombardo (R-Nev.)
GA Open (Kemp, R)
IA Open (Reynolds, R)

Solid Democratic (10D)

CA Open (Newsom, D)
CO Open (Polis, D)
Lamont (D-Conn.)
Green (D-Hawaii)
Pritzker (D-Ill.)
Moore (D-Md.)
Healey (D-Mass.)
Walz (D-Minn.)
Kotek (D-Ore.)
McKee (D-R.I.)

Solid Republican (15R)

AL Open (Ivey, R)
AK Open (Dunleavy, R)
FL Open (DeSantis, R)
OH Open (DeWine, R)
OK Open (Stitt, R)
SC Open (McMaster, R)
TN Open (Lee, R)
WY Open (Gordon, R)
Sanders (R-Ark.)
Little (R-Idaho)
Pillen (R-Neb.)
Ayotte (R-N.H.)
Rhoden (R-S.D.)
Abbott (R-Texas)
Scott (R-Vt.)

2025 RACES

Tilt Democratic

VA Open (Youngkin, R)

Lean Democratic

NJ Open (Murphy, D)

Continued from page 3

out. On the Republican side, recently former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Whatley joined the race with Trump's blessing after Lara Trump declined to run. The seat is open after GOP Sen. Thom Tillis announced he won't run for re-election, and is one of the most competitive races in the country. Toss-up.

South Carolina Governor. It's a very crowded Republican

race to replace term-limited GOP Gov. Henry McMaster. Reps. Nancy Mace and Ralph Norman recently jumped in, joining state Attorney General Alan Wilson (son of Rep. Joe Wilson), Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette and state Sen. Josh Kimbrell. State Rep. Jermaine



Nancy Mace

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Johnson is the most prominent Democrat running, but the most important race at this point is the Republican primary. Solid Republican.

South Carolina's 1st District. State Rep. Mark Smith is running, but the race is still taking shape to replace Mace, who is running for governor. Trump finished ahead of Harris 58-43 percent in 2024, according to The Downballot, so the seat is on the outskirts of Democratic takeover opportunities. The district includes coastal South Carolina and suburban Charleston. Solid Republican.

South Carolina's 5th District. State Sen. Wes Climer is running to replace Norman, who is running for governor. But the race is still taking shape. Trump finished ahead of Harris 61-38 percent in 2024, so the Republican primary should effectively choose the next member of Congress. The district includes some suburbs of Charlotte, North Carolina such as Rock Hill, as well as a large swath of rural area in north and central South Carolina. Solid Republican.

Tennessee Governor. GOP Sen. Marsha Blackburn officially entered the race and is the favorite in the primary and general elections. But Rep. John Rose is also running on the Republican side. Solid Republican.

Tennessee Senate. Blackburn is not up for re-election in 2026 (Republican Bill Hagerty is), so if she is elected governor, she'll vacate her Senate seat and appoint her successor. Most of the congressional delegation seems to be interested in the appointment, but Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, a retired pro wrestler better known by his WWE moniker Kane, is close to Blackburn and could get the nod.

Wisconsin Governor. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers will not run for re-election and competitive primaries look likely for both parties. On the Democratic side, Lt. Gov. Sarah Rodriguez is in and likely to be joined by state Attorney General Josh Kaul. Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley is considering a run and former lieutenant governor/Senate nominee Mandela Barnes hasn't ruled it out. State Sens. Kelda Roys (who finished third in the 2018 primary) and Chris Larson

