

The 2024 US congressional elections

Key data on the 119th Congress, following the November 2024 elections

Box 1 Composition of the 119th Congress following the 2024 elections

	Republican	Democrat
House of Representatives	220	215
Senate	53	47

- 72 new members were elected to the 119th Congress: 11 senators and 61 House representatives.
- \$1.2 billion was spent on advertisements in the swing state of Pennsylvania. It was the first time that over \$1 billion has been spent on ads in a single state.
- In the Senate, Republican candidates defeated their Democratic opponents in Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Democrats only took one seat from a Republican incumbent, in Arizona.
- Due to resignations from the House, including Matt Gaetz (R–FL 1) and others, because of Trump nominating them for positions in the executive branch, the House only actually held a majority of 217–215 at the time of Trump’s inauguration – the narrowest ever House majority.
- JD Vance, now serving as Vice President, was replaced by Jon Husted as Ohio Senator in January 2025.

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Box 2 Number of women in the 119th Congress

	Democrat	Republican	Total
Congress	110	40	150
House	94	31	125
Senate	16	9	25

- 28% of the 119th Congress are women, compared with 35% of MPs in the UK.
- Sarah McBride (D–DE) became the first openly transgender member of Congress.
- 87% of Congress identify as Christian, compared with 62% of the US population. 28% of Americans are not religiously affiliated, compared with less than 1% of Congress (three members).
- This is similar to the social composition of the 118th Congress.

Box 3 New party leaders in the Senate

Republican senators chose to elect John Thune (R–SD) as the new Senate majority leader. Thune had served under his predecessor, Mitch McConnell, in the previous Congress as the minority party whip. Thune raised \$33 million in the 2024 election cycle and attended more than 200 events supporting fellow Republican candidates.

President Trump wanted the new Senate majority leader to allow him to make recess appointments, avoiding Senate scrutiny of some of his more controversial cabinet nominees. However, Thune refused. Thune also said he will not get rid of the filibuster. Even with 53 senators, the filibuster in the Senate will make it difficult for the Republicans to pass legislation without some Democratic support.

Senator Chuck Schumer (D–NY) will serve as minority leader.

Box 4 New party leaders in the House

Mike Johnson (R–LA 4) was re-elected as Speaker of the House after achieving the 218 votes needed. However, Johnson had to convince Ralph Norman (R–SC 5) and Keith Self (R–TX 3) to support him prior to the final vote. Thomas Massie (R–KY 4) was the only Republican to refuse to support Johnson. Massie tried to remove Johnson as Speaker in April 2024 – he is a fiscal conservative who opposes Johnson’s bipartisan spending legislation.

Hakeem Jeffries (D–NY 8) will serve as minority leader in the House after all 215 Democrats voted to support him.

Box 5 Party divisions in the Senate

Former senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (R–KY), Susan Collins (R–ME) and Lisa Murkowski (R–AK) defied their party and joined the 47 Democrats in voting against Trump’s US defense secretary nominee, Pete Hegseth. Vice President JD Vance then cast the tie-breaking vote so that Hegseth could be confirmed by 51–50 votes. Prior to this, the Senate Armed Services Committee questioned Hegseth over allegations of sexual misconduct, financial mismanagement and alcohol consumption, but they voted 14–13 along party lines to proceed to a full Senate vote.

Collins and Murkowski both voted against Trump’s American Health Care Act in 2017, voted to impeach him in 2021 and voted against his education secretary nominee, Betsy DeVos, in 2017. The party is therefore likely to remain divided in the Senate during Trump’s second presidency.

ACTIVITIES

Class discussion

- 1 Why is it important for President Trump that the Republicans have control of the House and Senate and that the US Supreme Court has six conservative justices?
- 2 What problems is the 119th Congress likely to cause for President Trump, and how far can he get around these issues?
- 3 How important is it for Congress to ‘look like America’? How does hyper-partisanship affect the ability of members of Congress to truly represent the voters in their states and districts?
- 4 Who are more likely to perform their representative functions more effectively, MPs in the British Parliament or members of the US Congress? Why?
- 5 What are the arguments for and against the filibuster being abolished in the Senate?
- 6 Should President Trump be allowed to make recess appointments for his cabinet nominees? If not, why not?

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