

## THE WEEK

### 8 Election Day Predictions from The Nation's Leading Pollster

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#### **Election Day is finally here.**

Over the past several weeks, Democrats and Republicans have crisscrossed their electoral districts and regions, making closing campaign arguments to drum up voter enthusiasm. Midterm polls show that a focus on the economy, inflation, and crime has benefited Republicans, especially in the House, where they're in the lead. In contrast, Democrats' brief momentum seems to be fizzling out. While polls widely hint that voters should expect a red wave, some pundits still see a chance of Democrats at least maintaining Senate control.

Still, it's anyone's guess what is going to happen on Tuesday night. Here's what the experts predict:

#### **Steve Shepard: Democrats are down but not out**

Politico's most recent election forecast predicts Republicans will win the House, but control of the Senate is still a toss-up. In terms of the gubernatorial races, the publication expects Democratic governors will lead most Americans. Steve Shepard, Politico's chief polling analyst, says voters should anticipate the party in the White House losing some ground: "The first midterm election is historically a bear for the president's party, and this year is expected to be no different," he writes. "Republicans are likely to gain upward of 15 House seats, and they have a good shot of taking full control of Congress." That said, "in many of the most consequential statewide races, Democrats are still in the hunt — thanks to their candidates' strong fundraising and polls that show, for now, they are running ahead of President Joe Biden's poor approval ratings."

In another recent update to the Politico forecast, Shepard notes that a critical Senate race in New Hampshire moved toward Republicans, going from "lean Democratic" to "toss up" — a signal that the GOP was gaining momentum in the waning days of the campaign cycle. Shepard acknowledges

that the Senate majority is within reach for both parties but says "the range of plausible outcomes now includes a sizable Republican majority: A sweep of the six 'toss up' races would give the GOP 54 seats."

### **Nate Silver: Arguments for 'a Republican sweep' are convincing**

FiveThirtyEight says that Republicans have a 54 percent chance of winning both chambers of Congress, compared to Democrats with a 15 percent chance. The House and Senate races have both moved more in Republican's favor in the publication's most recent predictions: Republicans, for example, are easily favored to win the House, with FiveThirtyEight rating their chances at 84 percent to Democrats 16 — a lead that jumped around 10 points in the last few weeks of October.

Nate Silver, FiveThirtyEight's editor-in-chief, played devil's advocate by simulating a conversation between himself and his alter-egos, "Nathan Redd" and "Nathaniel Bleu." The pair presented respective cases for "a Republican sweep" or "a Democratic surprise" on Election Day. Redd's side argued that Biden's low approval rating and voters' dissatisfaction with the country's direction will lead to a clean sweep for Republicans. But Silver rejected that argument as oversimplified, saying, "Voters may be unhappy, but they're agnostic about which party they prefer." Bleu, meanwhile, harkened back to the Democrats' performance in special elections over the summer as a bright light in their favor. Silver's counter to that, however, was that the Democrats had fallen behind since then, and "the polls have been pretty clear in showing a Republican rebound."

Silver ultimately decided "Redd's case is stronger than Bleu's just because it's much simpler," though "Bleu raises a few solid points."

Nate Cohn: Senate control depends on if Democrats can 'withstand a hostile political environment.' Nate Cohn, The New York Times' chief political analyst, believes that the Republican's lead in the House is clear based on public polls, and the Democrats may be facing an increasingly tense battle for Senate.

"If the recent polls are right — and they may not be — Republicans will almost certainly take the House. The big question on election night would be whether and where individual Democratic candidates could withstand a hostile political environment. Control of the Senate would depend on it," Cohn muses for the Times.

He believes that Democrats are still putting up a fight for Senate control. "The party appears to be highly competitive in the key Senate races, like Pennsylvania, Georgia, Nevada, and Arizona. In these states, Republicans have nominated relatively weak candidates who might underperform, even in a favorable national political environment. And there are other bright spots for Democratic candidates in states like Michigan and Kansas, where abortion remains much on the minds of voters."

