

Poll numbers are pointing to a midterm shellacking for Democrats

First Read is your briefing from "Meet the Press" and the NBC Political Unit on the day's most important political stories and why they matter.

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WASHINGTON — If it's Tuesday ... Senate Democrats are set to embark on their [doomed voting rights push](#). ... President Biden is plotting a [communications reset](#). ... Gov. Kathy Hochul is in the driver's seat for New York governor, per [new Siena poll](#). ... And more on the tension between

Donald Trump and Gov. Ron DeSantis.

But first: Over the last 30 years, the NBC News poll has given us a good idea if the president's party is headed for an exceptionally good midterm election, a shellacking or somewhere in-between.

And right now, the arrows are pretty much pointing in the "shellacking" territory for President Biden and the Democrats as we debut our Midterm Meter, which will use our poll to gauge the overall political environment for the president's party.

A little history lesson: In 1998 and 2002, the party controlling the White House gained House seats — five in 1998, and eight in 2002. What did the numbers in our NBC News poll show right before those elections? Well, a majority or a plurality of respondents said the country was headed in the right direction; Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush had approval ratings north of 60 percent; and their parties enjoyed narrow leads on the generic ballot.

Now let us show you what a shellacking looks like: In 1994, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018 — when the president's party suffered big losses — overwhelming majorities said the country was headed on the wrong track before the election; each president's job rating was below 50 percent; and the president's party trailed on the generic ballot.

So with less than a year until the November midterms, what did the latest NBC News poll tell us? It was pointing more towards the shellacking territory. Our October 2021 NBC News poll showed 71 percent of Americans (!!!) saying the country is headed in the wrong direction; President Biden's job rating was at 42 percent; and the silver lining for Democrats is that they enjoyed a narrow lead on the generic ballot.

Of course, we know that political environments can change, so we will continue to show you what our Midterm Meter looks like as we get closer and closer to Election Day 2022.

Beginning with our latest NBC News poll, which comes out in just a few days.

The historical numbers

By the way, here are the historical gain/loss numbers from those past midterms, plus the political numbers from our NBC News the month before those elections:

1994

- Shellacking: -54 House seats / -8 Senate Seats
- Wrong Track: 57 percent
- Pres. Approval: 46 percent
- Congressional Preference: R+6

1998

- Exceptionally Good: +5 House seats / no Senate change
- Wrong Track: 31 percent
- Pres. Approval: 68 percent
- Congressional Preference: D+2

2002

- Exceptionally Good: +8 House seats / +1 Senate Seat
- Wrong Track: 42 percent
- Pres. Approval: 63 percent
- Congressional Preference: R+1

2006

- Shellacking: -30 House seats / -6 Senate Seats
- Wrong Track: 56 percent
- Pres. Approval: 29 percent
- Congressional Preference: D+9

2010

- Shellacking: -63 House seats / -6 Senate Seats
- Wrong Track: 60 percent
- Pres. Approval: 45 percent
- Congressional Preference: R+2

2014

- Shellacking: -13 House seats / -9 Senate Seats
- Wrong Track: 65 percent
- Pres. Approval: 42 percent
- Congressional Preference: R+1

2018

- Shellacking: -40 House seats / +1Senate Seat
- Wrong Track: 54 percent
- Pres. Approval: 46 percent
- Congressional Preference: D+7

[Data Download: The number of the day is ... 5](#)

That was the Republican party-identification advantage (in percentage points) in the fourth quarter of 2021, [according to Gallup polling](#). To close the year, 47 percent of Americans polled by Gallup considered themselves either

Republicans or leaning that way, compared to 42 percent who considered themselves Democrats or leaning toward that party.

That's a significant shift since the first quarter of 2021, when Democrats led 49 percent to 40 percent (when those leaners are included).

Democrats have historically enjoyed a lead in party ID for most of the 30 years that Gallup has tracked this trend, making the Republican lead notable. Read more from Gallup [here](#).

Other numbers you need to know today:

\$90 million: That's how big of a check Illinois Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker wrote his campaign ahead of his gubernatorial re-elect later this year. Pritzker's campaign [told the Chicago Sun-Times](#) that he'll also be using that cash to support Democrats and their causes down the ballot.

3: The number of House Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump who have since announced their retirements – following Friday's news that New York Rep. John Katko [is not running for re-election](#).

10: How many more Democrats there will be in the House than Republicans after newly elected Democratic Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick [gets sworn in Tuesday](#).

7: The number of senators who [traveled to Ukraine](#) amid escalating tensions with Russia.

[Tweet of the day](#)

[Midterm roundup](#)

Three Black women have [already established themselves as frontrunners](#) in

statewide primaries, fueling hopes that 2022 could be a historic year.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul is leading the Democratic primary, according to [a new Siena College poll](#) that showed 46 percent of respondents backing Hochul.

Ohio Republican Matt Dolan's campaign announced his [first TV ad Tuesday](#), which focuses on China. NBC reported last week Dolan is [investing \\$10.5 million of his own money](#) into his campaign.

Trump's first rally of 2022 took him to Arizona, where he repeated lies and conspiracy theories about the 2020 election and the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. As NBC's Jonathan Allen reports, Arizona is [ground zero for Trump's efforts](#) to strengthen his hold on the GOP.

NBC's Vaughn Hillyard was also on the ground in Arizona for Trump's rally, and he caught up with Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego at a voting rights march in Phoenix. Asked if he will challenge Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema in 2024, Gallego said, "I always keep the door open to the future."

There's growing tension between Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, with Axios reporting that Trump [has been bashing](#) DeSantis in private. NBC News reports that Trump advisers believe Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell [is stirring the pot](#) behind the scenes.

Democratic Louisiana Senate candidate Gary Chambers [launched an ad](#) this morning showing him smoking marijuana and criticizing marijuana arrests, per NBC's Julia Jester.

North Carolina legislators are planning to vote on Wednesday [to delay the state's primary \(again\) to June 7](#) due to ongoing court battles over the state's new legislative and congressional districts, the Raleigh News &

Observer reports.

The Ohio Supreme Court [tossed out the state's congressional map](#) on Friday as an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander. The legislature has 30 days to draw new lines.

[ICYMI: What else is happening in the world](#)

The Texas rabbi taken hostage over the weekend [credits security training](#) with him helping congregants escape a gunman.

NBC's Jonathan Allen and Marc Caputo take a peek inside former President Trump's "[secretive endorsement operation](#)."

CDC Director [Rochelle Walensky told the Wall Street Journal](#) that she hasn't always emphasized the "uncertainty" in evolving pandemic guidelines and that she wants to make communication from the agency clearer.

If you missed it, check out the state of gerrymandering in the U.S. by playing some [mini golf](#) with the Washington Post.

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