



The 2026 Statt Midterm Playbook:

At-Risk Districts, Legislative Positioning,
and the Outlook for Congress

May 2026

Updated Monthly

Introduction

The 2026 midterm elections continue to shape up as a high-stakes battle for House control, with Republicans holding a 218–214 majority and Democrats needing a net gain of just three seats to reclaim the chamber. Prediction markets price a Democratic House takeover at roughly 83.5% on Polymarket ([Polymarket](#)). Race to the White House's model had reached 78.2% Democratic on the back of the Virginia referendum result, but the May 8 Virginia Supreme Court decision voiding that referendum has reversed roughly a four-seat swing Democrats had banked on; markets and forecasters are still re-pricing this in the days since ([Race to the WH](#)); [NPR](#). The generic congressional ballot shows Democrats leading by 3–11 points across recent surveys, including NBC's 50–44 measure and Big Data Poll's 50.4–39.4 split among registered voters ([NBC News, Poll](#)); [Big Data Poll](#).

The most plausible 2026 legislative outlook remains a split-screen Congress before the election: targeted appropriations and oversight activity continue, but high-salience partisan items face mounting friction. Vulnerable members on both sides are emphasizing district-facing deliverables, bipartisan accomplishments, and selective distancing from national party conflict — and on the Republican side, many must also survive primary pressure from ideological challengers. With the Iran war pushing energy and grocery costs up, affordability has become the dominant message terrain — a dynamic that broadly favors Democrats but pushes vulnerable Republicans toward health-premium relief, Medicare/Social Security defense, and farm-relief legislation in the months before November.



Key Findings

as of May 2026

The House is still the Democrats' to lose, but the margin has tightened.

Prediction markets price a Democratic takeover at roughly 83.5%, and Cook has moved multiple races toward Democrats on the strength of polling and fundraising. The Virginia Supreme Court's May 8 ruling, however, voided the state's new map and erased a roughly four-seat redistricting swing Democrats had counted on.

The Callais ruling has reopened the southern map.

The Supreme Court's April 29 decision narrowing Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act triggered an immediate scramble. Florida pushed through a new map within hours, Tennessee signed a 9-0 GOP map on May 7 carving up Memphis-based TN-09, and Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi are all moving to act.

The Senate has become a genuine toss-up.

Prediction markets now price the chamber at roughly 51.5% Democratic. Cook has shifted four Senate races toward Democrats, including Ohio to Toss-up and both North Carolina and Georgia to Lean Democrat.

The war in Iran has made affordability the defining issue.

National gasoline averages near \$4.30 a gallon and headline PCE inflation at 3.5% have hardened into a durable political

headwind for Republicans. Six in ten Americans say the military action has gone too far, and only about a third approve of Trump's handling of Iran.

Democratic challengers are out-raising Republican incumbents.

Q1 fundraising reports delivered striking quarters for Democrats: Talarico (\$27M), Ossoff (\$14M), Cooper (\$13M), and Brown (\$12.5M). Republican committees and allied super PACs remain better stocked for centralized deployment, but candidate-level enthusiasm tilts Democratic.

Maine's primary is effectively resolved.

Governor Janet Mills suspended her campaign on April 30, leaving Graham Platner as the de facto Democratic nominee. With Collins underwater on favorability and Platner up roughly seven points in recent head-to-head polling, this is now Democrats' clearest path to unseating a Republican incumbent.

This report is updated monthly to reflect new polling, fundraising disclosures, redistricting developments, and shifts in the competitive landscape.

A New Voting Rights Landscape

What Changed in the Law

Justice Samuel Alito's majority opinion did not overturn *Allen v. Milligan* (2023) or declare Section 2 unconstitutional. Instead, it imposed a significantly higher evidentiary burden on plaintiffs challenging redistricting maps under Section 2. Under the prior framework established in *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986), challengers could demonstrate that a map had a discriminatory effect on minority voters. Now, a successful challenge requires proof that a state "intentionally drew its districts to afford minority voters less opportunity because of their race" — a standard that legal scholars describe as nearly impossible to meet in practice ([NPR](#)); [Campaign Legal Center](#)).

Critically, the decision also held that courts must allow states to invoke partisan motivation as a defense, given the Court's prior ruling in *Rucho v. Common Cause* (2019) that partisan gerrymandering claims are nonjusticiable in federal courts. This creates what critics describe as a roadmap for states to discriminate on the basis of race while shielding themselves with partisan justifications ([Campaign Legal Center](#)).

In practical terms, the ruling means states are no longer effectively required to draw majority-minority districts even in states with large minority populations. As one Tufts University analysis summarized, states with very large Black populations like Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia previously generally had to maintain one or two congressional districts where at least 50% of voters were African American, and the ruling essentially says they no longer have to ([Tufts Now](#)).

