

# 2022 Midterm Election Analysis

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# Introduction

WRITTEN BY: MICHAEL WILSON

In the weeks leading up to the 2022 midterms, many questions remained unanswered. Political pundits seemed focused on how the issues of abortion and inflation would impact voters. Additionally, most pollsters predicted that the Republican Party was going to gain control of the House of Representatives and potentially the Senate in addition to picking up several Gubernatorial seats around the country. Instead, Democrats largely overperformed, picking up one seat in the Senate, two governorships, and only losing 9 net seats in the House, although Republicans did ultimately win a slight majority there. It wasn't all bad news for Republicans, however, as both the states of New York and Florida moved further to the right by significant margins.



This Michigan Political Consulting (MPC) election brief will explore many key race results, analyzing both parties' successes, former President Trump's effect on the election, the accuracy of the polls this year, and a few other interesting developments before concluding with our suggestions for both parties' electoral strategies moving forward.

# Key Races

WRITTEN BY: CHARLOTTE BAER

Despite the prediction of a massive red wave, Democrats ended election day (which turned into an election week) with control of the Senate. A December 6 runoff election decided the final Senate seat of the election, with Raphael Warnock ultimately winning and handing the Democrats a 51st seat. Meanwhile, Republicans narrowly regained control of the House. Abortion was also a key issue in many states, as Montana and Kentucky rejected restrictions on abortion access and Michigan, Vermont, and California voted to uphold abortion rights in their states.

It was a turbulent election night in the state of New York, which is historically viewed as one of the strongest blue states in the nation. After a surprisingly tight race for Governor, Kathy Hochul won the gubernatorial race by almost 6 points against former East Hampton Congressman Lee Zeldin. Sean Patrick Maloney, the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), fell in New York's 17th Congressional district. NY-17 is just north of New York City and hasn't been represented by a Republican since 1981.

Florida also moved further to the right, leading some to claim it shouldn't be considered a swing state anymore. Ron DeSantis kept the governorship and won his race by almost 20 points, and Marco Rubio kept his Senate seat, winning his election by over 15 points despite challenger Val Demings spending tens of millions of dollars on her campaign.

Donald Trump's endorsements were a loud part of the election cycle. However, their results weren't so promising for the former President. Dr. Mehmet Oz, candidate for US Senate from Pennsylvania, gained the support of Trump during his primary, but ultimately fell to John Fetterman by about 5 points. Also in Pennsylvania, Doug Mastriano, another Trump pick, lost to Josh Shapiro in the gubernatorial race by almost 15 points. Kari Lake, who echoed Trump's allegations of voter fraud in the 2020 election, lost her gubernatorial race in Arizona to Katie Hobbs despite having a much bigger name and following than her opponent.

JD Vance, a Trump-endorsed candidate for US senate in Ohio, won his race, but only by about 6 points compared to Governor Mike Dewine's 25 point victory. Although Dewine later accepted an endorsement from Trump, he had previously been very critical of him.

Another interesting note is that Republicans seemed to struggle to hold on to the working class voters that populate a lot of the rust belt states. In Pennsylvania, both the Senate and gubernatorial races went blue as well as many of the House races. In Michigan, Democrats won many contentious House races, the governorship, Secretary of State, Attorney General, and both chambers of the state legislature. In Wisconsin, Governor Tony Evers fought off Trump-backed challenger Tim Michels. While Biden narrowly won these state in 2020, the margins in Michigan and Pennsylvania favored Democrats even more in 2022 than they did in 2020.

These midterms also showed that abortion was an issue that would turn out Democratic voters. In states where abortion was directly on the ballot, Democrats won by much wider margins. For example, in Michigan, generally considered a swing state, Proposition 3, which sought to constitutionalize abortion, passed, and Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan's Governor, won reelection by over 10 points. This is a huge margin compared to Wisconsin right across the lake where Tony Evers won his reelection for Governor by only 3 points, or in seemingly blue New York where Kathy Hochul won the Governor's race by about 6 points. In New York and Wisconsin, abortion was not on the ballot.

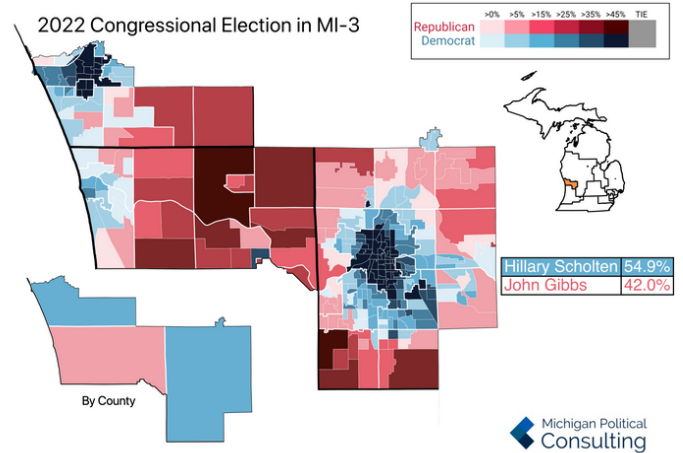
# The Rust Belt

WRITTEN BY: RACHELLE EVANS, SAATHVIK HARI, ANDREW VAN BAAL

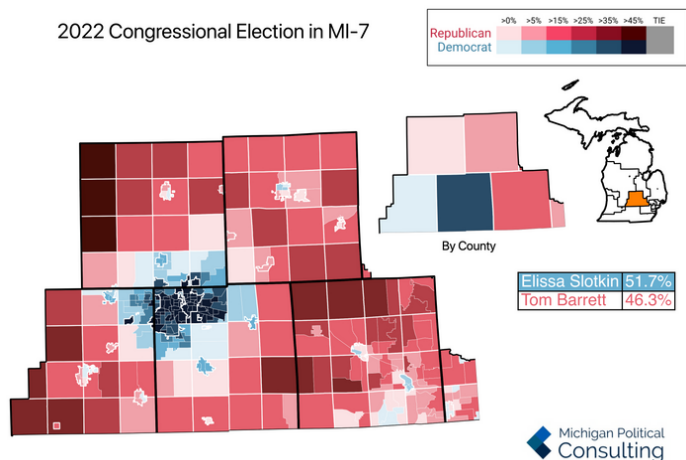
## MICHIGAN+HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