2026 House Open Seats

District	Outgoing Member	2024 Results	2024 Presidential	2026 Rating
AL-01	Barry Moore, R	78%	Trump 77%	Solid Republican
AZ-05	Andy Biggs, R	60%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
FL-19	Byron Donalds, R	66%	Trump 64%	Solid Republican
GA-01	Buddy Carter, R	62%	Trump 58%	Solid Republican
GA-10	Mike Collins, R	63%	Trump 60%	Solid Republican
IA-04	Randy Feenstra, R	67%	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
IL-02	Robin Kelly, D	68%	Harris 66%	Solid Democratic
IL-07	Danny Davis, D	83%	Harris 81%	Solid Democratic
IL-08	Raja Krishnamoorthi, D	57%	Harris 53%	Solid Democratic
IL-09	Jan Schakowsky, D	68%	Harris 68%	Solid Democratic
KY-06	Andy Barr, R	63%	Trump 57%	Solid Republican
MI-10	John James, R	51%	Trump 52%	Tilt Republican
MI-11	Haley Stevens, D	58%	Harris 57%	Solid Democratic
MN-02	Angie Craig, DFL	56%	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic
NE-02	Don Bacon, R	51%	Harris 52%	Toss-up
NH-01	Chris Pappas, D	54%	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic
PA-03	Dwight Evans, D	Unopposed	Harris 88%	Solid Democratic
SC-01	Nancy Mace, R	58%	Trump 56%	Solid Republican
SC-05	Ralph Norman, R	64%	Trump 61%	Solid Republican
SD-AL	Dusty Johnson, R	72%	Trump 63%	Solid Republican
TN-06	John Rose, R	68%	Trump 67%	Solid Republican

and former state Party Chairman Ben Wikler are mentioned as well.

On the Republican side, Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann and Bill Berrien announced before Evers made his decision public. Rep. Tom Tiffany is considering a bid as well. 2024 Senate nominee Eric Hovde and state Sens. Patrick Testin and Mary Felzkowski are mentioned as well. Battleground.

Washington's 3rd District. GOP State Sen. John Braun announced his challenge to Democratic Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez in one of the most competitive seats in the country. Perez is one of the



Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Marie Gluesenkamp Perez

few Democrats to represent a district where Trump finished ahead of Harris (50-47 percent, according to The Downballot). The Pacific Northwest wasn't as terrible for Democrats in 2024 as most of the rest of the country and the congresswoman

has proven to be a formidable foe for Republicans, but this will be her first test against a candidate who isn't Joe Kent, whom she defeated by 3.8 points in 2024 and less than a point (0.8 percent) in 2022. Tilt Democratic.



Continued from page 1

redistricting plan that helped the GOP secure a majority of the state’s congressional delegation for the first time since Reconstruction, the state’s leaders are now pushing to squeeze out as many as five incumbent Democratic members of Congress.

Under pressure from Trump and his team, and emboldened by significant gains among Hispanic and Latino voters, Texas Republicans have proposed a new map under which Trump would have finished ahead of Kamala Harris in 30 of the state’s 38 districts, compared to 27 of 38 under the current map. The proposed map reconfigures the Houston, Dallas, and Austin areas to create three new Trump-won districts (and force several Democratic incumbents into running against each other), and also makes two South Texas districts currently held by Democrats more Republican.

The affected members could include Reps. Greg Casar and Lloyd Doggett in Austin, Reps. Julie Johnson and Marc Veasey in Dallas/Fort Worth, and Reps. Lizzie Fletcher, Sylvia Garcia and Al Green in Houston, as well as the eventual winner of the vacant 18th District. In South Texas, perennial GOP targets Henry Cuellar and Vicente Gonzalez would find their districts even redder than before.

In a strong year, Republicans could gain five seats thanks to the new map. Even in a middling year, the party would likely gain at least two seats, the 9th and 32nd Districts. But Democrats are optimistic about competing not only in Cuellar and Gonzalez’s districts but also putting the new 35th District, a Trump +10 seat in the San Antonio area, on the map as well. That district, as well as several other reconfigured seats, have majority-Hispanic populations, reflecting a bet from Republicans that their increased margins among Hispanic voters are sustainable.

In a last-ditch effort to prevent passage of the new map, Texas Democrats have fled the state, denying Republicans a quorum and mirroring their predecessors in the 2003 fight, which saw Democratic legislators camp out in Oklahoma and New Mexico to delay redistricting. This time, the Texas delegation has traveled farther afield, to Democratic strongholds in New York, Illinois, and California, as GOP Gov. Greg Abbott and state Attorney General Ken Paxton maneuver back home to remove the absentee lawmakers from their seats via judicial means.