Louisiana v. Callais

On April 29, 2026, the Supreme Court issued its 6-3 decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, reinterpreting Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to require proof of intentional racial discrimination rather than discriminatory effects when challenging redistricting maps. While the Court did not formally strike Section 2 or overturn *Allen v. Milligan* (2023), legal scholars across the spectrum describe the new evidentiary burden as nearly impossible to meet in practice ([NPR](#)); [Campaign Legal Center](#). On May 4, the Court granted a request to issue its judgment immediately rather than after the standard 32 days, making the ruling effective at once and clearing the way for redistricting actions in the middle of the 2026 election cycle ([Democracy Docket](#)).

Where 2026 Effects Are Most Likely to Materialize

The central tension for the 2026 cycle is between states moving aggressively to redraw maps now and the practical and legal barriers to doing so in the middle of an election year. Multiple analyses converge on the conclusion that the decision's largest electoral effects will materialize in 2028 and beyond, but several states are attempting to act for 2026.

Louisiana: Direct Subject of the Case

Louisiana is the most immediately affected state. The day after the ruling, Governor Jeff Landry and Attorney General Liz Murrill announced they were suspending the state's May 16 congressional primary — even though mail-in ballots had already been sent to overseas and military voters — to allow the legislature to draw a new map. The district court upheld this suspension, ordering that the 2024 map (with two majority-Black districts) would remain enjoined and that the state would be "afforded the opportunity to enact a constitutionally compliant map." The practical outcome is that Louisiana will almost certainly enter the 2026 general election with a new map containing one fewer majority-Black district, directly jeopardizing the seat held by Rep. Cleo Fields (D-LA-6) ([SCOTUSblog](#)); [CNN](#).

Florida: Pre-Positioned for Rapid Action

Florida had already initiated mid-decade redistricting as part of the broader national GOP effort before the Callais ruling was issued. Within hours of the decision, the Florida legislature approved a new congressional map devised by Gov. Ron DeSantis aimed at helping Republicans secure 24 of the state's 28 U.S. House seats — a gain of approximately four GOP-leaning seats. Democrats in the state Senate urged delay to allow review of the ruling, but Republicans refused and pushed the map through ([AP](#)); [Florida Politics](#). While the new Florida maps are likely to face legal challenge, Callais "will likely strengthen DeSantis' hand in defending that map" ([CNN](#)).

Alabama: Emergency Motion Filed

Alabama filed an emergency motion with the Court the day after the Callais ruling, seeking to stay an injunction from the Northern District of Alabama that had blocked the legislature's maps in favor of those drawn by a court-appointed special master (a remedy stemming from the 2023 *Allen v. Milligan* decision). The state argued that Callais effectively overrode *Allen*, justifying the legislature's maps — even though early voting had already begun for state primaries. Governor Kay Ivey also called a special legislative session on May 1 to begin drawing new maps ([Democracy Docket](#)); [Stateline](#).

Tennessee: New 9–0 Map Signed Into Law (May 7)

Tennessee moved fastest of any state to act on Callais. On May 7, just over a week after the ruling, Gov. Bill Lee signed into law a new congressional map that gives Republicans a 9–0 advantage by carving up TN-09, the state's only majority-Black district, held by longtime Rep. Steve Cohen (D). The new map splits Memphis (Shelby County) into three districts and stretches the new lines hundreds of miles eastward to dilute Black voting strength in rural, Republican-leaning territory; it also further divides Nashville into five districts. The legislature acted in a three-day special session over Democratic walkouts and protests; the Senate vote was 25–5, and the House vote was 64–25. Tennessee's primary, originally scheduled for August 6, has been rescheduled, and the candidate qualifying period has been reopened through May 15, 2026, to accommodate the new district lines ([NBC News](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Hill](#), [WBIR](#)).

Litigation expected. State legislative leaders from both parties said they expected lawsuits to be filed by the day after the bill's signing. Plaintiffs are likely to argue the timing violates the Purcell principle and that the map is racially discriminatory under what remains of Section 2 — though the post-Callais standard makes that latter claim substantially harder to prove. The legislature explicitly framed the new map as race-neutral, with Republican sponsors saying it was drawn using political geography rather than racial demographics. If the map survives litigation, it likely nets Republicans one House seat (Cohen's TN-09) ([NBC News](#)); [WBIR](#).

Mississippi

Governor Tate Reeves called a special legislative session to draw new state Supreme Court maps, and a federal court that had previously found the state's districts violated Section 2 ordered a new briefing on how Callais affects the case ([Stateline](#)); [Democracy Docket](#).

Georgia and Most Other States: 2026 Effects Unlikely

Despite calls from prominent Georgia Republicans to redraw maps, Governor Brian Kemp stated it is "too late to do that this year" ([Stateline](#)). In most states, candidate filing deadlines and primaries have already passed or are imminent, making it logistically infeasible to redraw and implement new maps before November ([NPR](#)).

Estimated Seat Impact

The New York Times estimated that weakening the VRA could shift up to 12 seats from Democratic to Republican control across multiple election cycles. The Associated Press reported that the broader impact will "probably be felt in 2028, when Republicans potentially can replace more than a dozen Democratic-held House districts that were previously protected under the Voting Rights Act" ([AP](#)).