Cohn suggests there are signs this year that Republicans could still snag "a handful of reliably Democratic districts or states," noting that Democrats have been staunchly defending "solidly blue seats in New York, Rhode Island, California, and Oregon."

### **Charlie Cook: The outcome is an 'open question'**

The Cook Political Report analyst Charlie Cook thinks we shouldn't be too hasty to call the races. He agrees that it "looks like a Republican takeover of the House is a fait accompli," but notes that past elections had surprising outcomes. He cites Trump's 2016 win against Hillary Clinton despite losing the popular vote, and polls that had indicated his defeat "seemed all but assured."

Cook says the outcome of the upcoming elections is an "open question." He concludes, "My personal hunch is Democrats suffer net losses of at least 20 seats, but in the Senate, the difference between either party picking up or losing a seat or two could easily be minimal. In the upper chamber, the party that wins three of the following four contests will be in the driver's seat: the Democratic-held seats in Georgia and Nevada, and the two Republican open seats in Ohio and Pennsylvania."

### **Frank Luntz: Pay attention to what happens after the election**

Political commentator Frank Luntz argues in a tweet that Republicans' choice to focus on the economy over President Biden's closing warnings about the fragility of democracy is "a big GOP advantage." He added: "The American public prioritizes inflation and affordability over Jan. 6. And when Oregon and New York break for the @GOP on crime, something big is about to happen. For the first time, the GOP has taken a Senate lead. And in the House, my new projection is 231-236 seats."

In an interview with CNN, Luntz said Republicans need to win two out of three key states to gain the Senate majority — "Pennsylvania, Georgia, and the state we never talk about, Nevada" — and prognosticated a 51-49 GOP advantage when everything is said and done.

He also believes that the more important thing to consider is what will happen in the days following the election. "I'm scared of the vote counting," Luntz says. He warns that Philadelphia will be "ground zero" for a "crap show," noting that the state counts votes "so slowly" and leaves early voting ballots, which tend to break for Democrats, for later in the day. As a result, "you're going to have people claiming that the election is stolen, once again."

Emily Ekins: Expect a larger red wave than anticipated

Emily Ekins, the director of polling for the libertarian think-tank the Cato Institute, forecasted for Fox News that the GOP will flip both chambers based on her assessment of the latest poll trends. "Based on polling models, I expect Republicans to take the House and now the Senate, but the seat margin may be small in the Senate," she says. "Polls in key Senate races show more Americans want Republicans to take control of the Senate than are voting for their state's Republican Senate candidate. This suggests Republicans are running weaker candidates in some key races. The overturning of Roe also has been helping Democrats, but doesn't seem to have overcome voters' concerns about inflation."

Ekins believes that polls could undercut support for the GOP and may hide the magnitude of the Republican takeover. "There's a real possibility that polls are once again underestimating Republican support," she notes. "There are some markers for non-response bias, in particular, Democrats are more enthusiastic about taking surveys in some key states. So there may be more of a red wave this year than we think."

### **Scott Rasmussen: Gubernatorial race watchers, brace for 'at least one surprising upset'**

Pollster Scott Rasmussen, president of RMG research, kept his prediction short and got straight to the point when likewise speaking with Fox News: "Republicans [will take] 53 Senate seats, GOP [will gain] 30 seats in House." And there will be "at least one surprising upset in [the governor] races."

David Wasserman: 'Tuesday could be a big GOP wave in both chambers'

In his final House forecast for The Cook Political Report, analyst David Wasserman previews for Politico Playbook that "heading into Election Day, 212 seats are at least Lean Republican, 188 seats are at least Lean Democrat, and there are 35 Toss Ups. If those Toss Ups were to split evenly down the middle, Republicans would wind up at around 230 seats (+17). We believe a Republican gain of 15 to 25 seats is most likely, but it wouldn't be terribly surprising if the Toss Ups broke mostly their way, pushing GOP gains even higher."

Wasserman also tweeted that "it's possible Tuesday could be a big GOP wave in both chambers, but [to be honest] there's not much high-quality data to support narrative the 'bottom has fallen out' for House Dems. If anything, state fundamentals have moved the Senate outlook a notch closer to where the House already was."