It’s not obvious how long the Texas legislators (who would be arrested and brought to the statehouse if they return to the state) can delay the ultimate passage of the map. While the current special session ends on Sept. 19, Abbott has said he will continue to call special sessions until the maps pass. ABC News has reported that the absentee Democrats will return to the state for a second special session, but the caucus has disputed that reporting.

California

As Texas moves forward with its redistricting effort, California Democrats led by Gov. Gavin Newsom and Reps. Zoe Lofgren and Pete Aguilar are racing to counteract any Republican gains in the Lone Star State with their own map.

State legislators are currently working on a map that could result in a net gain of 5 seats for Democrats by redrawing the districts of GOP Reps. Doug LaMalfa (Northeastern California), Kevin Kiley (Northeastern Sacramento suburbs and Lake Tahoe to Death Valley), David Valadao (Southern Central Valley and eastern Bakersfield area), Ken Calvert (Southern Riverside suburbs to Palm Springs), and Darrell Issa (Southern Riverside County and inland San Diego County), according to Lofgren. No matter what, Valadao and Calvert were already set to be top targets for Democrats next year.

If Democrats have their way, California might send just four Republicans to Congress from 52 districts: Reps. Tom McClintock, Vince

2026 Open Senate Seats

State	Outgoing Senator	2024 Presidential	2026 Rating
Alabama	Tommy Tuberville, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
Illinois	Dick Durbin, D	Harris 54%	Solid Democratic
Kentucky	Mitch McConnell, R	Trump 65%	Solid Republican
Michigan	Gary Peters, D	Trump 49.7%	Toss-up
Minnesota	Tina Smith, DFL	Harris 51%	Likely Democratic
New Hampshire	Jeanne Shaheen, D	Harris 51%	Lean Democratic
North Carolina	Thom Tillis, R	Trump 51%	Toss-up

Fong, and Jay Obernolte and Orange County Rep. Young Kim, whose district Democrats have targeted in the past but who might be drawn into a safer seat. A map is likely to be released on Friday.

Unlike in Texas, where the state legislature is the final authority on redistricting, California has used an independent redistricting commission to draw its maps since the 2010 Census. Because voters instituted that process via a statewide ballot initiative, California Democrats will need voters to approve an exception to that process as well, meaning another ballot initiative approving or rejecting the map drawn by the legislature. That vote would take place on November 4 of this year, with ballot language finalized by August 22.

California ballot initiative battles are often costly — spending on 2024’s ballot measures averaged \$100 million each — and notoriously difficult to poll. There’s no guarantee that voters will go along with the plan, but if they do, Democrats could see a significant net gain, as well as shore up their own vulnerable members.

Florida

Like Texas, Florida passed an aggressively drawn map following the 2020 Census that has helped the GOP secure a 20-8 advantage in the state’s congressional delegation.

State lawmakers are laying the groundwork to twist the screws on Democrats even further before the 2026 elections. State House Speaker Daniel Perez recently empaneled a special committee on redistricting, and GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis has said he supports redrawing the maps as well, with an eye toward flipping as many as three seats. Some Democratic strategists are girding for even more losses. Potential targets include Orlando Reps. Maxwell Frost and Darren Soto and South Florida Reps. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Jared Moskowitz and Lois Frankel.

Florida also has a constitutional amendment on the books outlawing partisan gerrymandering, though a recent state Supreme Court case may have fatally wounded that law and DeSantis has implied he sees the law as federally unconstitutional.

Indiana

Trump and his allies have put pressure on Indiana to redraw its map to obliterate Democrat Frank Mrvan’s 1st District, one of two seats in the state Republicans don’t hold. Vice President J.D. Vance traveled to Indiana to meet with GOP Gov. Mike Braun on the issue last week. So far, there doesn’t appear to be much outward enthusiasm for a redraw in the Hoosier State, and several GOP members of the state legislature have already come out against the plan.

But that could change as Trump ratchets up the heat on the strongly

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Republican state. A new map could result in a GOP net gain of at least one seat.