For 2026 specifically, the most concrete seat shifts are: Louisiana (likely loss of one Democratic-held majority-Black district, currently Rep. Cleo Fields's seat); Florida (potential gain of up to four Republican-leaning districts under the new DeSantis map); Tennessee (one likely Republican gain — TN-09 — under the 9-0 map signed May 7, pending litigation); and Alabama (uncertain, depending on the speed of legislative and judicial action).

The Redistribution Paradox

A counterintuitive dynamic deserves attention. Eliminating majority-minority districts does not simply delete Democratic seats — it redistributes those Democratic voters into surrounding districts, potentially making adjacent Republican-held seats more competitive. As one analyst noted, removing a majority-minority district spreads Democratic voters into other districts, which increases their Democratic vote share elsewhere. In a midterm environment that may already favor Democrats, Republicans "could end up losing two seats instead of the one that they would have lost in the majority-minority district" ([Tufts Now](#)).



The Redistricting Wild Card

The nationwide redistricting battle, triggered by Trump's push for mid-decade map changes and now amplified by the Callais decision, has fundamentally altered the competitive landscape.

Texas

Added as many as 5 new GOP-tilted districts. Primary turnout suggests the math may not work as cleanly as Republicans hoped. Democrats set a record for statewide office primary turnout ([NPR](#)).

California

Carved out 5 Democratic seats in retaliation.

Ohio

Court-ordered maps favor Republicans, though to a lesser degree than feared.

North Carolina

New maps improved GOP odds, especially in NC-1.

Missouri

New GOP-backed map is in effect ([AP News](#)).

Utah

New map created a Democratic opportunity.

Florida

Within hours of the Callais ruling, the legislature approved a new DeSantis-designed map targeting up to 4 additional GOP seats ([AP](#)).

Louisiana

May 16 primary suspended; a redrawn map containing one fewer majority-Black district is expected ([SCOTUSblog](#)).

Alabama

Emergency motion filed; special legislative session called May 1 ([Democracy Docket](#)).

Tennessee

Bill Lee signed a new 9–0 GOP map on May 7 carving up TN-09 (Cohen) — Memphis split across three districts; primary date moved and qualifying reopened through May 15; lawsuits expected ([NBC News](#)); [Washington Post](#).

Virginia Supreme Court Voids Redistricting Referendum

On April 21, Virginia voters approved by a 52–48 margin a constitutional amendment authorizing a Democratic-favorable mid-decade redistricting plan. The new map would have shifted Virginia's congressional delegation from 6-5 Democratic to roughly 10-1 Democratic, with Rep. Jen Kiggans (VA-02) drawn into a district Harris won by about five points and several other Republican-held seats made meaningfully more difficult ([NBC News](#)); [CNBC](#).

On May 8, the Virginia Supreme Court invalidated the referendum result in a 4–3 ruling. The majority found that the General Assembly violated procedural requirements in Article XII, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution, which requires constitutional amendments to pass the legislature twice with an intervening general election. The court ruled that the General Assembly approved the second-round amendment after early voting for the 2025 House of Delegates elections had already begun, meaning no qualifying "intervening general election" had taken place. The court wrote that this violation "incurably taints" the resulting referendum vote and renders it "null and void." The order requires Virginia to use the same congressional district map for 2026 that was used in 2022 and 2024 ([NPR](#)); [Virginia Mercury](#); [Ballotpedia](#).

Democrats are appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court but face a difficult path: state supreme courts are generally the final word on interpretation of their own state constitutions,

and federal review is correspondingly narrow. Speaker Don Scott and AG Jay Jones filed an emergency appeal and have asked the Virginia high court to clarify aspects of its order, but House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries acknowledged in his response that the options for overturning the decision are limited. Realistically, the existing 6-5 Democratic map will govern Virginia's 2026 House races ([The Hill](#)); [Axios](#).

Practical bottom line

The roughly four-seat swing toward Democrats that Virginia had been expected to deliver is largely off the table for 2026. This is a meaningful setback for the House Democratic outlook — Race to the White House's model had reached 78.2% Democratic based in part on the Virginia result; that number is likely to revise downward as forecasters re-price. Kiggans remains exposed under current lines but no longer faces a Harris +5 district. The wider redistricting scoreboard — Texas, Missouri, Ohio, North Carolina, and Utah on the GOP side; California on the Democratic side; plus the Callais cascade in Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee, and possibly Alabama — now tilts back somewhat toward Republicans.

Virginia Supreme Court Voids Redistricting Referendum

AP describes the redistricting battle as still rolling, with unresolved disputes in Missouri and potentially Florida; Virginia is now effectively resolved against Democrats following the May 8 ruling ([AP News](#)). NBC's analysis had previously said the GOP's redistricting push had been "largely neutralized by a Democratic counteroffensive," but with the Virginia map voided and Callais now adding Republican-leaning seats in the South, that calculation has shifted back toward the GOP ([NBC News](#)).

