

Voters answer top 10 questions about election

Before the midterms, I offered my top 10 questions for voters to answer. Here are their responses, as we know them so far:

1. In 2020, House Republicans flipped 15 Democratic seats but didn't lose a single incumbent. Will the GOP continue its undefeated streak in the House?



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No. This year, three Republican incumbents lost on Election Day: Steve Chabot of Ohio, Maya Flores of Texas—who had just flipped the seat in

a special election—and Yvette Herrell of New Mexico. In addition, the GOP lost two seats held by Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump—Peter Meijer of Michigan and Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington state. Both were defeated in GOP primaries by MAGA challengers who went on to lose to Democrats in the midterm elections.

2. During GOP primaries, Democrats spent tens of millions of dollars to get “poison pill” MAGA candidates nominated. How did those MAGA candidates do?

The strategy was immoral, cynical . . . and effective. All the Democrat-backed MAGA candidates—including Senate candidate Don Bolduc in New Hampshire, congressional candidate John Gibbs in Michigan, and gubernatorial candidates Doug Mastriano in Pennsylvania and Dan Cox in Maryland—lost.

3. Did any Republicans pay a price for the Supreme Court's abortion decision?

All the Republican governors—in Ohio, Georgia, New Hampshire, Florida and Texas—who signed laws restricting abortion won reelection. But the Fox News Voter Analysis showed that voters ranked abortion the second-most important issue facing the country (10 percent), trailing far behind the economy (48 percent) but narrowly ahead of immigration (9 percent) and crime (8 percent). So, abortion might have helped put some Democrats over the top in tight House and Senate races, many of which were closer than they should have been due to extreme GOP candidates.

4. Did ticket-splitters show up?

In droves. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) got 203,130 more votes than Republican U.S. Senate candidate Herschel Walker. If Walker had won those votes, he would be a senator-elect today. In New Hampshire, Gov. Chris Sununu (R) got 76,820 more votes than Bolduc. Bolduc lost by 56,682 votes, which means that ticket-splitters made the difference. In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine (R) got 380,120 more votes than Senate candidate J.D. Vance, but that difference did not prevent Vance from winning. In Nevada, GOP gubernatorial candidate Joe Lombardo won with 6,989 more votes than Senate candidate Adam Laxalt, who lost by 7,928 votes. So, even without ticket-splitters, Laxalt still would have lost by 939 votes.

In those four states alone, 667,059 voters pulled the lever for the GOP candidate for governor but not Senate—collectively a massive vote of no

confidence in the GOP's Senate picks.

5. Did the Trump-backed Senate candidates make it?

Four lost: Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania, Bolduc in New Hampshire, Laxalt in Nevada and Blake Masters in Arizona. Two won: Vance in Ohio and Ted Budd in North Carolina—both thanks to a massive rescue effort by Sen. Mitch McConnell (more on that below). Walker made it to a runoff in Georgia—thanks, again, to McConnell. If Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey and New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu had been the Republican Senate nominees in their states, the GOP would probably hold the majority today.

6. Was there an opportunity cost to bailing out Trump-backed Senate nominees?

Yes. The \$32 million that McConnell-aligned super PACs had to spend to rescue Vance siphoned critical resources away from efforts to widen the electoral map and flip Democratic Senate seats. In Nevada, the GOP lost by 0.77 percent. Could a few million dollars more have made the difference?

7. How much did Trump's MAGA, Inc. super PAC spend in the general election to shore up candidates he championed in the primaries?

Trump's super PAC, Make America Great Again, Inc., spent a grand total of . . . \$15.03 million on Senate races. By contrast, McConnell-aligned PACs spent \$248.8 million. Trump helped nominate weak candidates and then left them to fend for themselves.

8. What happened to so-called GOP voter suppression in Georgia?

Early voting shattered the state's record for a midterm and outpaced the 2016 presidential election, with 2,288,889 ballots cast. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that Black voters accounted for 29 percent of early voters, outpacing 2020 when they made up just over 27 percent. When the final votes were counted, 3,964,926 Georgians cast ballots, slightly more than the 3,949,905 who voted in the 2018 midterms. So much for “Jim Crow 2.0.”

9. Will Republicans reach 54 seats in the Senate, which would put them in striking distance of a 60-vote, filibuster-proof majority in 2024?

Quite the opposite. Republicans could actually lose one net seat if Walker fails in the upcoming runoff. For the second election in a row, Trump cost Republicans control of the Senate. But Republicans are almost certain to take back the chamber in 2024, when the field is heavily tilted toward the GOP—provided they learn from this year's mistakes.

10. If Republicans win in a rout, will Democrats turn on Biden and begin openly urging him to step aside in 2024?

Far from a GOP rout, Biden's first midterm performance was better than that of any president since John F. Kennedy (except for George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks)—despite the worst inflation in 40 years, the worst crime wave since the 1990s and the worst border crisis in U.S. history. If Biden decides to run again, it is unlikely that any Democrat will challenge him.

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GOP plans petty payback

The incoming Republican House majority is salivating to begin investigations against the Biden administration, with some in the caucus even talking about impeachment. In contrast to the numerous Democratic investigations and two impeachments against Donald Trump—which were legitimate responses to a uniquely unfit president who routinely spurned the rule of law—the GOP's current plans are little more than tit-for-tat politics. They should keep in mind how obvious that will be to a nation that just denied their party the “red wave” everyone was expecting.