Missouri

Republicans currently hold a 6-2 advantage in the Show Me State's delegation, but could redraw the map to make re-election difficult for Kansas City Rep. Emanuel Cleaver. Republicans chose not to target Cleaver's district after the 2020 Census, but under pressure from Trump, state leaders are considering a special redistricting session. State Senate President Pro Temp Cindy O'Laughlin told Bloomberg that Republicans' goal was "to be sure Missouri's representation matches Missouri's Christian conservative majority," though Cleaver is one of the only pastors in Congress.

Democrats in the state Senate may take advantage of Missouri's filibuster rules to delay passage of a new map, but Republicans have parliamentary tactics to circumvent a filibuster — though that could grind other legislative business to a halt.

If Missouri Republicans do muscle through a new map, there's some concern that cracking Cleaver's heavily Democratic seat could put surrounding GOP members at risk of losing their own seats in a wave year. But the most likely outcome would be a GOP net gain of one seat.

Ohio

Unlike the other states on this list, Ohio is required to redraw its map ahead of the 2026 elections. While Republicans must navigate a three-stage process, they are in control of redistricting and will target at least two of the five Democratic-held seats in the Buckeye State: Marcy Kaptur's 9th District and Emilia Sykes' 13th district.

If state GOP lawmakers want to get even more aggressive, they could go after 1st District Rep. Greg Landsman, though his Cincinnati-based seat has more protections under state law. Depending on the choices state legislators make, Republicans could see a gain of one to three seats.

Utah

A looming state court ruling could mandate a new map in the Beehive State, where Republicans overruled an independent redistricting commission and dismantled a competitive Salt Lake City-based district following the 2020 Census. But even if the pro-redistricting plaintiffs win, time is running out for a new map before the 2026 elections, especially because it's not obvious what redrawing process the court would mandate. GOP Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, the state's top election official, has said maps must be finalized by Nov. 1 — though the courts might be able to push back that deadline if necessary. If a new map is implemented ahead of 2026, it is possible Democrats could see a one-seat net gain.

Inside Elections Podcast

Nathan, Jacob and expert guests discuss the latest election news in a nonpartisan, data-driven and accessible way.

Episode 52: Nathan and Jacob unveil the new Senate race ratings and break down the fight for the majority

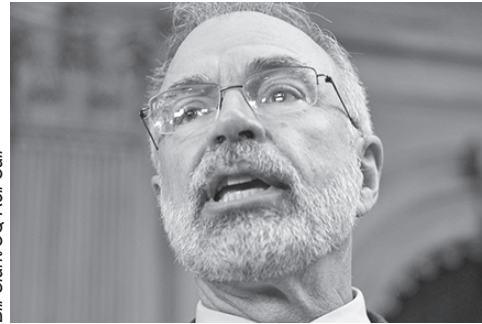
Episode 51: All things Iowa, including races for Senate, House and governor with Brianne Pfannenstiel of The Des Moines Register

Louisiana

The U.S. Supreme Court punted on a decision regarding Louisiana's current congressional map, which the court itself is largely responsible for after invalidating the Pelican State's previous map. The justices will hear more arguments about the legality of Louisiana's map later this fall. That court case could also have wide-reaching implications for what remains of the Voting Rights Act, and could eventually affect maps across the South, in Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi and elsewhere. Republicans could see a net gain of one seat with a favorable ruling.

Maryland

Democratic leaders in Maryland are talking about using their complete control of the Old Line State to offset Texas' redistricting plan.



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Andy Harris

State Senate President Bill Ferguson said his party is reviewing the state constitution to see if there is a way to redraw the congressional map to push out the last Republican in the state's delegation, Rep. Andy Harris.

Democrats previously tried to draw Harris out of his Eastern Shore seat after the 2020 Census but their initial map was struck down by a court.

Nebraska

There's some chatter that Nebraska Republicans will attempt to redraw the Cornhusker State's three districts to prevent a takeover of the 2nd District, currently represented by the retiring Rep. Don Bacon and just one of three House seats represented by a Republican that voted for Kamala Harris in 2024. But Nebraska's unique state legislature has a filibuster function that Democrats would likely take advantage of to stymie that plan. Last year, Republicans attempted at Trump's urging to change the process by which the state allocates its electoral votes, but were unsuccessful.