Texas primary results suggest that coalition geography matters more than ever: candidates are winning by building tailored regional bases, including Hispanic-heavy border regions, urban cores, suburbs, and rural conservative areas ([AP News](#)). Dan Crenshaw lost renomination despite major spending advantages, while Tony Gonzales was pushed into a runoff after scandal damage — suggesting that even where redistricting helped Republicans, candidate quality and primary politics could still erode the gains ([AP News](#)).



The Senate Battlefield

Republicans currently hold a 53–47 Senate majority; Democrats need a net gain of **four seats** to take control. Cook Political Report has shifted four Senate races toward Democrats since early April, and Cook's likeliest outcome is a one- to three-seat Democratic pickup — just shy of the four needed for a majority ([Fox News, Cook Senate](#)). The key battlegrounds are North Carolina, Maine, Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Alaska, Iowa, and Texas, with Minnesota and Nebraska also worth watching ([CBS News](#)); [CNN](#).

North Carolina: Cooper vs. Whatley

This is one of Democrats' top pickup opportunities and one of the most expensive races in the country. **Cook shifted the race from toss-up to Lean Democrat**, and recent polling shows Roy Cooper leading: 50.4–41.4 in an Opinion Diagnostics poll and 50–42 in High Point/YouGov. CNN describes the race as one strategists in both parties expect to remain close to the end, despite Democrats' current edge ([Fox News, Cook Senate](#)); [CNN](#).

Fundraising: NPR reported Cooper raised \$13 million in Q1. Whatley announced \$5 million in Q1 fundraising, while Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$71 million for the race — the second-largest GOP defensive investment on the map ([NPR](#)); [CNN](#).

Georgia: Ossoff Defending

Ossoff is the only Democratic senator up in a state Trump carried in 2024, making him the GOP's top Democratic incumbent target — but his position has improved markedly. **Cook moved Georgia from Toss-up to Lean Democrat**. Recent polling shows Ossoff ahead 51–44 vs. Mike Collins and 52–43 vs. Buddy Carter. CNN reports that Republicans privately see Michigan as slightly more prime for a pickup than Georgia right now, largely because the GOP primary in Georgia is messy while Ossoff is already consolidated ([Fox News, Cook Senate](#)); [CNN](#).

Fundraising: Ossoff reported \$14 million in Q1, according to NPR, and earlier coverage noted he had already amassed more than \$25 million in cash on hand. Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$44 million for the race ([NPR](#)); [CNN](#).

Maine: Collins vs. Platner

On April 30, Governor Janet Mills suspended her Senate campaign, citing insufficient funds, effectively clearing the Democratic primary for oyster farmer and Marine veteran Graham Platner, who had been leading her by double digits. Platner faces nominal opposition from David Costello in the June 9 primary but is overwhelmingly favored to be the nominee. DSCC chair Kirsten Gillibrand and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer — who had backed Mills — issued a joint statement saying they would now work with Platner to defeat Collins ([NBC News](#)); [Washington Post](#).

This is Democrats' clearest shot at unseating a Republican incumbent in a state Trump lost, and many analyses call it central to any path to a Senate majority. Cook and Sabato rate it a **Toss-up**; The Economist and Race to the White House list it Lean Democratic. Polymarket prices Democrats at roughly 72% following Mills's withdrawal ([Newsweek](#)); [Polymarket](#).

Polling (Platner vs. Collins): Platner has led consistently. An Emerson poll (March 21–23) had him up 48–41, with Collins underwater on favorability (38/57). A Maine People's Resource Center poll (March 20–31) showed him ahead 48.3–39.3. Pooled averages put Platner up roughly 6.8 points ([Newsweek](#)).

Fundraising and outside spending: Platner had outraised Mills by nearly \$2 million in late 2025 and dominates small-dollar fundraising. By late April, Platner's campaign had spent ~\$7.3M on ads, compared with ~\$2.4M for Collins, per AdImpact. Outside money tilts the other way: pro-Collins super PACs have spent at least \$50M combined, including \$17M from One Nation with Senate Leadership Fund planning \$42M more. Majority Forward (pro-Democrat) has spent ~\$4.7M. Collins also moved her longtime chief of staff, Steve Abbott, to campaign manager ([Press Herald](#)); [Collins press release](#).

The Platner risk profile: Platner brings a strong small-dollar base and endorsements from Sanders, Warren, and progressive groups, with apparent appeal to some 2024 Trump voters — but carries vulnerabilities Mills had flagged: controversial Reddit and social media posts (including comments downplaying sexual assault and criticizing police and rural Americans) that GOP outside groups will likely use heavily. Collins remains one of the Senate's most durable incumbents and has repeatedly outperformed her polling. The intra-Democratic moderate vs. progressive question is resolved by default; the open question is whether Platner's coalition holds under \$50M+ in negative spending ([NBC News](#)); [Semafor](#).

