

The Economy and History Point to Republican Control of Congress in 2023

Matt Mayer

Of course, it is possible that Democratic President Joe Biden will do what few incumbent presidents have done during their first midterm elections by not losing seats in the U.S. House or U.S. Senate. It is also possible that Democrats will lose only a few seats, but will win a majority on November 8th, thereby allowing Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to keep her fingers firmly clenched on the levers of power. It is finally possible that Democrats will hold ground in the U.S. Senate allowing a 50-50 tie to be broken by Vice President Kamala Harris or will gain seats and keep Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in charge.

These outcomes are possible, but highly unlikely given Biden's low approval rating that is hurting his party (42.6%—Donald Trump was at 43.6% at the same point in 2018). Let me explain why.

“IT’S THE ECONOMY, STUPID!”

As famously stated by Clinton campaign Svengali, James Carville, in 1992, the condition of the economy—real or perceived—is what drives voters in America. With six weeks to go (publication deadline was September 30th), the U.S. economy is in a recession and continues to do poorly. Inflation continues to exceed 8%, wages are down, interest rates are rising rapidly, the housing market is in a tailspin, credit card balances are at an all-time high, the stock market is below what it was when Biden took office, gasoline prices remain elevated compared to when Trump was president, energy prices for homes and businesses have jumped over the last two years, supply chains are a mess causing issues in numerous industries, and half the states—mostly Blue states led by Democrats—still haven't recovered the private sector jobs lost due to the COVID pandemic.

More broadly, illegal immigration across the southern border is reaching record numbers. Those illegal immigrants suppress wages of lower-income Americans, and they commit a multitude of crimes, including murder. The coyotes who bring them and the Mexican drug cartels who control the area bring massive amounts of fentanyl into America through our currently unsecure border and keep our overdose death count at a record high. Contrary to progressive beliefs that being pro-open border would attract Hispanic voters, illegal immigration (and rising crime and economic decline) is driving growing numbers of Hispanic American voters towards the Republican Party.

Additionally, crime in America's large cities is surging, with nearly daily videos of unprovoked attacks on innocent residents and tourists hitting social media. Increasingly, large mobs are ransacking stores and stealing substantial amounts of merchandise in smash-and-grab operations. Due to the American Left's, led by uber-progressive New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasia-Cortez, move to defund the police and to the lack of prosecutions by George Soros-funded Dem-



It is possible that Democrats will lose only a few seats, but will win a majority on November 8th, thereby allowing Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to keep her fingers firmly clenched on the levers of power. Pictured is Pelosi holding a town hall at Mount Saint Vincent College, New York in March 2022 (photo: lev radin / Shutterstock.com)

ocratic District Attorneys, law enforcement is standing down in many locations, as it loses personnel to early retirements and resignations. No sane American would opt to become a police officer in today's anti-law-enforcement environment. Black Americans are increasingly looking to Republican ideas to end the Left's soft-on-crime approach.

Lastly, beyond the economy, illegal immigration, and crime, America looks weak internationally, as Vladimir Putin ignored Biden's threats and invaded Ukraine and China ramps up its plans to seize control of Taiwan. Many Americans are still disgusted by Biden's Afghanistan withdrawal debacle. Add the resurgence of ISIS and al Qaeda in the Middle East and North Korea's restarting of its missile tests to this mix and Biden's America looks feckless. Voters might not often vote on foreign policy issues, but they hate when America is seen as weak.

HISTORY ISN'T ON THE DEMOCRATS' SIDE

Over the last 100 years, the party controlling the White House has gained seats in the U.S. House only three times: 1934 during the Great Depression, 1998 during Bill Clinton's impeachment, and 2002 after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack. The president's party gained seats in the U.S. Senate on six occasions: 1934, 1962, 1970, 1982, 2002, and 2018. These gains occurred over 26 midterm elections, thereby indicating how hard it is for the party controlling the White House to gain seats in Congress during midterm elections. In that span, the president's party on average lost 30 seats in the U.S. House and four seats in the U.S. Senate.

If we adjust our timeframe to the post-landslide era starting in 1992 (no candidate has surpassed 400 Electoral Votes since the 1988 presidential election), the president's party gained

seats in only two U.S. House (1998 and 2002) and two U.S. Senate (2002 and 2018) midterm elections. On average in those seven midterm elections since 1992, the president's party has lost 27 U.S. House seats and four U.S. senate seats.

More ominous for the Democrats, in the four elections since 1992 in which the president is facing his first midterm election (1994, 2002, 2010, and 2018), the president's party on average has lost 37 seats in the U.S. House and three seats in the U.S. Senate. Given that 2022 is Biden's first midterm election, modern history would signal that the Democrats will lose seats in both chambers, with the only real questions being how many seats will they lose. Democrats can afford to lose only a handful of seats in the U.S. House and cannot afford to lose any seats in the U.S. Senate.

THE LIKELY OUTCOME ON NOVEMBER 8TH

Based on history, Republicans should pick up between 25 and 40 seats in the U.S. House, thereby making Kevin McCarthy the Speaker of the House for the next two years. Based on current polling, Republicans are expected to gain between six and 31 U.S. House seats. No serious person believes the Democrats will buck history and polling to keep control of the U.S. House, which means Pelosi will retire from Congress and seek an ambassadorship or other sinecure from Biden.