New York

Gov. Kathy Hochul has talked a big game about redrawing the Empire State's map to benefit Democrats, but she will probably have to wait until 2028 to do so, thanks to New York's complicated constitutional amendment process. Democrats had the opportunity to redraw the state's map last year but opted not to pursue an aggressive gerrymander, instead boosting their prospects in just one district. In 2021, Democrats had attempted to implement a more overt gerrymander that was struck down by the courts.

The Bottom Line

Gerrymandering is nothing new. The term and practice date back to the time of the Founding Fathers and both parties have made a habit of it ever since. But Trump's push for a multi-state, mid-decade redraw explicitly for partisan purposes is nonetheless unprecedented in modern politics. While the 2010s saw a movement across parties and states toward independent and less partisan redistricting processes, this summer's activity looks likely to push both Republicans and Democrats back toward an older style of aggressive partisan gerrymandering for the foreseeable future.



The Tennis-Serve Election: An Excerpt from the 2026 Almanac of American Politics

By Louis Jacobson

The following is an excerpt from the introductory essay to the 2026 Almanac of American Politics, which has been published after each election going back to 1972. The Almanac includes 2,200 pages with updated chapters on all 435 House members and their districts, all 100 senators, all 50 states and governors, and much more. Jacobson is the chief author.

Imagine a still photograph of a tennis player midserve. His back is arched, his racket dangles behind. His other arm is throwing the ball upwards, awaiting the racket's eventual thwack.

In this moment, the ball hovers in midair. Is it still rising? Or is it dropping? From a still image, it's impossible to know.

This is how I feel about the aftermath of the 2024 elections, including the first few months of President Donald Trump's second term. Has the Democratic Party suffered permanent setbacks in the 2024 election—a turning away by once-core supporters such as Latinos, young voters, and Black voters, and policy losses on such issues as transgender rights and diversity, equity and inclusion? Collectively, will these developments erode the Democratic Party's long-term competitiveness and produce a long-lasting political realignment? Or are the Republican victories and the Democratic defeats of 2024 temporary—destined to reverse again in a coming pendulum swing?

There's evidence in support of both theories.

Republicans have ample reason to feel good about the results of the 2024 election

Not only did Trump in 2024 become just the second GOP presidential nominee to win the popular vote since 1988 (the other was George W. Bush in 2004)—Trump also improved on Republican presidential performance across the U.S.

"Compared with his showing in 2020, Trump didn't pick up a huge amount of ground in many places, but he did gain at least a little bit nearly everywhere," Almanac contributor Geoffrey Skelley wrote for (the sadly shuttered) FiveThirtyEight.com. "This marked the first presidential election since 1976 in which all 51 components of the Electoral College moved in the same direction relative to how they voted four years earlier."

FiveThirtyEight found that more than 9 in 10 voters in 2024 lived in counties that swung right in 2024.

All told, Trump flipped 85 counties that four years earlier had voted for Joe Biden; by contrast, Kamala Harris flipped zero counties Trump had won in 2020. Trump's 2024 flips included some populous locales: Maricopa County, Arizona (Phoenix); Miami-Dade County, Florida (Miami); Riverside County, California (Riverside); San Bernardino County, California (San Bernardino); Tarrant County, Texas (Fort Worth); Hillsborough County, Florida (Tampa); Nassau County, New York (Long Island); Duval County, Florida (Jacksonville); and Fresno County, California (Fresno).

Mark Muro and Shriya Methkuppally of the Brookings Institution calculated that Harris won 427 counties, a decline from the 512 Biden

won in 2020. The share of the nation's GDP generated in Trump-won counties remained a distinct minority, as in recent elections, but it improved from 29 percent in 2020 to 38 percent in 2024.

