WHAT ARE THE MIDTERMS?

The next big national elections are coming up in November 2022. Even though President Biden will not be on the ballot, the people elected to Congress and state and local offices will significantly impact what he can get done for the remainder of his first term — and on American life over the next couple of years.

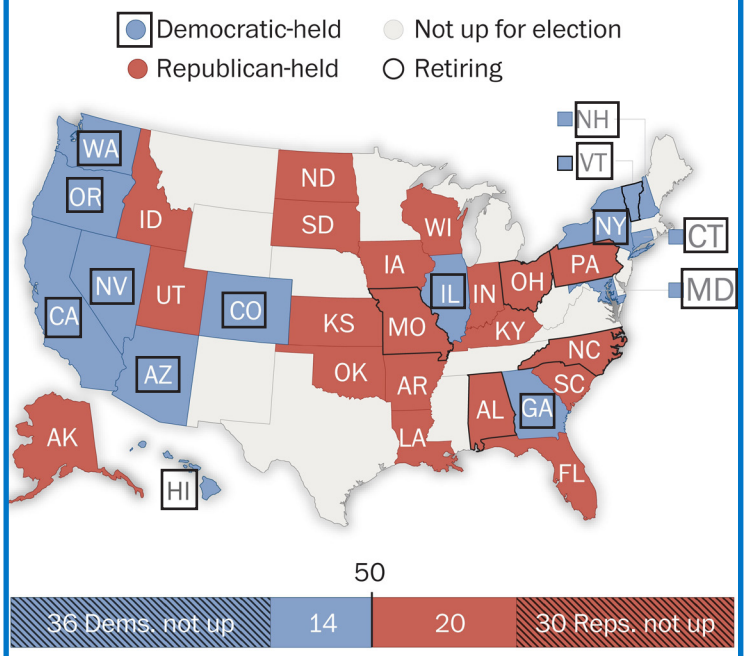
These elections are called ***midterms*** (as in, they happen right in the middle of a presidential term). Here is what you need to know to understand the news about them.

Congress and the Midterms

The midterms are when much of Congress is up for election. Every two years, every seat in the House of Representatives is up for election. Furthermore, about a third of the seats in the 100-member Senate are up (since senators serve six-year terms).

The control of each chamber of Congress can shift depending on who wins more of these individual races. The party that controls the House or the Senate gets to decide what Congress will consider and how much the party's lawmakers want to work with the White House to pass laws. Democrats run both now.

2022 Senate map



Any losses or gains in seats may alter the narrow Democratic majority in the Senate.

Many states have aligned their elections on this schedule, which means 36 governors and thousands of state legislators, plus even more local positions, are on the ballot. Add to that various ballot initiatives to change state policies — you will hear about things like marijuana and campaign finance — that will come before voters on Election Day. There's also momentum to be captured for the next presidential election. If Republicans have a good midterm, they will try to unseat President Biden, who has said he plans to run again in 2024.

When are the Midterms?

The next midterms will be the ***general elections*** held on Tuesday, November 8th, 2022. Between now and then, there will be primary elections that typically narrow the field to one candidate from each party for each seat up for election. The dates for those primaries vary state by state. In some states, you have to register as affiliated with a political party to vote in these primaries; other states have ***open primaries***.

Why are the Midterms Important?

As you probably remember, both chambers of Congress need to approve a bill for it to clear Congress. So if even just one chamber switches hands from Democrat- to Republican-controlled, Republicans can stick together and stop anything Biden wants to do for the rest of his first term.

That is not to say ***bipartisanship*** is dead. Congress does many things that require Republicans and Democrats to work together. However, the parties increasingly do not see eye to eye on the significant issues — like immigration, gun rights, health care, even funding the government. Having a Democrat in the White House and a Republican-controlled Congress is almost certainly a recipe for gridlock.

The coronavirus pandemic has underscored how much influence state officials — such as governors and state and local lawmakers — have over Americans' lives. These officials decided on stay-at-home orders for communities, whether people wore masks, and whether and when businesses and schools could stay open. With Congress increasingly gridlocked, states are where most laws are passed that affect Americans' everyday lives, such as education, public safety, and taxes.

While there are many issues voters care about, these elections will be impacted by the economy and inflation, the coronavirus and actions to eliminate the threat, and addressing the increase in crime.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a ***T*** or ***F*** in the space provided.

____ 1. The midterm elections coincide with the presidential election.

____ 2. Every Senate seat is up for election in 2022.

____ 3. Thirty-six governors will be on the ballot in the midterm elections.

____ 4. The next presidential election will be in 2024.

____ 5. Primary elections will take place on November 8th.

____ 6. Bipartisanship refers to both parties working together to pass legislation.

____ 7. The pandemic illustrates the differences in lawmaking philosophies by governors.

____ 8. U.S. House Represenatives serve two-year terms.

Answers: 1-F, 2-F, 3-T, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-T, 8-T