Things are a bit murkier in the U.S. Senate. Based on history, Republicans should pick up three to four seats. The polling, however, is not as favorable for Republicans. As of now, here is who is winning the eight U.S. Senate seats considered toss-ups:

- Arizona: Democrat Mark Kelly (+5.4% - Democrat Hold)
- Georgia: Democrats Raphael Warnock (+0.7% - Democrat Hold)
- Nevada: Republican Adam Laxalt (+1.7% - Republican Pick-Up)
- New Hampshire: Democrat Maggie Hassan (+9.3% - Democrat Hold)
- North Carolina: Republican Ted Budd (+1.6% - Republican Hold)
- Ohio: Republican J.D. Vance (+1.2% - Republican Hold)
- Pennsylvania: Democrat John Fetterman (+4.1% - Democrat Pick-Up)
- Wisconsin: Republican Ron Johnson (+2.3% - Republican Hold)

Five of these races are within the margins of error indicating the tightness of American politics today. Should these leads hold, the U.S. Senate again would be divided 50-50 between the parties, with Harris's vote keeping Democrats in control

for two more years. There are reasons to believe, however, that these numbers won't hold.

First, since 2016, polling companies have consistently undercounted Republican votes because Republican voters tend to ignore polling company calls for privacy reasons. According to Robert Cahaly of the Trafalgar Group, which has been among the most accurate pollsters since 2016, this phenomenon grew substantially after Biden's "MAGA Republicans are extremists" speech on September 1st. The reason is because Republicans are now concerned that stating their preferences to pollsters could subject them to federal action by Biden's U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is going after non-violent Republicans with reckless abandon.

Next, based on the issues highlighted above regarding the economy and history, is it really likely that Biden will do what far more gifted politicians like Barack Obama and Bill Clinton failed to do and not lose U.S. Senate seats during his first midterm election? That just seems improbable given all of the factors cutting against him.

Finally, specific issues in a few of the races might determine who wins. In Georgia, Warnock is up by the slightest of margins currently. Though Georgia went with Biden and Warnock in 2020, many believe that was due to anti-Trump sentiment and Mark Zuckerberg's massive financial assistance to Democrat get-out-the-vote groups. Neither of those factors will drive this race, so it is likely Georgia will revert to Republicans. That would give Republicans a 51-49 majority in the U.S. Senate.

In Pennsylvania, Fetterman continues to suffer health concerns from a major stroke he suffered in May. Videos of him, like Biden, giving confusing speeches are spreading among the voters. Should he suffer another health issue or be filmed looking badly, enough Pennsylvania voters could stay home or vote for Republican Mehmet Oz to give the seat to Republicans. Fetterman and Oz are scheduled to debate on October 25th, so any problem arising during that debate could be politically fatal to Fetterman. Holding this seat would push Republicans to 51 or 52 depending on what happens in Georgia.

If I had to make a guess a month out, I would wager Republicans picking up 25 seats in the U.S. House and two seats in the U.S. Senate, thereby giving them full control of Congress.

IMPACT OF THE ELECTIONS OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Should my prediction prove accurate, then Biden's domestic and judicial agendas will be dead in their tracks. Republicans will pass popular legislation aimed at retaining control of Con-



Based on history, Republicans should pick up between 25 and 40 seats in the U.S. House, thereby making Kevin McCarthy the Speaker of the House for the next two years. Pictured is McCarthy during a rally in 2022 in Phoenix, Arizona (photo: Flickr / Gage Skidmore / CC BY-SA 2.0)

gress and winning the White House in 2024. Biden will veto most, if not all, of those proposed bills. More problematic for Biden, Republicans will launch multiple congressional investigations of Biden, his family, and his administration. Those investigations will harness the precedent set by the Democrats during the last six years to minimize Democratic presence on the committees, ignore concepts of due process, and turn over every pebble to take down Biden and his enablers in the same hyper-partisan manner with which the Democrats have gone after Trump and his supporters.

Biden will have more power on foreign policy issues given his near unitary constitutional power in that arena. The problem for Biden is that America won't set the agenda over the next two years globally; rather, it is more likely Russia, China, and Iran who will set the agenda. Russia will continue to push its war in Ukraine, including the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons should the U.S. and NATO continue to corner Vladimir Putin by backing Ukraine. The recent sabotage of the Nord Stream One and Two Russian pipelines is deeply troubling in that regard.



Things are a bit murkier in the U.S. Senate. Based on history, Republicans should pick up three to four seats. The polling, however, is not as favorable for Republicans. One likely winner for the Democrats is John Fetterman (pictured) in Pennsylvania (photo: OogImages / Shutterstock.com)

As for China, Xi Jinping must decide if taking control over Taiwan is truly vital for his country. If it is, then he knows he must act before the 2024 U.S. presidential election lest a strong-on-defense Republican like Trump or Florida Governor Ron DeSantis wins the presidency. Should China move on Taiwan over the next two years, Biden will be forced to react at a time when America’s military is already focused on Russia via NATO. Most experts don’t believe the U.S. is currently capable of fighting on two fronts at once.

With the resurgence of both ISIS and al Qaeda, Iran will continue to work covertly through its proxies to destabilize the Middle East and entangle America. Given the porousness of the southern U.S. border – 72 suspects on the terrorist watch list have been apprehended in 2022 – Iran also could enable a terrorist attack against America.

All three of these foes will exacerbate the energy crisis in Europe and America, which will cause continued economic turmoil. Should his noticeable mental decline continue, these

enemies will exploit Biden’s weakness as much as possible. Thus, Biden won’t have much time or capacity to save his presidency from being considered one of America’s worst. It is possible the Democrats will buck both the poor economic conditions and history in midterm elections, but I wouldn’t bet my retirement account on it. Most likely, we all will wake up on November 9th with a divided U.S. government that will be just as divisive and destructive for Democrats as the last two years have been for Republicans. What is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

Matt Mayer is the President of Opportunity Ohio (www.opportunityohio.org) and former senior official in the George W. Bush Administration. He can be found on Twitter at @ohiomatt.

Would you like to react?
Mail the editor: redactie@atlcom.nl.