When it comes to the House of Representatives races in the rust belt this election cycle, there was no shortage of nail-biting races and a feeling of materialized resistance against election-denying and Trump-affiliated candidates. This resistance was unprecedented given historical trends of midterm elections and the latest polling numbers showing Republicans entering election day being competitive in many of the region's races. Starting in Michigan, four races were of particular interest to MPC in crafting this analysis. Starting on the west side of the state with Michigan's 3rd Congressional district, two-time Democratic nominee and former Department of Justice attorney Hillary Scholten (54.8%) secured a strong 13-point victory over Trump-endorsed opponent John Gibbs (41.9%). Scholten's win shows the impacts of Michigan's newly redrawn Congressional districts by an impartial commission formed in response to a successful 2018 ballot initiative, the ousting of incumbent Congressman Peter Meijer for his deviation from the Republican party during the Trump impeachment proceedings, and the Democrat's capitalizing on the striking down of Roe v. Wade in June to mobilize voters. All three counties within the district saw leftward shifts from 2020 margins, with Ottawa County showing the largest shift of 7 points left of 2020 margins. She will be the first woman to represent Michigan's second-largest city and the first Democrat to represent the area in almost 50 years. Hillary Scholten for Congress was a campaign client of MPC this year. Just south in the 4th district, Bill Huizenga (54.4%) fended off Democrat Joseph Alfonso (42.5%) in a successful reelection bid in what will be a mostly new constituency for him; the district was previously held by longtime Congressman Fred Upton who did not seek reelection. While the margins compared to 2020 show rightward shifts in all counties, the redrawing of the district allowed for a stronger Democratic showing by Marine veteran and political newcomer Joseph Alfonso; with less than \$35,000 cash-on-hand in comparison to Huizenga's almost \$3 million spent, Alfonso's losing margin was better than Gibbs' in MI-03, with the stark contrast being that MI-03 was a race that Democrats spent much more money and resources on. These numbers may make Democratic strategists reconsider bulking up spending in Michigan's 4th district during the next election cycle.

The cash cow, and what was deemed the most competitive of the Michigan Congressional races this cycle, was the 7th Congressional district that saw Elissa Slotkin win her reelection bid (51.7%) against Republican Michigan State Senator Tom Barrett (46.3%). The new 7th district centers around the liberal state capital of Lansing and averaged a lean of Biden + 1 from 2020 election results.



Slotkin ran an unconventional campaign to keep hold of a district that has voted Republican two of the last three Presidential elections; she did so by knocking on doors in the reddest areas of the district that seemed unchangeable in an attempt to shift their percentage tallies by single points in her direction, hoping that this would end up carrying her to her best margin of victory yet. This unique strategy in such a highly competitive district may prove to be a blueprint for future moderate Democrats nationwide looking to overcome the partisan leans standing in their way.



# The Rust Belt (Cont.)

WRITTEN BY: RACHELLE EVANS, SAATHVIK HARI, ANDREW VAN BAAL

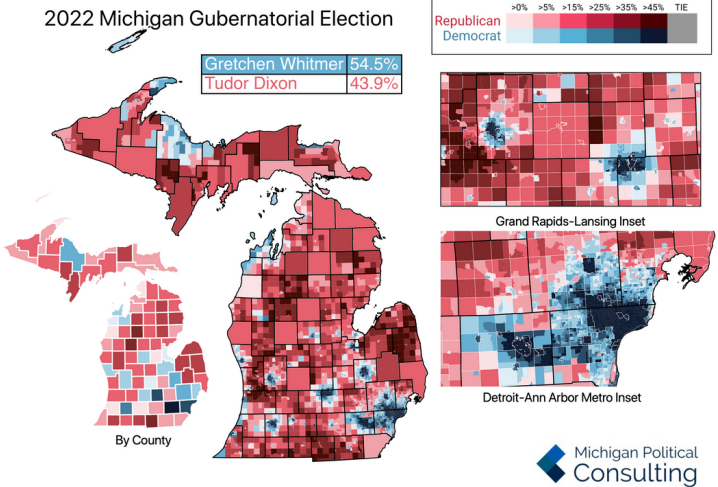
Two-time failed Michigan Senate candidate and Army veteran John James (48.40%) finally edged himself into a House seat representing Michigan's 10th district, which is just north of Detroit. He defeated longtime judicial figure Carl Marlinga by less than 2,000 votes. This became a surprisingly close race that may warrant a rematch in 2024 between the two, as Marlinga has indicated he has not ruled it out yet and also that he will not be running for reelection in his current judiciary position next election cycle.