Congress has an implied duty under the Constitution to provide oversight of the president. Inarguably, both parties in modern times have weaponized the oversight process to score partisan points. Trump may well have been the most investigated president in history, with scores of inquiries launched in the two years Democrats have controlled Congress. Many Republican partisans clearly believe that fact alone merits some payback—as if the Trump probes were plain

old politics. That attitude is part of the blinkered normalization the GOP has always extended to a dangerously abnormal president.

No one can deny Democrats approached their oversight duties with zeal when it came to Trump. But Trump provided voluminous, literally unprecedented justification throughout his tenure, including his inherently suspicious Kremlin coddling, his appalling family separation policy at the southern border, his use of the Justice Department to attack his political enemies and his abuse of his pardon power to reward cronies. And don't forget his tragic politicization of the pandemic and his frontal assault on democracy itself during and after the 2020 election.

In contrast to the GOP's craven and silly impeachment of Bill Clinton for the high crime of lying about sex, Trump's impeachments were about the deadly serious topics of extorting a global ally for political gain and fomenting a physical attack on America's seat of government. There is simply no rational way for anyone not wearing par-

tisan blinders to conclude they are comparable.

The same can be said for most of what Republicans have in store for President Joe Biden. There are some legitimate issues that deserve attention—most notably, his botched withdrawal from Afghanistan—but far more of the ammo Republicans have looks like exploding cigars. Unlike Trump's border controversies, Biden's problems appear to be about poor management, not malign and deliberate inhumanity. The FBI's search of Mar-a-Lago was a solidly legal and restrained operation, no matter how Trump's hysterical supporters tried to portray it as an abusive siege. The business dealings of Biden's son, Hunter, might deserve scrutiny, but the right's obsession with the whole topic seems designed more for distraction than oversight.

House Republicans are going to do what they're going to do. And, as they did with Bill Clinton's impeachment, they're likely to see their transparently cynical attempts to mount these molehills backfire on them politically.

Hey, Congress: No last-minute shopping at taxpayer expense

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It's happened to all of us: The holidays are here before you know it, and you're scrambling for that last-minute gift. Maybe you procrastinated, but at least you are spending your own money on someone else. Conversely, the politicians in Congress are preparing to spend YOUR money on THEMSELVES and their special interests in a perverse, year-end shopping spree.

What's on their Christmas wish list? A plethora of radical, left-wing boondoggles that the American people clearly did not endorse in this year's midterm elections. The Pelosi-Schumer-Biden omnibus may include everything from granting citizenship to large groups of immigrants living in the country illegally, bailouts for failed “green” energy programs, even more money sent to Ukraine without enough accountability, and further COVID-related funding despite President Joe Biden declaring the pandemic to be over.

All these additional outlays, on top of what the federal government already spends, come with a massive price tag measured in the trillions. While the details of such a proposal are still being hammered out behind closed doors and out of the public view, left-leaning lawmakers have made it clear that they want to ram a massive omnibus through Congress in this lame-duck session.

Why the urgency to spend so much money that the taxpayer does not have? It's because Democrats have lost the House of Representatives. The new

Congress, which will take office in January, will likely be much less amenable to granting this expensive wish list.

This is occurring at the same time the U.S. Treasury is hitting its debt ceiling, which functions like a limit on a credit card. Put simply, the Treasury has borrowed to its limit and cannot issue more debt without congressional approval—authorization that should not be granted under any circumstances.

With the Treasury—and therefore the taxpayer—hopelessly \$31.5 trillion in debt, there is no room for more borrowing and spending, especially by a Congress whose priorities are clearly not aligned with the American people's. Liberals may crow about their love of democracy, but it is hard to imagine something less democratic than a lame-duck Congress thwarting the will of the American people by hastily assembling and passing another bloated omnibus, and thereby robbing the people's duly elected representatives of the chance to pass meaningful spending reform beginning in January.

Instead, there should be three priorities in the halls of Congress. First, the debt ceiling should not be raised. The solution to a maxed-out credit card is not a higher credit limit, but balancing the household budget. Second, this Congress has no mandate for further spending; there is also no need for any new spending in the remainder of this year. Until the new representatives are seated in January, Congress should not authorize any new federal expenditures. Lastly, when the new Congress

convenes, it must drastically cut federal spending, repeal onerous regulations across industries and stop discouraging domestic producers of reliable American energy.

The gargantuan federal deficits over the last two years have caused inflation to explode and the menace of rising prices will continue its rampage across the American economic landscape until the reckless government spending is brought under control. At the same time, excessive regulation has throttled the supply side of the economy, reducing production, which is the real driver of wealth creation and economic growth.

Possibly the clearest example of this is in the energy market, where domestic producers are laboring with the Biden administration's boot pressed against their neck. Less energy has meant higher prices everywhere and for everything. The agenda outlined above, in addition to being the will of the American people, will have a dramatic and positive impact on fighting inflation.

The lame-duck Congress has no right to go on a last-minute shopping spree for themselves and their special interests this holiday season. Taxpayers already have an unsustainable burden of government debt on their shoulders. The last thing they need is another expensive wish list from liberal politicians to dampen the holiday spirit.

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