Michigan: Open Seat, Democratic Primary, Mike Rogers

With Sen. Gary Peters retiring, Michigan is one of Republicans' best pickup opportunities, but the Democratic side is still unsettled. Michigan is widely treated as a **Toss-up**. The Democratic nominee is still unknown: Haley Stevens, Mallory McMorrow, and Abdul El-Sayed are in a three-way fight ([CBS News](#)); [CNN](#). The Democratic primary is being shaped by intra-party conflict over Israel/Gaza, ideology, and electability. CNN and Semafor describe endorsements splitting among progressive and moderate senators. El-Sayed has drawn sustained controversy over comments related to terrorism and a synagogue attack, as well as his appearances with Hasan Piker ([Fox News](#)); [Jerusalem Post](#).

Fundraising: McMorrow raised over \$3 million in Q1; El-Sayed raised \$2.25 million. Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$45 million — its largest offensive investment at the time, underscoring how seriously Republicans view this pickup ([CNN](#)).

New Hampshire: Pappas (D) vs. likely Sununu (R)

This open Democratic-held seat is one of the GOP's few realistic pickup opportunities in a blue-leaning state, but Democrats currently have the advantage. Cook rates it **Lean Democrat**. Polling shows Pappas ahead of both potential GOP opponents: 49-42 vs. John Sununu and 52-38 vs. Scott Brown. Senate Leadership Fund plans \$17 million for Sununu ([Newsweek](#)); [CNN](#).

Ohio: Husted (R) vs. Sherrod Brown (D)

Ohio is one of the red-state reach races Democrats likely need if they are to win the Senate majority. **Cook moved Ohio from Lean Republican to Toss-up**. Brown's comeback bid is central to Democratic hopes because he still has a working-class brand in a state Trump won by double digits in 2024 ([Fox News](#), [Cook Senate](#)); [CNN](#).

Fundraising: Brown raised \$12.5 million in Q1 and had \$16.5 million cash on hand. Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$79 million — its largest commitment anywhere on the map, signaling how seriously Republicans take the threat ([CNN](#)).

Alaska: Sullivan (R) vs. Peltola (D)

Alaska is one of the most surprising competitive Senate races because Peltola has made a usually red state look viable for Democrats. Cook still rates it Lean Republican, but polling shows Peltola ahead. Alaska Survey Research's latest ranked-choice poll had **Peltola 52-48** over Sullivan in the final head-to-head round. Peltola raised more than \$1.5 million in her first 24 hours after launching; Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$15 million for Sullivan ([Newsweek](#)); [CNN](#).

Iowa: Hinson (R) vs. Democrat TBD

CBS notes Cook rates Iowa Likely Republican, but recent polling is close: Zach Wahls 46-44 over Hinson; Josh Turek 46-45 over Hinson in an April Echelon poll. Iowa is a test of whether economic dissatisfaction, anti-tariff sentiment among farmers, and midterm backlash can overcome the state's Republican drift ([CBS News](#)); [CNN](#).

Fundraising: Wahls and Turek each announced \$1.1 million Q1 hauls; Hinson raised over \$3 million and had \$6.5 million cash on hand. Senate Leadership Fund reserved \$29 million to defend the seat. Democratic elites are split ideologically, with centrists backing Turek and Warren backing Wahls ([CNN](#)); [Semafor](#).

Texas: Talarico (D) vs. Cornyn or Paxton (R)

Texas is no longer being dismissed as a fantasy race. It is still Republican-leaning, but the bitter GOP runoff and Talarico's fundraising have made it a serious watch race. Cook still rates Texas Likely Republican, but underlying numbers are much tighter than that label implies. Recent general-election polling: **Talarico 44-41 over Cornyn; Talarico 46-41 over Paxton** in April Texas Public Opinion Research. Polymarket has the seat near even: Republicans 53.5%, Democrats 48% to win ([CBS News](#)); [Polymarket](#).

The headline number — Talarico's \$27 million in Q1 — is one of the largest Senate quarters of the cycle, per NPR. Cornyn raised nearly \$9 million in Q1 with over \$8 million cash on hand. NBC reported Cornyn outraised Paxton in the runoff period \$2.8 million to \$1.7 million in primary committees ([NPR](#)); [CNN](#); [NBC News](#).

Three intersecting stories

1. Cornyn and Paxton remain locked in a brutal runoff, with Paxton holding slight polling advantages in several runoff surveys ([Newsweek](#)).
2. Texas Democrats set a record for statewide office primary turnout, suggesting real engagement ([NPR](#)).
3. Democrats and some Republicans believe Talarico is more competitive against Paxton than Cornyn because Paxton carries more scandal baggage ([Newsweek](#)).

Minnesota: Open Democratic-Held Seat

Not top-tier in the way North Carolina or Maine is, but one of the seats Republicans say they can contest if the climate improves or Democrats emerge damaged from their primary. Cook, Inside Elections, and Sabato all rate Minnesota **Likely Democratic**. Democrats are in a notable primary between Angie Craig and Peggy Flanagan. Craig had \$6.79 million in receipts and Flanagan \$3.29 million as of year-end 2025 ([Ballotpedia](#)).