Moving into Pennsylvania, two Democrats in the 7th and 8th Congressional districts fended off fierce challenges. Representative Susan Wild defeated second-time challenger and businesswoman Lisa Scheller in a new, thought to be more conservatively-drawn, district. Three of the four counties in the district trended slightly leftward from 2020 margins. In the 8th district, attorney and almost 10-year incumbent Matt Cartright (51.2%) also defeated a second-time challenger similar to his 7th district colleague. Opponent Jim Bognet (48.8%) was endorsed by former President Trump. Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional district elected a new progressive Democrat backed by Senator Bernie Sanders and "the Squad." Member-elect Summer Lee (55.9%) cruised to victory over Republican challenger Mike Doyle (44.1%).

In Ohio, almost 30-year incumbent Steve Chabot (47.5%) of Ohio's 1st Congressional district lost his bid for another term to DC newcomer Greg Landsman (52.5%). Landsman is a member of the Cincinnati City Council and a staunch advocate for education reform. It will be interesting to see what Chabot's next move will be in 2024 given that he ran for the seat again after losing it in 2008. However, given that this new district encompasses all of the large metropolitan area of Cincinnati, the chances of a comeback in this district may be slim to none. Greg Landsman was another campaign client of MPC this year. In Ohio's 13th Congressional district, it was a race between two non-incumbents. Voters had their choice of two women of color on the ballot: Democratic state legislator Emilia Sykes (52.6%) and Republican nominee and 2014 Miss Ohio USA Madison Gesiotto Gilbert (47.4%). The district shifted leftward alongside much of the rust belt, giving Emilia Sykes a window to win the vacant seat.

## GOVERNOR

Democrats produced one of their strongest performances of this election cycle in the state of Michigan, taking control of the Governorship and both houses of the State Legislature. Given the acute polarization of American politics in the recent past, the significance of this formidable support for the Democrats cannot be understated, as such a blue trifecta hasn't occurred for over 40 years in the state. The Democratic candidates for the Attorney General and Secretary of State races also won.



In the gubernatorial race, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was challenged for re-election by Republican Tudor Dixon and won by a 10+ point margin. Whitmer was the incumbent heading into the race and ran on a platform of major investments in K-12 education, protecting the right to abortion, and stopping the disenfranchisement of voters. She improved on her performance in the 2018 gubernatorial race, where she picked up 53.3% of the vote. Tudor Dixon, a former actress, steel executive, and conservative media personality, won a bruising Republican primary to represent the GOP. She is a hardcore Trump loyalist who was once an election denier, a claim she distanced herself from after securing his endorsement. She was backed by the state's politically powerful DeVos family and believes that abortion should be illegal, including in cases of rape and incest. Every county in Michigan trended more Democratic in this race compared to 2020. Gretchen Whitmer flipped counties like Macomb and Clinton, where the Republicans won by 8 and 7 percentage points in 2020, respectively. Additionally, Republican support in counties like Livingston and St. Clair almost halved compared to 2020. Gretchen Whitmer was considered one of the most electorally endangered Governors in this year's elections, but won the race convincingly, signaling the state's Democrat tilt.

In Pennsylvania, Democrat Josh Shapiro won the gubernatorial race over his Republican opponent Doug Mastriano by almost 15 percentage points. Josh Shapiro was Pennsylvania's Attorney General and came into the election positioning himself as a relatively moderate Democrat. He focused on the economy, education, public safety, abortion rights, and protections of democracy. His opponent Doug Mastriano, meanwhile, is an election denier who funded buses to shuttle supporters to the January 6th rally in DC. He promised to enact broad changes to voting procedures in the state and supported bans on abortion. Although he supported abortion without exception previously, his campaign had sidestepped questions on the issue in the weeks leading up to the election.

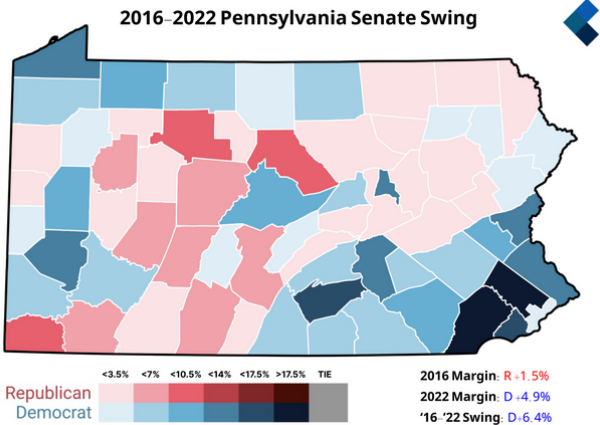
# The Rust Belt (Cont.)

WRITTEN BY: RACHELLE EVANS, SAATHVIK HARI, ANDREW VAN BAAL

Every Pennsylvanian county trended more Democratic compared to 2020. Shapiro flipped counties like Cumberland and Luzerne, which went Republican by double digit margins in 2020. Mastriano also lost half the Republican support in counties like Washington and Butler. While the governorship and State House are blue, the State Senate is still held by Republicans.

## SENATE+OHIO

Pennsylvania's Senate election served as the rust belt's blockage of the "red wave." John Fetterman, Pennsylvania's 34th Lieutenant Governor, managed to win the seat with 51.2% of votes after incumbent Republican Senator Pat Toomey decided to retire. This was good enough to beat media personale turned Republican politician Mehmet Oz ("Dr. Oz") who only won 46.4% of votes. This race was followed closely by political analysts and the general public alike due in part to Dr. Oz's reputation and Pennsylvania being one of 6 states to have one Senator from each party.



