THE MIDTERMS: A DC INSIDER SPECIAL

Naomi Lim and Eric Garcia

28 October 2026

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Speakers

Naomi Lim is a White House reporter at the *Washington Examiner* and has covered both the Biden and the current Trump White House from the briefing room and the Oval Office. She previously worked for *News Corp Australia*, and at *CNN* and the *BBC* while earning a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University.

Eric Garcia was most recently the Washington Bureau Chief and Senior Washington Correspondent at *The Independent* and is the author of the book *We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation*. He is also a columnist for MS NOW. He previously worked as an assistant editor at the *Washington Post*'s Outlook section and an associate editor at *The Hill*, as well as a correspondent for *National Journal*, *MarketWatch*, and *Roll Call*.

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THE 2026 MIDTERMS VIEW FROM THE HILL

Eric Garcia

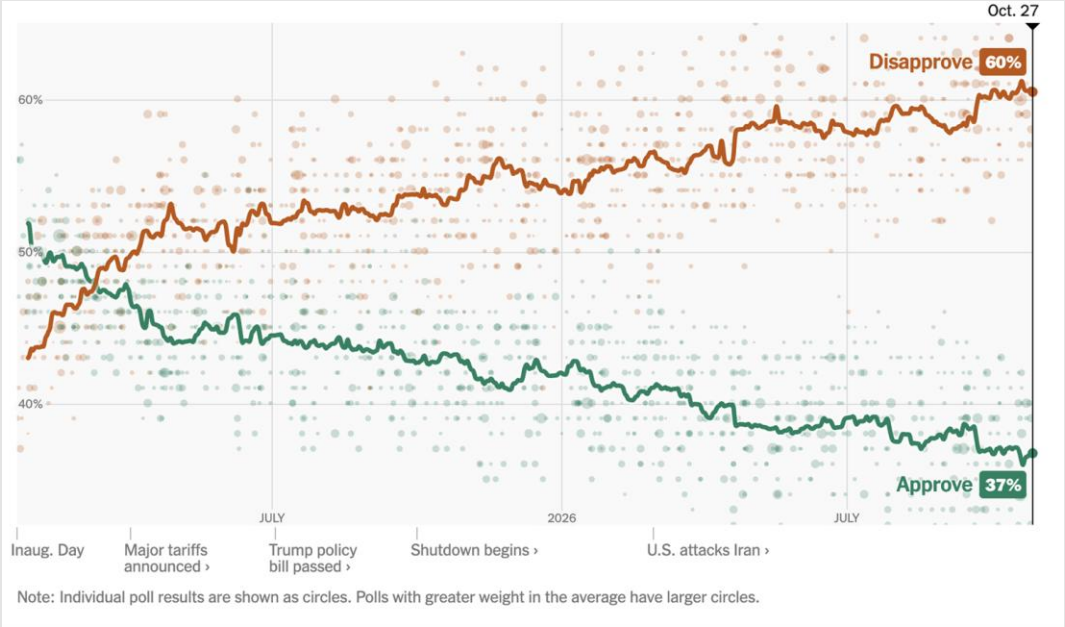
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Some things to know

- Midterms work in cycles
  - Two years into a president's term, voters often feel frustrated with the party in power
  - Because the president is not on the ballot, voters tend to take it out on the president's party in Congress
- Often these cycles are magnified in the president's second term

What's the state of play right now?

- Voters are deeply dissatisfied
- Trump's approval rating has been low before the war in Iran
- A PRRI poll shows that Congress is "too deferential to Trump"
- The generic ballot shows Democrats with a 9-point advantage via YouGov



Via The New York Times

These trends have been magnified in Trump's second term

- Republicans have mostly either rubber-stamped the president's most unpopular policies
- House Speaker Mike Johnson attempted to restrict debate over tariffs, the war in Iran and DOGE.
- They passed a massive spending bill with little internal debate.
- According to Roll Call, 68% of Republicans



Getty images

The midterm is a game of small numbers

- The Cook Political Report rates only 20 seats as “toss-up,” 16 as “Lean Democratic” and 17 as “Lean Republican” out of 435 seats.
- That’s about 12.5 percent of all seats
- Republicans have attempted to put their thumb on the scale with mid-decade redistricting efforts in Texas, North Carolina and Missouri

Where does it stand for the Democrats?

- The party remains somewhat unpopular
  - An Economist/YouGov survey show 54% of Americans have an unfavorable view of the Democratic Party
- Democrats looked like they would have an unfavorable map
  - They'd have to defend seats in Georgia and Michigan after Trump won these states and there was only one pickup opportunity in a state Trump won by single digits and one crossover state.

What's happened instead

- Republicans had a candidate quality problem
  - Trump drove out the incumbent Republican in North Carolina and now Susan Collins in Maine is vulnerable
  - Democrats recruited strong candidates in red and purple states
  - Republicans recruited relatively weak ones
- Democrats are not out of the woods
  - They still have to win over Republican voters, including people who backed Trump and have to repair their image with Hispanics

What this means for the final years of Trump's presidency?

- Trump will have to deal with something that he has never had to deal with: his star fading and no longer being the center of attention
- His lack of popularity will give Democrats significantly more leverage in negotiations around the debt limit and annual spending bills
- Democratic presidential candidates will sell themselves as the candidates of change
- Republicans will need to distance themselves from the president

Q&A

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