

TO: Discussion Group

FROM: Lynn Miller

RE: Implications of the November 2022 midterm elections

These articles were all published within 48 hours of the midterm elections of November 8. They provide analysis of the election's implications, although by the time we meet on November 14, we'll know more about election outcomes. Please inform yourselves of the latest updates, and we'll try to make sense of what it all means for the next two years and more of America's political life.

Article #1: Still Undecided

By German Lopez, November 9, 2022, NYT

Democrats defied expectations in the midterm elections, potentially defending enough seats to maintain control of the Senate but likely not enough to keep Republicans from taking the House. The battle for power in Congress stood too close to call this morning.

The Democrats' biggest win of the night came in the Pennsylvania Senate race, where [John Fetterman](#) defeated [Dr. Mehmet Oz](#) to flip the seat, which is held by the retiring Republican Pat Toomey. Three other races critical to the outcome of Senate control — Arizona, Georgia and Nevada — were too close to call. Democrats, who are running incumbents in all three seats, probably need to win two to keep the Senate; Republicans have to pick off two to take over.

We may not know who won the Senate for some time: Georgia's contest appears headed to a runoff election, to be held in December.

In the House, Republicans are favored to win control, but they appear to be on track to do so by less than many political observers expected. The Times forecasts that Republicans will end up with 224 seats, just above the 218 needed to secure a majority. That result would be the weakest performance by the president's opposing party in a midterm election since 2002. "This is not the night the Republicans wanted," Nate Cohn, The Times's chief political analyst, wrote. "The party is underperforming most everywhere."

For President Biden, a Republican-controlled House dooms his chances of passing the rest of his agenda in the next two years. Keeping the Senate would let Democrats continue approving Biden's nominations for his administration and the courts.

Here's where we stand:

- Three high-profile Republican governors — [Ron DeSantis](#) of Florida, [Greg Abbott](#) of Texas and [Brian Kemp](#) of Georgia — won re-election. In Pennsylvania,

Josh Shapiro, the Democratic candidate for governor, easily beat Doug Mastriano, an election denier. Democratic incumbents won in Wisconsin and Michigan.

- Voters in Vermont, California and Michigan approved constitutional amendments protecting abortion and reproductive rights. An anti-abortion ballot initiative in Kentucky was too close to call.
- More than 210 Republicans who questioned the 2020 election won seats in Congress and in state races. Whether and how Republicans who lose will accept defeat is a major unknown.
- Many of Donald Trump's most prominent endorsements came up short. He delivered brief remarks at a Mar-a-Lago party last night, and made no mention of DeSantis, a potential 2024 rival.
- America leaves these midterms much as it entered, The Times's Lisa Lerer writes: a divided country that remains anchored in a narrow range of the political spectrum.
- It could take days to get all the results. Here's a potential timeline.

Senate

Many of the biggest contests are too close to call. Here's where the rest of the major races stand:

- **Georgia:** Raphael Warnock, the Democratic incumbent, leads Herschel Walker, the Trump-backed former football star, but the race appeared headed to a Dec. 6 runoff.
- **Nevada:** The race between Catherine Cortez Masto, a one-term Democratic incumbent, and Adam Laxalt, the state's election-denying former attorney general, remained too close to call. Many ballots are left to count.
- **Arizona:** Mark Kelly, the Democratic incumbent, led Blake Masters, a Trump-endorsed venture capitalist, according to The Times's election needle. The race was leaning toward Kelly.
- **Wisconsin:** Ron Johnson, the Republican incumbent, narrowly led Mandela Barnes, the state's Democratic lieutenant governor.
- Republicans held on to seats in **Ohio**, where J.D. Vance, a critic-turned-defender of Trump, beat Tim Ryan, a Democratic member of Congress., and in **North Carolina**, where Ted Budd, a Republican member of Congress, defeated Cheri Beasley, the state's Democratic former chief justice.
- Maggie Hassan, a two-term Democratic incumbent in **New Hampshire**, easily beat Don Bolduc, a Republican retired Army general who had questioned the 2020 election results.