Ohio once again is an anomaly in the otherwise 2022 overperformance by Democrats in the Rust Belt, with every county trending more Republican. Governor Mike DeWine improved on his 2018 gubernatorial victory, where he secured 50.4% of the vote, by garnering above 60% of the vote, one of the biggest victories for Republicans in the midterms. DeWine managed to flip Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati and the surrounding suburbs. Franklin and Cuyahoga Counties, where Columbus and Cleveland are, saw their support for the Democratic Party fall by more than half. This is the first time since 1994 that Trumbull and Mahoning Counties have gone Republican by 60+%. Ohio's Senate seat also remained red. J.D. Vance, a writer and venture capitalist, defeated Democratic Congressman Tim Ryan to succeed retiring Republican Senator Rob Portman. Vance secured 53.3% of votes, while Ryan got only a 46.7% share. This race was extremely notable in that it could have ended Ohio's Senate split if a Democrat was elected to serve alongside Senator Sherrod Brown. Although Vance was projected to win, Ryan posed a greater threat to Vance than expected.

In Wisconsin, Republican Senator Ron Johnson won a third term in office by a razor-thin margin over Democratic Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes. Johnson secured 50.5% of the vote, only 1% more than Barnes' 49.5%. This left Wisconsin as another state to remain split in terms of Senate seats, gravely disappointing some Democrats that anticipated Barnes' triumph.

Ohio stands apart from the other three states in the rust belt, as a Republican trifecta was established in 2022. Republican Mike DeWine beat his Democratic opponent comfortably in the state's gubernatorial race with a huge 25-point margin of victory. Mike DeWine was the incumbent coming into this race and was trying to secure his second term as Governor. During his first term, DeWine signed the Ohio "heartbeat law," which bans abortion after a heartbeat is detected in a fetus. Nan Whaley was the mayor of Dayton, Ohio coming into the race and was also the first woman to win a major party nomination to run for Governor of Ohio.

# Republican Success in New York

WRITTEN BY: ROHAN VYAS

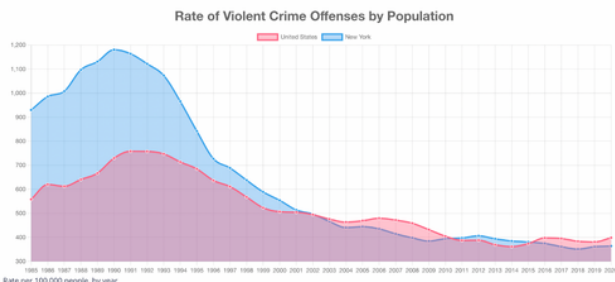
Before this November's midterm elections, the Empire State of New York was undoubtedly considered deep blue. The Democrats not only held a trifecta in the state, but also sent a majority of the state's US Representatives and both US Senators to Washington. Simply put, they appeared to have total control. On election night, the seemingly certain red wave failed to materialize on the national level, with Democrats retaining the Senate and Republicans only flipping 9 net House seats en route to capturing a slim majority. However, contrary to the national trend, New York Republicans made their presence felt by flipping 4 House seats and narrowing the margin of defeat in the state's gubernatorial race to just 328,893 votes, or 5.69%. This tight margin, when compared to Marc Molinaro's 24-point defeat at the hands of former Governor Cuomo back in 2018 and former President Trump's 23-point defeat in New York in 2020, signals a dramatic rightward shift in New York.

While Republican messaging on crime may have fallen short across the nation, it was particularly effective in New York. The prominently suburban counties of Nassau, Suffolk, and Rockland were swept by Republican candidates and shifted right by between 14 and 20 points. Despite NYC crime rates being the lowest they've been in decades, GOP crime-related messaging, especially around the 2019 bail reform bill, allowed them to sweep Long Island and make gains in Hudson Valley. In fact, media coverage of crime has substantially increased, especially in NYC, where nearly 8 times as many stories per month about crime have been published during Eric Adams' term compared to De Blasio's. While Hochul-led Democrats failed to generate optimism or hope for change about the crime situation in the state, Zeldin-led Republicans appealed to the swing suburban voters' concerns. Democrats didn't even attempt to include public safety in campaign messaging until just weeks before the election. By not countering GOP messaging head-on, the Democrats harmed themselves tremendously.

The Democrats' reversal of fortune can also be attributed to their redistricting blunder. Earlier this year, Albany Democrats aggressively attempted to reconfigure the state's Congressional districts. Their proposed maps would have given Democrats the advantage in 22 of the 26 races, protected incumbents, and likely allowed them to pick up 3 House seats. However, those plans fell under intense scrutiny, and a Republican-backed lawsuit saw them overturned by a state court. What's more is that after the judge struck down the initial proposal, Democrats had an opportunity to revise their maps, but failed to provide one in hopes that the appellate decision would be made too late to take effect before the election. Then, when Democratic lawmakers had another chance to submit a remedial map to a court-appointed Special Master, they made insignificant alterations. In hindsight, these decisions certainly panned out to be short-sighted and costly. It is now apparent that by failing to create reasonable alternatives, Democrats enabled the Special Master to redistrict in a manner that helped Republicans, and they thus sealed their own fate.

Although political pundits forecasted a red wave in New York, few would have expected such a dramatic shift. Coming off of such a disastrous election cycle for NY Democrats, the state's party is now under fire. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and others have renewed their calls for Jay Jacobs, the Democratic Party's Chair in New York, to resign. Progressives like Ocasio-Cortez have long criticized the fact that the party's infrastructure and machinery are largely remnants of the Cuomo machine. The slate of stunning 2022 election results could trigger a turnover in state party leadership. It is evident that if the Democrats wish to maintain the status quo and prevent future losses, they will absolutely need to take decisive action in fending off an ambitious GOP.