Senate Money Picture

Republican institutions still have more strategic cash on hand: NRSC at \$43.0 million, DSCC at \$36.5 million; on the House side, NRCC at \$78.2 million vs. DCCC at \$69.9 million. But Democratic candidates are posting eye-catching numbers individually — Talarico (\$27M), Ossoff (\$14M), Cooper (\$13M), Brown (\$12.5M) ([NPR](#), [Money](#)).

Outside groups remain enormously important. Senate Leadership Fund has announced \$342 million across eight Senate battleground states; MAGA Inc. has nearly \$350 million cash on hand; Fairshake (the crypto-aligned super PAC) reports \$165.8 million cash on hand; and Leading the Future, an AI-focused super PAC, says it has raised \$140 million for the cycle ([CNN](#)); [CNBC](#).

On small-dollar platforms, ActBlue has taken in \$1.52 billion this cycle and has \$78.3 million in cash on hand, while WinRed has taken in \$605.7 million and has \$1.6 million in cash on hand. NPR's synthesis is that Democratic candidates are drawing more direct donor enthusiasm while Republican committees and allied super PACs are better stocked for centralized deployment ([NPR](#), [Money](#)).



The Iran War and Energy Politics

The Affordability Channel

The political problem voters experience is concrete: gas, utilities, and groceries. CNN reports Republicans had planned to campaign on putting more money in voters' pockets, but the Iran war "sent gas prices soaring" and put "everything on hold until the war's over" ([CNN](#)). Semafor frames energy inflation as the most visible and emotionally salient economic touchpoint for voters, because gas prices are publicly posted and easy to blame ([Semafor](#)). AP describes Republicans as facing a "painful political backlash" six months before early votes begin, with veteran GOP pollster Neil Newhouse warning of "an ugly November" ([AP](#)).

Energy Costs Are Feeding Broader Inflation

The Fed's preferred inflation gauge rose 0.7% in March and 3.5% year over year, with the Iran war's surge in gas prices a major driver. Gas prices jumped nearly 21% in March from the prior month ([LA Times](#)). Morningstar/MarketWatch similarly says higher gas prices tied to the war were "mostly to blame" for the March jump in PCE inflation to 3.5% ([Morningstar](#)). The Dallas Fed scenario analysis estimates the war could add roughly 0.2 to 1.8 percentage points to 2026 headline PCE inflation and 0.1 to 0.5 points to core inflation, depending on the duration and severity of the oil shock ([Dallas Fed](#)).



Voter Opinion on the War Itself

Even setting prices aside, the war itself appears politically weak. AP-NORC polling found about **six in 10 U.S. adults say the military action in Iran has "gone too far,"** and only about a third approve of Trump's handling of Iran. Roughly six in 10 oppose deploying U.S. ground troops, including about half of Republicans; only about 1 in 10 favor ground deployment ([AP](#)). The Chicago Council reports about six in 10 Americans generally oppose the war, 69% are worried about higher gas and fuel prices, and 66% want the U.S. to end its involvement even if objectives are not met ([Chicago Council](#)). NPR summarized the political lesson bluntly: "Getting out of this war would be the best thing for Trump and his party" before the midterms ([NPR](#)).

House and Senate Implications

AP says Republicans now privately concede the House is "all but lost" and that Democrats have a realistic shot at the Senate too ([AP](#)). CFR concludes that the operation poses a higher political risk to Republicans than Democrats, and if it matters electorally, it will likely put more Republican House and Senate seats at risk ([Council on Foreign Relations](#)). CNN says many Republicans privately concede their chances of holding the House are slipping and that avoiding sweeping losses depends first on Trump extricating himself from Iran quickly ([CNN](#)).

The Duration Caveat

Almost every analysis adds the same caveat: political effects depend heavily on how long the war and energy shock last. CFR says if the war ends in two to three weeks and gas quickly falls to prewar levels, voters may largely forget it. The Washington Institute adds a strategic wrinkle: Iran may have reason to drag out negotiations because the U.S. midterm election is a pressure point Tehran can exploit ([Council on Foreign Relations](#)); [Washington Institute](#).

Prediction

On current trajectory, the Iran war and energy shock are a net negative for Republicans, and the strongest political channels are higher gasoline prices, higher utility costs, broader inflation, public opposition to the war, and MAGA/internal GOP division. They probably increase the odds Democrats win the House and improve, though do not assure, their chances of winning the Senate. If conditions improve materially before September, some damage could recede; if not, Republicans risk fighting the midterms under the most punishing possible frame — an unpopular war that made everyday life more expensive.

Potential Election Outcomes and Implications

House: Democrats Have a Clearer Edge Than in April

Across multiple sources and prediction markets, the House is the chamber most likely to change hands. NBC's analysis notes Democrats hold a generic-ballot advantage and Republicans can lose only a handful of seats before losing control; a net loss of three seats would cost Republicans the House ([NBC News](#)). Polymarket priced Democrats at roughly 83.5% to win the House heading into May 8; Race to the White House's model had reached 78.2% Democratic based partly on the now-voided Virginia referendum, and that figure is expected to revise downward as forecasters incorporate the Virginia Supreme Court ruling ([Polymarket](#)); [Race to the WH](#); [NPR \(May 8 VA ruling\)](#)). Even with the Virginia setback, the recent generic-ballot polling reinforces a difficult climate for the GOP — Democrats lead by anywhere from 3 to 11 points across major surveys ([Big Data Poll](#)); [Morning Consult](#).