The share of counties won by a "landslide"—in which one candidate prevailed by at least 20 points—rose from 77.6 percent in 2020 to 80.2 percent in 2024, data from the Cook Political Report with Amy Walter shows. Trump, not Harris, won the vast majority of those counties.

Meanwhile, in the all-important battleground states, Trump went seven for seven in 2024, pushing them all rightward, from 1.4 percentage points redder in Wisconsin to 5.8 points redder in Arizona.

Some of 2024's most striking red shifts came in solidly blue states. Of the 10 states that shifted most aggressively toward Trump in 2024, six were solidly Democratic: New York (a red shift of 10.5 points), New Jersey (10 points), California (9 points), Massachusetts (8.3 points), Rhode Island (seven points), and Hawaii (6.4 points), the Cook Political Report's David Wasserman calculated.

Harris still won these solidly blue states easily—but in the closest one, New Jersey, the trend lines went strongly against Democrats. As NBC's Steve Kornacki has noted, locales such as Perth Amboy, Union City, West New York, Passaic, Dover and North Bergen shifted Republican by 22 to 35 points between 2020 and 2024.

Such pro-Trump shifts spanned demographic groups: The GOP fared its best in decades with Black voters, Latino voters, and young voters. Maps showing county-by-county shifts from 2020 to 2024 are a veritable thicket of red arrows, with barely any blue visible; this was especially true for predominantly Black, Latino, Asian and Native American counties.

Data collected by the New York Times' Nate Cohn shows that from 2012—the last pre-Trump presidential election—to 2024, Black voters turned 19 points redder, Hispanic voters 29 points redder, Asian Americans 17 points redder, and voters ages 18 to 29 14 points redder.

As for the defining demographic shift of the Trump era—the rightward movement of white, noncollege-degree voters—this group has become 13 points redder since 2012, while nonwhite, noncollege-degree voters have become 37 points redder.

Some of this shifting stemmed from weak Democratic turnout; some, apparently, stemmed from persuasion.

"Interviews over the past year with hundreds of working-class minority voters revealed the challenges confronting Democrats as both clear and daunting," Jennifer Medina wrote in a *New York Times* 2024 election postmortem. "For many, hope had already hardened into cynicism. Promises about affordable housing fell flat and promoting accomplishments on insulin prices failed to break through. Simply put, their trust in the Democratic Party was gone."

Daniel Trujillo, an East Las Vegas barbershop owner who watched many of his customers shift from supporting Barack Obama to favoring

Continued on page 8



Continued from page 7

Trump, told Medina, “The right turned blue collar and went full border control, strong economy and law and order. Who doesn’t want that?”

The only group that shifted significantly toward Democrats from 2012 to 2024 were white voters with a college degree; this group became 17 points bluer. But in 2024, their votes weren’t enough to carry Harris to victory. Even voters who liked the Democrats’ agenda on social issues weren’t slam-dunk Harris voters: In all 10 states that had an abortion-related ballot measure in 2024, support for the abortion measure outpaced support for Harris, often by double-digit margins.

It’s easy to see why Democrats were so deflated after the 2024 election. Early in Trump’s second term, approval ratings among Democrats for their own party stood at historic lows, fed by Democratic lawmakers’ inability to block Trump’s unilateral second-term actions. An NBC survey in March 2025 showed Republicans with a four-point advantage on party identification—the Republicans’ largest lead at any point in recent memory.

Noting that three states won by Obama in 2012—Florida, Ohio and Iowa—are no longer considered competitive for Democrats in presidential races, Florida-based Democratic strategist Steve Schale wrote in the *Bulwark*, that this is “not just a canary in a coal mine. It is a massive boulder landing in front of you on the only road home. Even worse, my party has largely avoided reckoning with how big that boulder is.”

Democrats may not need to blow up their party and start from scratch

Yet amid the Democratic doom and gloom, it’s important to remember some context.

First, Trump’s 2024 winning margin was the fourth-smallest in a presidential race since 1960—less than 1.5 percentage points—and Trump didn’t secure a majority of votes cast. That the 2024 race was this close was impressive for the Democrats, given the tides Harris was swimming against.