On the other hand, Lee Zeldin and other New York Republicans are relishing their victories, as they have energized the state's Republicans, which could lead to an influx in funding for future elections. Zeldin's success was so prominent in a national landscape of Republican disappointments that he was even generating buzz for a potential run for the office of RNC Chair against incumbent Ronna McDaniel. In fact, he initially sent an email stating he is "very seriously considering" running for the post. He later announced that he wouldn't run for the position, but also encouraged McDaniel to step down. Furthermore, the GOP is starting to build a coalition of Asian-American and Latino voters in hopes that they can replicate the success of their Florida counterparts. While it may seem like Republicans' success was solely the result of Democrats shooting themselves in the foot, Lee Zeldin was able to command a 62% total vote increase in NYC and a 15% increase outside NYC in New York compared to Molinaro's 2018 campaign. Zeldin's campaign, focused on appealing to urban and suburban voters, will serve as a roadmap for future conservative candidates in the state. Clearly his energetic, anti-crime-centered campaign was effective in raising GOP turnout, shifting the state from dark blue to light blue and leaving the door open for future GOP victories.



Crime data<sup>33</sup> for New York is pulled from National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) reports voluntarily submitted to the FBI.



# The "Trump Effect" & Ballot Proposals

WRITTEN BY: PRAHAR DAVE, GWEN TATARA

## THE TRUMP EFFECT

While the former President was not on the ballot, Trump's endorsements loomed over the midterms and ultimately led to mixed results. The triumphs and losses of his endorsed candidates may offer a glimpse into the success of his recently announced 2024 Presidential bid. Trump's endorsement of Mehmet Oz for a Pennsylvania Senate seat allowed the fellow reality TV star to win the crowded Republican primary, but did not translate to a win in the tight general election. Interestingly, Oz distanced himself from Trump and his brand throughout the latter half of the run up to the general election. This shift represents a predicament many Trump-endorsed candidates found themselves in, as the former President's support presented almost guaranteed success in a primary, but was often a source of criticism in the general election. Election-denying gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake lost her race in Arizona to Secretary of State Katie Hobbs. Lake refused to concede her loss and suggested that election interference kept her from winning office. Jim Marchant, another candidate closely aligned with Trump, lost his bid for Nevada Secretary of State. Marchant is the founder of the America First Secretary of State Coalition, which advocates for more restrictive ballot access laws. He is well known as a proponent of hand counting votes. Marchant's loss in a swing state like Nevada signals a shift from election denial rhetoric since 2020. Despite the losses, some Trump-endorsed candidates did manage to win big on election day. J.D. Vance, notable for his past criticisms of the former President, was able to win his competitive Ohio Senate seat over Democratic nominee Tim Ryan. Low approval ratings for Biden in Ohio and a populist, America first rhetoric worked to Vance's advantage. Vance's win suggests an endorsement from Trump can still be crucial to swing races in some parts of the country.

## BALLOT PROPOSALS

Similar to Trump's checkered record this election cycle, ballot proposals in key states provided wins for both Democrats and Republicans. Abortion rights were the most influential policy issue of the cycle – an astounding \$428 million was spent on abortion ads alone, with Democrats outspending Republicans by a 3:1 margin. In the end, despite fears that abortion may not be a galvanizing force in the midterms, every state proposal protecting access to abortion passed. This included states like Kentucky, California, and Michigan, a state where more voters turned out to vote for Proposal 3 than for the gubernatorial race. Voting procedures were also a contested issue this cycle. In one of the most closely followed voting procedure propositions in 2022, Arizonans voted no on Proposition 309 by less than a 1% margin; Proposition 309 would have enacted stricter voter identification requirements, including photo identification to vote in person and more stringent rules for absentee ballots. Additionally, Connecticut handily passed an amendment to allow early voting in the state. Another big issue of election night was marijuana legalization. Interestingly, proposals to legalize the substance for recreational use in deep red states like North Dakota, South Dakota, and Arkansas failed. Campaigns like the Arkansas Family Council Action Committee, with the help of former Vice President Mike Pence, were successful in keeping the substance only legal for medical use. Experts point to low voter turnout, particularly among young voters in these states, as partially responsible for the amendments' failures.

# Looking at the Polls

WRITTEN BY: ELLA ANDREWS, CLAIRE PHILLIPS

According to polling averages compiled by FiveThirtyEight, pollsters did a mediocre job at predicting 2022 gubernatorial races. While most polls were graded as a B, there were also some outstanding polls that deserve to be highlighted, as well as some polls that misread likely voters by a large margin.

Some races in which pollsters stood out in their accuracy include Georgia, where almost all polls identified that incumbent Brian Kemp would defeat Stacey Abrams in their 2022 rematch. Kemp won the race by about 6 points, and most pollsters accurately said Kemp would win by a margin of 4-7 points. The accuracy of Georgia's polls are surprising after how close the gubernatorial race between these two candidates was in 2018, when Kemp won by less than a 2 point margin. In fact, Research Co.'s poll showed the exact breakdown of voters that turned out for the actual election. Polling averages for the Pennsylvania and New Hampshire gubernatorial races were also strong.