The Niskanen analysis argues presidential approval and public opinion are moving against the president in ways that historically predict House losses for the incumbent party, and concludes Democrats are "very much on their way for a House majority" ([Niskanen Center](#)). Brookings goes further, arguing that GOP midterm prospects have darkened materially as Trump's approval has fallen ([Brookings, GOP Prospects Darken](#)).

Caveats Since April

1. The Callais decision has reopened redistricting in several states, which could net Republicans seats — most concretely in Florida (up to +4 R) and Tennessee (likely +1 R under the May 7 map), with Louisiana also adding a Republican seat (Cleo Fields's LA-06) and Alabama still uncertain.
2. Texas and California redistricting outcomes have largely offset one another.
3. Virginia's redistricting referendum was struck down by the Virginia Supreme Court on May 8, voiding the roughly four-seat swing Democrats had counted on; the existing 6-5 Democratic map will govern 2026 races and a U.S. Supreme Court appeal faces an uphill path.

Senate: Closer to Toss-Up Than in April

The Senate map is harder for Democrats than the House, but it has tightened materially since April. Prediction markets now show Democrats at 51.5% and Republicans at 49.5% to control the chamber — essentially a coin flip ([Polymarket](#)). Cook Political Report has shifted four Senate races toward Democrats, and the likeliest outcome by Cook's count is a one- to three-seat Democratic pickup ([Fox News](#), [Cook Senate](#)).

The Simplest Framing

Democrats need four seats. They have one near-certain pickup opportunity in North Carolina (Cook: Lean D), one strong target in Maine (Toss-up but polling favorable), one increasingly competitive Ohio (Toss-up), one toss-up in Michigan (open seat with messy primary), and a series of reach races in Alaska, Iowa, and Texas. Hold all incumbents and win North Carolina + Maine + two of (Ohio, Michigan, Alaska, Iowa, Texas) and Democrats have the chamber. That math is possible but not probable

Three Plausible Post-Election Control Scenarios

Most Likely Single Outcome

Most likely single outcome: Democratic House, Republican Senate. This has the broadest cross-source support ([Guardian](#)); [CNBC](#).

Second Plausible Outcome

Democratic House, Republican Senate. This has the broadest cross-source support ([Guardian](#)); [CNBC](#).

Less Likely But Possible

Republicans narrowly retain both chambers if the environment stabilizes — especially if the Iran war resolves quickly with energy prices falling, Callais-driven redistricting nets several GOP seats, and Senate nominees hold the party's battleground seats ([NBC News](#)). Compared to April, the probability of this scenario has fallen modestly because the Iran war has not yet de-escalated.

Legislative Implications of Each Scenario

If Democrats Win the House

A Democratic House would almost certainly mean aggressive oversight and subpoenas, blocked or slowed Trump legislative priorities, messaging-heavy appropriations fights, and a pivot from lawmaking to investigations in at least some committees. The Guardian notes that taking the House would give Democrats subpoena power and the ability to block the president's legislative agenda ([Guardian](#)). The committee activity already underway — Oversight pursuing subpoenas and probes on PBMs, campaign finance, DOJ matters — offers a preview of the kind of escalation that would deepen under a Democratic majority ([House Oversight](#)).

If Republicans Keep the Senate

A Republican Senate retains leverage over judicial and executive nominations, blocking House-driven legislation, and shaping appropriations negotiations from a stronger veto point. Senate control is especially important for confirmations — a Republican Senate preserves Trump's confirmations pipeline even if his legislative agenda stalls ([Guardian](#)).

If Democrats Also Take the Senate

This is no longer remote. If Democrats win both chambers, the implications are much sharper: no smooth path for Trump judicial and cabinet confirmations, a broader investigations agenda, likely committee-driven confrontation over election law, immigration enforcement, and executive actions, and a severe limit on any second-term Trump legislative expansion ([Federal News Network](#)); [LA Times](#).

Prediction: Split control would produce a low-output, high-conflict 2027 — continuing appropriations brinkmanship, executive-legislative conflict, more nomination fights, more oversight confrontation, and fewer large bipartisan packages outside emergencies or must-pass items. If Democrats win both chambers, the second half of Trump's term becomes primarily defensive.

The Democratic Oversight Map: Financial Services

The 2026 midterms won't just reshape Congress. They'll determine which investigations get subpoenas. **Statt's Democratic Oversight Map for Financial Services** lays out the full investigative record Democrats have already built: the letters sent, the documents demanded, the firms named, and the officials on the witness list.

[Download the Report](#)



Key Uncertainties

Iran war duration and energy prices.