House

Headed into the election, Democrats held a narrow majority in the House: 220 to 212. Republicans needed to win 19 competitive seats to take control. So far, they have won five. Democrats would need to win 46 to keep control and have claimed 19.

- Republicans flipped seats in **New Jersey** and **Virginia**. In **New York's** Hudson Valley, Mike Lawler was leading Sean Patrick Maloney, the head of the Democrats' House campaign arm.
- Marjorie Taylor Greene, once a political pariah, glided to victory in her predominantly Republican district.
- Democrats flipped Republican-held House seats in **Ohio** and **Michigan** and held on to vulnerable seats in **Virginia**, **New Hampshire** and elsewhere.
- Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat, won re-election in an **Ohio** district redrawn to favor Republicans. She is set to become the longest-serving woman in congressional history.
- Mary Peltola, a Democrat and the first Alaska Native elected to Congress, was ahead of Republicans Sarah Palin and Nick Begich in **Alaska's** sole House election.
- **Vermont** elected Becca Balint, a progressive Democrat, to its lone House seat, becoming the last U.S. state to send a woman to Congress.
- Maxwell Frost, a 25-year-old Democrat, will become the first Gen Z member of Congress after winning a **Florida** House seat.

Governors

Headed into Election Day, Republicans controlled 28 governors' mansions, while Democrats controlled 22. Democrats flipped the governorships of Maryland and Massachusetts. Some notable races:

- **Florida:** DeSantis won historically Democratic parts of the state, giving his party an unusually strong performance. The results may boost his prospects as a potential 2024 presidential candidate.
- **Arizona:** The race between Kari Lake, a former TV news anchor who falsely claims Trump won the 2020 election, and Katie Hobbs, the Democratic secretary of state, remained uncalled.
- **New York:** Kathy Hochul won a full term, beating Lee Zeldin, a Republican member of Congress, in one of the state's closest races in decades.
- **Maine:** Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, won a second term, defeating Paul LePage, the Republican former governor.
- **Michigan:** The incumbent Democrat, Gretchen Whitmer, defeated the Trump-endorsed Tudor Dixon.

- **Arkansas:** Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump’s former press secretary, will be the state’s first female governor.
- **Texas:** Gov. Greg Abbott won a third term, beating Beto O’Rourke, a Democrat.
- **Massachusetts:** Maura Healey, a Democrat, became the nation’s first openly lesbian governor, flipping control of the governorship from Republicans.
- **Maryland** elected Wes Moore, a Democratic former nonprofit executive, as its first Black governor.
- Races in **Nevada** and **Oregon** remained uncalled.

Ballot measures

- Maryland and Missouri voted to legalize recreational marijuana. Similar efforts failed in Arkansas and North Dakota.
- Washington, D.C., overwhelmingly voted for a **higher minimum wage** for tipped workers.
- Ballot initiatives restricting **forced prison labor** passed in Alabama, Tennessee and Vermont and failed in Louisiana. Results in Oregon were too early to call.

Commentary

“Big winners tonight: Biden, who lost far fewer congressional seats than historical averages; reproductive rights, which proves a major issue among voters; democracy, with huge voter turnout and many high-profile election deniers losing big.” — Mark Updegrove, historian

“There wasn’t a red wave. That is a searing indictment of the Republican Party. That is a searing indictment of the message that we have been sending to the voters.” — Marc Thiessen, Washington Post columnist and Fox News commentator

“If you’re worried about the health of our democracy, it seems pretty good that we’ve had big turnout — implying that both sides think their votes actually matter.” — Farhad Manjoo, Times Opinion columnist

“Voters weren’t necessarily looking to move the country left or right. They were anxious about the ways our country feels like it is unraveling. They went looking for a safe harbor in a storm.” — Kristen Soltis Anderson, Republican pollster

“Dems have a Florida problem, but Republicans have a Trump problem. That seems harder to solve.” — Jen Psaki, former Biden press secretary

Article #2: Abortion on the Ballot

By Lisa Lerer, NYT, November 10, 2022

Democrats won crucial races in states where abortion rights were at stake.