Polls in other gubernatorial races were less successful in their predictions. The Arizona Governor's race had one of the least accurate polling averages of all the races this election cycle. The votes in Arizona took days to count, but Secretary of State Katie Hobbs ultimately defeated Kari Lake by less than 1 point. Almost all the polls correctly identified the winner of the race would win by a small margin of 2-3 points. However, many polls actually predicted Lake defeating Hobbs. Only one poll highlighted by FiveThirtyEight, Marist College, correctly identified Hobbs as the winner.

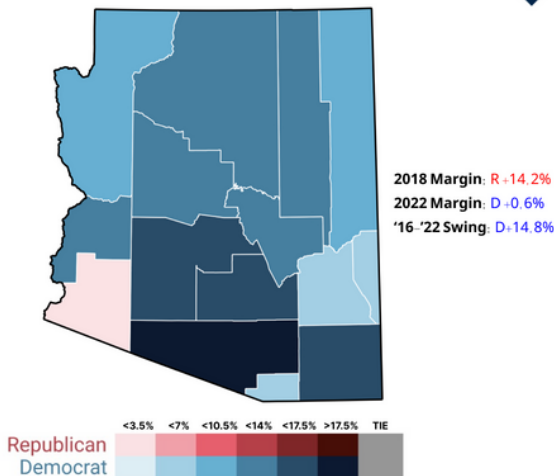
According to polls compiled by FiveThirtyEight, pollsters did a moderately good job predicting who would win Senate races, but did not necessarily do a good job predicting the exact margins candidates would win or lose by. Further, Republican-funded polls consistently overestimated the chances of Republicans winning Senate races. Lastly, throughout the country, Democrats for the most part outperformed pollsters' predictions and disproved the theory of a red wave. In Arizona, Mark Kelly won 51.4% of the vote to beat Blake Masters, who won only 46.5% of the vote. According to many pollsters, including The Cook Political Report, this race was marked as a toss up. Further out from the election, pollsters predicted Masters ahead of Kelly, but as election day grew closer, pollsters more often predicted Kelly defeating Masters. However, all of the polls underestimated the amount of votes Kelly would ultimately receive. In races across the country, including in Arizona, Republican-funded polls like those done by Trafalgar Group overestimated the percentage of the vote that Republicans would receive. Trafalgar Group reported that Kelly would win 47% of the vote while Masters would win 48%. Democrat Mark Kelly ultimately received about 4% more of the votes than this prediction.

In Georgia, Democratic incumbent Raphael Warnock and Republican Herschel Walker went to a runoff that was completely predicted by pollsters. The November 3rd tally resulted in Warnock with 49.4% of the vote and Walker with 48.5% of the vote. Polls leading up to the election ranged from predicting Warnock with between 46-49% of the vote and Walker with 41-50% of the vote. It is important to note that the only poll that had Walker receiving 50% of the vote was again a Republican-funded poll. Polls in the beginning of November had Warnock leading Walker. However, all of the polls done closest to the election predicted Walker to at least lead Warnock after the first round November election.

In New Hampshire, Democratic incumbent Maggie Hassan won 53.6% of the vote, defeating Republican Donald Bolduc, who only won 44.4% of the vote. Pollsters had consistently categorized this race as a toss up, with Hassan leading by one or two points. However, it is clear that this was a race that pollsters were not necessarily accurate in predicting, as Hassan won by a significant 9.2% margin.

In Florida, Republican incumbent Marco Rubio won 57.7% of the vote to keep his Senate seat from challenger Val Demings, who received 41.3% of the vote. Pollsters predicted Rubio would win this race, but did not correctly predict the margin. Rubio won a far greater percentage of the votes than pollsters anticipated, again reflecting the rightward shift in the state of Florida.

2018-2022 Arizona Governor Swing



# Demographic Shifts

WRITTEN BY: AUDREY CLAYTON

While demographic shifts from 2018 and 2020 to 2022 contributed to the Democrats' loss of the House, strong support among certain demographics helped Democrats stave off the expected "red wave." Particularly important demographics in the 2022 election were women, black and Latino voters, and youth voters. The overall trend across all demographics was a shift towards the Republican Party. However, strong Democratic support among youth voters ages 18 to 29 and high voter turnout in this age range helped keep Democratic losses to a minimum, particularly in highly competitive states.

While women across the country still favored Democrats by 8 points, this was an 11-point drop compared to the 2018 midterms. Additionally, support for Republicans grew among men between the 2018 and 2022 midterm elections, increasing from Republican plus 4 to Republican plus 14. Both men and women among black, Latino, and white voters saw a shift in partisan support toward the Republican Party. White men and women each had an 8 point increase in their support of Republican candidates. At the same time, Democratic support among black men and women decreased 7 points and 11 points, respectively. Even more prominently, Latino men and women had a respective 14-point and 21-point decrease in support for Democrats. Shifts toward the Republican party by gender, race, and ethnicity is reflected in the Republicans success of regaining control of the House.

These shifts, specifically within Latino communities, could have very interesting implications moving forward. Latinos are the fastest growing racial and ethnic group of voters since the 2018 midterm elections, and the number of eligible Latino voters has increased by 4.7 million since 2018, accounting for 62% of growth in the US electorate since then. While the Latino community was once considered a stronghold for the Democratic party, the data mentioned above suggests a meaningful shift towards the Republicans in recent years. Democrats seem to now be much more heavily reliant on support from college-educated white voters than minority voters, a trend that has left many Latino voters feeling disconnected from the Democratic party. It is hard to know at this point whether these trends will continue and lead to more GOP victories in future elections, as this will depend heavily on the Democrats' ability to reverse the trend and hold strong support among white college-educated voters.

