



Midterm Elections

What They Are and Why They Matter

What Are Midterm Elections?

Midterm elections take place every two years, halfway through a president's four-year term. They occur in November of even-numbered years. These elections determine the makeup of Congress and include critical state and local races.

What's on the ballot?

- All 435 U.S. House seats
- About one-third of U.S. Senate seats
- Governors and other statewide offices
- State legislators
- Local offices (school boards, county officials, mayors)
- Ballot measures and referenda (voted on by the people not the legislature)

Why Midterms Matter and Often Shift Power?

Midterms shape national and local decisions that affect daily life. Their outcomes determine:

- Who controls Congress and how laws and oversight are handled
- State and local decisions on schools, healthcare, housing, transportation, and public safety
- The direction and limits of the presidential agenda

Midterms often shift political power because:

- Voters want a continued say in decisions that shape their everyday lives
- Midterms allow voters to signal approval or frustration with national direction
- When the opposite party of the President's Administration gains seats, it can shift the balance of decision-making and legislation

Checks and Balances

The U.S. government was designed with checks and balances so no single branch (Executive- President, Legislative- Congress, made up of the House and Senate, or the Judicial- United States Supreme Court) can hold too much power.

How Congress helps keep things balanced:

- Congress makes laws and controls how tax dollars are spent.
- The President carries out laws but cannot spend money or launch major programs without Congress's approval.
- Congress can challenge the President's ideas, propose alternative laws, or investigate how presidential power is used.
- The Senate must approve the President's nominees for judges and top federal positions.

Turnout is typically lower in midterm elections than in presidential elections, which means small margins can shift political power significantly. **Examples include:**

- 2010: Congressional power shifted, reshaping national debates on healthcare and spending.
- 2018: Record turnout led to historic representation gains and new state-level policies.



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Everyday Impact

Midterm decisions influence:

- Benefits like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/formerly food stamps)
- Childcare funding
- Healthcare access
- School funding
- Housing and zoning policies
- Wages and job programs
- Public transportation

What You Can Do Before the Election

- Register or check your registration at [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov)
- Learn what's on your ballot at [ballotready.org](https://www.ballotready.org), [ballotpedia.org](https://www.ballotpedia.org), or [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org)
- Know key deadlines for your state (registration, absentee ballots, early voting) at your state election office. A listing by state is at [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov)

During the Election

- Vote early, by mail, or on Election Day
- Help others get to the polls or access information

After the Election

- Stay engaged with your elected officials
- Attend local meetings, give feedback, and follow how policies develop and how elected officials vote on the issues you care about

Quick Commitment

Choose one action you will take: *one before the election, one during, and one after.*

Helpful Resources

- **Your State's election office website**
- [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) - Register or confirm registration
- [ballotready.org](https://www.ballotready.org) - See your full ballot
- [ballotpedia.org](https://www.ballotpedia.org) - Detailed information about local, state, and federal elections
- [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org) - Learn how to vote in your state
- **Local civic or community organizations**

Midterms determine who makes **important decisions** that affect your community. Your consistent participation helps **shape the future** of every election, not just every 4 years but every year.