By the time the midterm election campaign reached its final days, some Democrats had spent weeks fretting that their nominees had consumed far too much time talking about abortion rights at the expense of economic issues — and, potentially, their seats.

Well, about that.

Support for abortion rights now appears to be one of the big reasons Democrats defied history and staved off deep midterm losses. In a new article, my colleague Elizabeth Dias and I explain how Democrats changed the politics of an issue that's long been most galvanizing for their opponents.

Democratic campaigns invested more heavily in abortion rights than any other topic, riding a wave of anger after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June. In total, Democrats and their allies spent nearly half a billion dollars on ads mentioning abortion — more than twice what they spent on crime, and eight times as much as Republicans spent on abortion, according to AdImpact, an ad-tracking firm.

The impact

In Virginia, Minnesota, New Mexico and elsewhere, abortion rights emerged as a driving force in the midterm elections, helping Democrats win ballot measures, governor's races and House seats.

Voters in three states — California, Vermont and highly contested Michigan — protected abortion rights in their state constitutions. In Kentucky, the Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell's home state, voters rejected an anti-abortion amendment.

In several states where the future of abortion rights rested on the outcomes of state legislative and governor's races, voters said the issue was pivotal, according to exit polls conducted by TV networks and Edison Research. In Pennsylvania, abortion overtook the economy as the top issue on voters' minds. Democrats there won a Senate race, critical to their hopes of maintaining a Senate majority, as well as the governor's mansion, and they seemed poised to flip control of the State House of Representatives.

In Michigan, where nearly half of voters said abortion was their top issue, Democrats won both chambers of the Legislature and re-elected Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, giving the party a trifecta of power for the first time in 40 years.

The bottom line

Republicans had sought an end to Roe for nearly 50 years, and the issue had long motivated their core supporters more than it had their opponents'. But in this election, the court victory turned out to be a political loser. (And, as The Upshot recently reported, it hasn't made much of a dent in the number of abortions nationwide.)

The midterm results suggest that Democrats have upended the status quo on the issue — and that abortion rights could remain a source of motivation in the next election, when the possibility of a nationwide ban is on the ballot.

Article #3: Unconventional Results

By [Nate Cohn](#)

Nov. 11, 2022, 6:26 a.m. ET, NYT

In states where abortion rights or democracy was on the ballot, Democrats upended the typical midterm result.

The results of this year's midterm elections won't be final for weeks, but there's more than enough data to say this: They were different.

Historically, the president's party gets trounced in midterm elections. But for the first time in the era of modern polling, dating to the 1930s, the party of a president with an approval rating below 50 percent (President Biden's is in the low 40s) seems to have fared well. Democrats are favored to retain control of the Senate; they could even still hold on to the House.

Results by state only add to [the unusual picture](#). In our era of increasingly nationalized elections, we've come to expect that trends in one part of the country will play out in others as well. Instead, this year we saw a split: Republicans fared exceptionally well in some states, including Florida and New York. In others, like Michigan and Pennsylvania, Democrats excelled.

How can we make sense of it all? The results seem to be about a pair of issues at the forefront of politics now: democracy and abortion.

Most national polls — including The Times's — suggested that these issues had faded in salience for most voters. But the two matters were at stake in direct ways in some states, whether through referendums on abortion rights or candidates on the ballot who had taken antidemocratic stances. In many of those places, Democrats defied political gravity. In states where democracy and abortion were less directly at issue, the typical midterm dynamics often took hold and Republicans excelled.

Border battle

A comparison between New York and Pennsylvania is an illustrative example. The states border each other: If you drive across the state line, things look about the same. Yet their election results look like different universes.