Moving forward, Republicans have an opportunity to garner more support among minority voters by appealing specifically to working class Latinos. After losing large support from middle and upper class college-educated white voters who were once the core of the Republican Party, this may be their best pathway to future victories. Many Latino voters feel the Democratic Party has moved too far left on issues like policing, immigration, abortion, and transgender rights. By putting a stronger focus on the immediate needs of working class Latinos, Republicans have an opportunity to gain some of the Latino voters that feel disconnected from the Democratic Party.

Youth voters between the ages of 18 and 29 were one of the most important demographics for ensuring Democratic successes in 2022. The youth turnout in this election cycle was the second highest in three decades at 27%, just behind the 31% turnout in the 2018 midterms—however, the aggregate youth turnout in battleground states in 2022 was 31%. While there was a slightly rightward shift in 2022 compared to the youth vote in 2018—from 67% Democrat and 32% Republican to 63% Democrat and 35% Republican—the breakdown of party support was nearly identical to the more recent 2020 elections. Youth voters continue to be a strong Democratic demographic, making it the only age bloc that strongly supports Democrats. This support was particularly critical in key races such as for Michigan Governor, Arizona Senate, and Pennsylvania Senate. It seems that moving forward, young college-educated voters will make up a growing segment of the Democratic Party. If youth registration and participation in elections continues to grow as it has in recent years, this could be a very powerful asset for Democrats.

# Impacts on Legislation

WRITTEN BY: RACHELLE EVANS

The midterm elections that resulted in a Republican House majority will have extremely notable consequences on legislation for the next 2 years. Congress' 116th session was incredibly successful for Democrats in gaining the House majority, which allowed for the passage of notable legislation such as "The American Rescue Plan," "Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act," and arguably 2021's most prominent legislation, "The Build Better Act." However, legislation like this is unlikely to pass with the new Republican majority likely being led by current GOP Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy. House Republicans have been clear in stating their agenda, which greatly differs from the one of the Democrats. Many anticipate the blockage and delay of the Biden Administration's agenda, including changes to foreign policy in terms of aid given to Ukraine and economic changes aimed at reducing inflation and decreasing social aid. It is clear that the new Republican-led House will change the course of legislation and policy until the next election cycle, leaving some members of the public relieved and ready for change, while others are disappointed and frightened for what's to come. Additional nationwide impacts will be seen when it comes to executive oversight with five big investigations planned by the House Republicans. First, a letter from the House Judiciary Committee to the Department of Homeland Security Secretary outlined that investigations will take place relating to how many migrants are crossing the southern border into the United States. During fiscal year 2022, US border officials encountered more than 2 million migrants, up from 1.7 million in fiscal year 2021, raising concerns among GOP members Representatives. The second investigation stems from the choice made by President Biden to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan in 2017.

Following the pullout, many Afghans desperately sought to leave the country. Tragic images of individuals clinging to airplane wings in an attempt to evacuate the country before the Taliban administration took over were captured. Third, Republicans aim to investigate the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this is not a direct inquiry into the Democratic Party, it was prompted by Republican disappointment that led to questions about many events during the onset of the pandemic, which took place under Democratic House rule. Fourth, on November 2, 2022, Congressman Jim Jordan wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland requesting a plethora of documents on everything from the Justice Department's alleged targeting of Project Veritas to the search for classified documents at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort. Jordan is widely expected to chair the House Judiciary Committee when Republicans formally take the majority in January 2023. Finally, Republicans aim to investigate Hunter Biden's financial activities concerning foreign spending. Kentucky Rep. James Comer made specific comments on this effort in saying that the investigation will aim to see if President Biden is an official that can be "compromised or swayed by foreign dollars and influence."

# Looking to the Future

WRITTEN BY: PATRICK PULLIS, MICHAEL WILSON

## THE PATH FORWARD FOR DEMOCRATS

So what does this all mean for Democrats and the future of their party? First, their victory in the Senate and overperformance in the House proves that at the moment, most Americans see the Democratic Party as the more attractive of the two major parties. Against all odds, namely those of historically high inflation and an incredibly unpopular sitting President, the Democrats avoided a red wave and came out relatively unscathed after election day. One key factor in their overperformance in many House districts was the high quality of their candidate selection. While the Republican Party and its primary voters opted for more ideologically extreme candidates, even in some swing districts, Democrats chose moderation and nominated candidates that appealed to many independent and even some conservative voters. One hotly contested House race that illustrated this point was MI-03. While Republicans elevated Trump-endorsed Republican John Gibbs to replace incumbent Congressman Peter Meijer, a vocal critic of the former President who also voted to impeach him for his role in the January 6 Capitol riot, Democrats went with Hillary Scholten, a palatable, middle-of-the-road Democrat whose values seemed more in line with the Grand Rapids-area district. The move paid off, as Scholten won her race by almost 13 points after losing the race to Meijer by 6 points just 2 years prior. If Democrats want to carry this success into 2024 and retake the House, they need to continue placing an emphasis on nominating quality candidates who are an ideological match for the district they're running in.

Democrats also did well with messaging on one key issue that Americans cared deeply about during the 2022 election cycle: abortion. Exit polls show that voters trusted Democrats on the issue of abortion by a margin of 53-42, and this was no surprise after they spent millions of dollars running commercials attacking Republicans on the issue and making it a focal point of their party's platform after the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* Supreme Court decision that overturned the Constitutionally protected right to an abortion on a federal level. If abortion remains an important issue in the 2024 elections and beyond, Democrats would be wise to build on their 2022 strategy of branding Republicans as too extreme on abortion. However, as *Dobbs* fades further into the back of voters' minds and many states begin passing legislation to handle abortion on the state level, Democrats may run into a situation where voters feel like access to abortions isn't as immediately relevant.