If the conflict resolves and gas prices fall before September, the GOP's affordability problem could ease; if it drags on or escalates, political damage compounds ([Council on Foreign Relations](#)); [AP](#).

Callais redistricting timeline.

How many states actually implement new maps before November depends on emergency motions, Purcell-doctrine litigation, and the speed of state legislative action. Louisiana is locked in; Florida has acted; Tennessee signed its 9–0 map on May 7 and now faces expected litigation; Alabama is in special session; Georgia is unlikely; most other states are off the table for 2026 ([Stateline](#)); [NBC News](#).

Virginia appeal to U.S. Supreme Court.

With the Virginia Supreme Court having voided the referendum on May 8, the question is whether Democrats' emergency federal appeal — premised on procedural and federal-law arguments — could revive the new map for 2026. Most observers see it as a long shot, but success would restore the ~four-seat swing and Kiggans's Harris +5 exposure ([NPR](#)); [The Hill](#).

Election-administration conflicts.

The SAVE America Act fight and Callais-related litigation could alter campaign strategy and mobilization patterns even

without major statutory change ([Fox News](#), [10 Senate races](#)).

Latino vote trajectory.

Whether Latino voters return to pre-2024 patterns (~60–40 Democratic) or maintain their 2024 Trump-ward shift remains arguably the single most consequential variable for South Texas and several other battlegrounds. Early evidence — including a 14-point Democratic win in a Tarrant County special election Trump carried by 17 — suggests significant reversion ([Brookings](#), [Texas redistricting](#)).

Trump approval.

Brookings notes there is no modern precedent for the president's party to avoid losses in the House unless the president's job approval is well above 50%. Trump's late-April approval was around 41% with 57% disapproval in Big Data Poll's measure ([Brookings](#), [GOP Prospects Darken](#)); [Big Data Poll](#).

Senate primaries and candidate quality.

Michigan (Stevens, McMorrow, El-Sayed), Iowa (Wahls vs. Turek), Minnesota (Craig vs. Flanagan), and the Texas GOP runoff (Cornyn vs. Paxton) all carry meaningful candidate-quality risk — the last could materially change Texas's competitiveness. Maine is resolved with Platner as presumptive nominee, but his social-media history is a vulnerability Republicans will press hard ([CNN](#)); [Newsweek](#), [Talarico](#); [NBC News](#).

Bottom Line

The 2026 House battlefield still features roughly three dozen genuinely competitive seats, concentrated in Pennsylvania's suburbs, South Texas, and scattered swing districts across the Midwest, Mountain West, and Northeast. Democrats' overall position remains favorable but the picture is more mixed than a week ago: prediction markets still price a Democratic House at roughly 83.5%, but the Virginia Supreme Court's May 8 ruling voiding the new map removed a roughly four-seat redistricting tailwind, and the Callais cascade is on track to net Republicans several seats in the South.

The legislative landscape remains narrowed toward appropriations, oversight, and symbolic election-law and Iran-related conflict. The Callais decision is a generational shift in voting-rights law but will produce only modest 2026 effects — concentrated in Louisiana, Florida, and Tennessee, with Alabama possibly adding more. Its bigger consequences are in 2028 and beyond ([AP](#)).

The Iran war and resulting energy-price shock are now the single most consequential short-term variable, cutting directly against the GOP's affordability message and probably increasing the odds Democrats win the House. If the war resolves and energy prices fall before late summer, some damage could recede; if not, Republicans face the most punishing possible frame.

At-risk members will continue to behave defensively and locally: claim district wins, foreground bipartisan or practical achievements, manage primary risks, and tailor immigration/economy messaging to district conditions rather than national party scripts. The interaction between Callais outcomes, Iran-war duration, Latino voter behavior, and Trump's approval rating will ultimately determine whether these legislative positioning efforts prove sufficient.

Single-line summary: In April, we said the House was more likely than not to flip and the Senate was genuinely competitive. In May, the House looks clearly Democratic-leaning, the Senate looks genuinely toss-up, and the cycle's defining issue has crystallized into affordability under conditions of war.



Data & Methodology

The May 2026 Midterm Playbook was produced using [Briefer](#), Statt's AI-powered policy analyst chatbot. Briefer is trained as a policy analyst and delivers relevant, accurate, and cited answers to policy questions, fully integrated into Statt's legislative, regulatory, and hearing content. This analysis was generated through a structured research process built around three core questions: which incumbent seats are most at risk, how vulnerable members are positioning themselves legislatively, and what are the most likely congressional outcomes and their policy implications.

Briefer synthesized information across a broad range of source types, including nonpartisan election analysis, research from think tanks, national news coverage, local and regional reporting on individual races, official congressional press releases and committee documentation, and prediction market data. Where polling data appears, it is sourced from published news reporting rather than direct polling feeds.

Statt's platform is updated in real-time, and all analysis in this edition reflects information available as of May 15, 2026. This edition builds on the April 2026 Midterm Playbook: [Download the Statt April 2026 Midterm Playbook](#)

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