Democrats excelled in Pennsylvania. They ran as well as Biden had in 2020 or even better. They swept every contested House seat. John Fetterman won the race for U.S. Senate by a much wider margin than Biden had won the state. Josh Shapiro, the Democratic nominee for governor, won in a landslide.

On the other side of the state line, in New York, Republicans won big. Their candidates for Congress fared seven to 13 points better than Donald Trump had in 2020 presidential votes in those same districts. Republicans won all but one of the state's competitive congressional districts. The governor's race was fairly close in the normally blue state, though the Democratic incumbent, Kathy Hochul, held off her Republican challenger, Lee Zeldin.

Before the election, it was hard to imagine that these two outcomes could occur on the same night. In recent years, voting trends have been nationwide. Not this time.

The most obvious difference was the implications for abortion and democracy. Pennsylvania Republicans nominated a candidate for governor, Doug Mastriano, who was central to efforts to overturn the state's 2020 presidential election results. Democrats viewed a potential Mastriano victory as a threat to democracy. It might have put abortion rights at risk as well: Mastriano is a strident opponent, and Republicans controlled the state legislature, though Democrats are on track to flip it.

The two issues were less critical in New York. Its Democratic Legislature would not overturn abortion rights. No movement ever emerged to overturn Biden's 2020 victory in New York, and there was little indication that anyone feared Zeldin might do so, though he did vote as a congressman to try to overturn the 2020 results. This year, Republicans focused their campaigns on crime — an issue that worked to their advantage. It paid off.

The bigger picture

New York and Pennsylvania are examples of the broader pattern that played out across the country, where voters who were weighing in directly on abortion or democracy helped propel Democrats to victory.

There are exceptions, of course — like Democratic strength in Colorado or Republican durability in Texas. But the pattern explains a lot of the results that upended recent election trends. It even helps explain outliers in particular states. Representative Marcy Kaptur trounced her Republican opponent, J.R. Majewski, who rallied at the Capitol on

Jan. 6, 2021, by 13 points in an Ohio district that Trump won in 2020. All but one of the other Republicans in House races in Ohio performed better than Trump had.

One example that might help put the midterm trends into context is Virginia. It had no statewide races because it held its governor's race last year and had no Senate seat up for election in 2022. As a result, the unusual state-by-state dynamics were absent, so Virginia acts something like a control.

Republicans there tended to fare well. They outperformed Trump in every House race, some by double-digit margins. If abortion and democracy hadn't been major issues elsewhere, perhaps Virginia's seemingly typical show of out-of-party strength would have been the result nationwide. But not this year.

Article #4: Pennsylvania Democrats believe they have flipped the state House

Republicans will retain control of the Senate. But flipping control of the House would represent a stunning victory for Democrats.

by Anna Orso Nov 9, 2022, Philadelphia Inquirer

Pennsylvania Democrats believe they have taken control of the state House for the first time in more than a decade, an outcome that was considered a long shot by even the most optimistic Democrats but that has not yet been confirmed by independent analysts.

Republicans on Wednesday said the declaration of victory was premature. They're pinning their hopes on a handful of close races in the Philadelphia suburbs where the candidates are separated by hundreds — or in some cases just dozens — of votes.

Even if Republicans retained control, the surprise showing by Democrats still indicated that strong victories in statewide races for governor and U.S. Senate may have helped carry the party in down-ballot races. Democrats in other swing states outperformed expectations, including in Michigan, where the party won control of the legislature for the first time in decades.

Democrats said it showed that a favorable redistricting process in Pennsylvania gave them a fighting chance, and that swing voters were moved by Harrisburg's now-total control over abortion policy in Pennsylvania.

Democratic control of the House would have major implications for Gov.-elect Josh Shapiro's ability to enact policy in Harrisburg next year. Republicans will retain control of the state Senate, but a House controlled by Shapiro's party would strengthen his hand in negotiations with the legislature.

And it would all but guarantee abortion laws in Pennsylvania remain unchanged. The GOP has advanced legislation that would amend the state constitution to say there is no right to an abortion, but the legislation would require a majority of both chambers.