Even with their overperformance in many areas of the country, Democrats still lost their majority in the House to Republicans in 2022. This result can serve as a lesson for Democrats and offers them several places to look for improvement moving forward. First and most importantly, Democrats need to come up with a more clear and comprehensive economic platform. 2022 exit polls show that inflation was the clear #1 issue on voters' minds as they headed to the polls on election day. Additionally, voters indicated that they trust the Republican Party to handle the issue of inflation by a margin of 54-42 compared to Democrats. Part of this can be explained by voters falsely attributing high inflation to Democrats since they controlled Congress and the Presidency when it became an issue for many lower and middle class families. However, surely part of voters' distrust in Democratic economic policies stems from a place of legitimate concern. Of course it's true that Trump and Congressional Republicans also spent big on COVID-19 relief at the onset of the pandemic, but Biden and Congressional Democrats went a step further by maintaining high levels of spending even in the face of inflationary pressures. We see a simple solution to this economic problem for Democrats. First, they need to recognize their mistakes from the last two years. High levels of spending undoubtedly led to inflation, and this needs to be acknowledged.

Second, moving forward, Democrats need to be more careful about the timing of their spending bills. We aren't suggesting that Democrats need to do an about-face and limit their support for social spending; these policies are generally popular and definitely have a part to play in Democratic electoral success. However, in order to keep these spending programs popular, Democrats also need to understand when the economy can handle high levels of government spending and when inflationary pressures mean it's better to wait. If Democrats are able to win voters on economic issues, it's hard to see much electoral success for Republicans in the future.

## HOPE FOR REPUBLICANS

From a Republican perspective, the midterm elections were less than satisfactory, resulting in only a slim majority in the House of Representatives. Likewise, former President Donald Trump, although not on the ballot, may have been the biggest loser of the night. Trump's endorsed candidates underperformed in Senate, House, and gubernatorial races. The majority of election-denying candidates in battleground states were unsuccessful. A few days after the election, Donald Trump announced his bid to take back the White House in 2024. However, is Donald Trump truly the right choice for Republicans moving forward?

In 2016, Donald Trump was successful due to his businessman appeal. A President who would confront the media, disrupt Washington, and take on the elites. However, his time in office led to 2 impeachments, election result denial, and federal investigations launched by the Department of Justice and FBI. The 2020 and 2022 elections demonstrate that Trump no longer resonates with voters like he once did in 2016. Specifically, his extremism and crude presentation of himself no longer aligns with moderate Republicans and independents. Moving forward, it is in the GOP's best interest to ensure Trump is not their nominee in 2024. Republicans should put time, money, and endorsements behind someone other than former President Trump during the primaries. The GOP has a fine line to walk: there will always be people who vote for Trump, but the rest of the party must counteract these voters by preemptively agreeing on who the nominee should be. Republicans cannot risk splitting votes during the primary and allowing Trump to secure the nomination.

Second, the Republican Party must reframe their messaging on social issues. Despite shifts in support among the general electorate, it continues to take publicly unpopular stances on abortion, and as of recently, the majority of Senate Republicans voted against codifying marriage equality.

This is potentially a bad political move, as 61 percent of Republican youth voters favor legalizing same-sex marriage, and youth voters ranked abortion as their number one concern in midterm exit polls. For Republicans to not reflect this sentiment at least in part is likely a losing strategy, as the proportion of people who support legalizing gay marriage and access to abortion will only increase in the future. In regards to the abortion issue, many Republicans and moderates still believe in some reasonable restrictions. The GOP should take a middle of the road stance on abortion if they want to resonate with voters. For example, they should consider something along the lines of legalizing all first trimester abortions or creating a fetal viability cut off. For right-leaning individuals, a more moderate approach will resonate over the Democrats' extreme view on abortion. As a whole, for Republicans to win, their messaging needs to shift back to concerns about jobs, inflation, and crime, not about social issues. According to an ABC poll, Americans trust the Republicans over the Democrats to handle inflation by 19 percent. Likewise, voters have more faith in the GOP to handle crime and the economy by over 10 percent. Simply put, the GOP's social ideology no longer matches the majority of Americans' views, and to be successful moving forward, the Republican Party should focus on other key policy positions.

# Conclusion

## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

This year's midterms shattered projections, highlighted successful and unsuccessful strategies from both parties, and offered a lot of insight into what we can expect to see moving towards 2024. Democrats saw a surge at the polls that was previously unexpected, leaving both parties regrouping and preparing for the next 2 years and watching closely the emergence of Oval Office contenders, as Trump is not likely to be alone in the Republican ring. On the legislative side of things, the combination of polarization and a divided Congress will likely complicate Biden and the Democrats' policy agenda. This lame-duck session has proved productive for Democrats as they cram before the new Congress begins; however, legislative productivity over the next 2 years is highly doubtful once Republicans take control of the House.

For now, MPC will continue to watch, advocate, deliver, and organize. We offer sincere gratitude to our campaign clients, wishing our winning candidates the best in their new terms in office. Their collaboration and partnership is invaluable to the growth of our organization. Thank you for your readership and to our dedicated consultants who took the time to contribute to this report. Your contributions represent the best parts of MPC: determination, community, and growth. We look forward to continuing to foster this environment, seeing a future for MPC that is bold and bright.

All the Best,

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