For instance: Since Richard Nixon, any president with an approval rating higher than 50 percent has won a second term, while any president with an approval rating below 50 percent has lost. Biden’s approval rating going into the 2024 election: 39 percent.

Similarly, every president with a University of Michigan Consumer Sentiment Survey index higher than 82 was re-elected; every one below that mark lost. Biden, at 70.1, had the worst index of any president during that period.

Economic concerns clearly weighed on voters’ minds. An October *New York Times*/Siena College poll found that two-thirds of Trump voters said they’d had to cut back on groceries, compared with one-third of Harris voters who said the same.

And it wasn’t only Trump’s presidential victory that was narrow; the Republican victories in the House and Senate were, too.

The Democrats came within 7,309 votes across three districts (Iowa’s 1st, Colorado’s 8th and Pennsylvania’s 7th) from winning the House majority. That was just 0.005 percent of the House votes cast in 2024, making it the smallest decisive share since at least 1994, *Inside Elections*’ Jacob Rubashkin calculated.

In the Senate, Democratic candidates won races in four battleground states Harris lost: Arizona, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin.

Heading into the 2026 midterms, Democrats can leverage a new and favorable pattern to break these narrow majorities, especially in

the House. A decade or two ago, Republicans tended to fare better in lower-turnout elections, including midterms, because the GOP was disproportionately the party of educated, affluent voters. But in the Trump era, this part of the electorate has become much more Democratic, enabling Democrats to fare well in low-turnout special elections. A good example is the Wisconsin Supreme Court election in April 2025, which the Democratic-aligned candidate won by double digits, just a few months after Trump had won the state.

Trump, by contrast, has built an advantage with low-propensity voters—but these won’t help his party as much during a midterm election. A pre-election NBC national poll found that, among voters who said they follow politics closely, Harris led Trump by five points, and Democrats led Republicans for control of Congress by seven points. By contrast, voters who did not follow politics closely favored Trump over Harris by 14 points and Republicans over Democrats to control Congress by 15 points. Republicans, younger voters and noncollege graduates were all disproportionately represented in the “don’t follow politics” camp.

Republican drop-off in low-turnout elections has been a constant throughout the Trump era. I’ve noticed this in my regular visits to southwestern Pennsylvania to write election postmortems for PoliticsPA. In five blue-collar counties that were ancestrally Democratic but have become solidly Republican—Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland—Republican turnout has dipped noticeably in midterm years when Trump’s name wasn’t on the ballot. By comparison, Democratic turnout in those counties has remained mostly steady between presidential and midterm elections.

Even if Democrats have a good 2026 midterm, the longer term is looking challenging

How the Electoral College map looks today matters less than how it will look starting with the 2032 presidential election.

Based on census data projections, New York University’s Brennan Center for Justice forecasts that solidly red states will gain seats after the 2030 Census, and solidly blue states will lose them.

Specifically, the group’s calculations show Texas on track to gain at least four seats (and possibly five). Florida is poised to gain four, and Utah and Idaho are on track to gain one seat each.

Among blue states, California is on track to lose four seats, New York is set to lose two and Illinois, Minnesota, Oregon and Rhode Island are each poised to lose one. The seven battleground states are more of a wash; North Carolina and Arizona are poised to gain one seat each, while Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are on track to lose one seat each.

A switch of at least 10 electoral votes from solidly red states to solidly blue states will make matters more difficult for any Democratic presidential candidate beginning in 2032.

Even worse for Democrats, reversing these population trends will not be easy or quick. As Almanac contributor Drew Savicki has noted, the 15 fastest-growing metro areas from 2020 to 2024 with at least 500,000 residents are exclusively in states that voted for Trump in 2024—six metro areas in Florida, three in Texas, and one each in Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, North Carolina, South Carolina and Utah.

By the time the next Almanac comes out, I suspect we’ll have a better sense of which direction that tennis ball is heading.

The 2026 Almanac of American Politics is scheduled to be released on September 2. Inside Elections readers can receive a discount by using the code Elections2026 when ordering at the Almanac’s web page.