State Rep. Leanne Krueger (D., Delaware), who chairs the party's state House campaign arm, estimated that Democrats will win at least 102 seats of the 203-seat chamber. She based her projection on the number of mail ballots left to count in close races. Mail ballots have generally leaned toward Democrats.

As of Wednesday afternoon, the Associated Press had called 195 seats and Democrats had a razor-thin advantage. Eight remain uncalled, and members on both sides of the aisle said control would likely come down to five or fewer races.

Jason Gottesman, a spokesperson for the House GOP, said Democrats claiming the majority Wednesday was premature and that House Republicans are still monitoring a number of races.

In Montgomery County's 151st District, incumbent Republican Rep. Todd Stephens and Democratic challenger Melissa Cerrato were separated by just two dozen votes. The county had about 4,300 mail ballots left to count, and provisional ballots had not yet been processed.

In Bucks County's 144th District, Republican incumbent Rep. Todd Polinchock trailed Democratic challenger Brian Munroe by fewer than 500 votes. And in the 142nd, Democrat Mark Moffa and Republican Joseph Hogan were virtually tied — separated by just two votes.

Patricia Poprik, chair of the Bucks County GOP, said provisional, military, and overseas ballots had yet to be counted, and hundreds or thousands of mail ballots could still be outstanding.

"For anyone on either side to jump and say they have won is premature," she said.

Why House Democrats are confident

Still, more than a dozen Democrats felt confident enough in their projection that they stood in the shadow of Independence Hall Wednesday afternoon and laid out their policy agenda while referring to Rep. Joanna McClinton, the House minority leader, as the speaker of the House.

If Democrats took control of the chamber, McClinton would be the first woman to be speaker of the House in state history. Pennsylvania has had just one other Black speaker — K. Leroy Irvis, of Allegheny County, was the first Black speaker and served in the role for eight years in the 1970s and 80s.

McClinton, who represents parts of West Philadelphia, said the wins represented a rebuke of the Republican Party, saying “Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly rejected fear, Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly rejected hatred, Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly rejected division.”

Democrats needed to net a dozen seats to take control. The party targeted 14 districts across the state that it saw as key, almost all of them in suburban areas.

Three of those districts — two in Allegheny County and one in the State College area — were newly drawn, so there was no incumbent to defend them. Democrats Arvind Venkat and Mandy Steele held significant leads Wednesday morning in Allegheny, as did Democrat Paul Takac in State College.

Krueger said Democrats expected to flip some seats due to favorable redistricting, but appear to have held onto seats in districts that former President Donald Trump carried and that Democrats expected to lose.

“It shows that talking to folks face-to-face and providing good constituent services and working hard and knocking doors can pull us over the finish line,” she said. “The voters are tired of lies, they want to defend democracy. And women came out to vote strongly. When you put all of that together, you can get the path to 102.”

Democrats saw this year as their best chance in a decade to take control of the lower chamber, as it was the first general election since the state adopted new legislative maps through redistricting. And while the new state House map slightly favors Republicans, it is far more politically competitive than the previous one, according to a detailed data analysis conducted for The Inquirer by the nonpartisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project.

Redistricting happens every 10 years and is tied to population changes captured by the census. The new Senate map largely protected incumbents in both parties. So the upper chamber, which Republicans have controlled since 1994, was less likely to see major shifts, and just half the 50 seats were on the ballot.

State Rep. Jordan Harris (D., Philadelphia) said the new maps were the difference maker.

“When you have fair maps, Democrats win,” he said. “And that’s what you saw on Election Day.”

Article #5: ‘It’s time for him to retire’: Some Pa. Republicans want to push Trump aside after their election losses

“We can’t win races if he continues to be the head of the party,” said one Republican as party insiders blamed Trump for brutal losses the GOP suffered in Pennsylvania this week.

by Jonathan Tamari and William Bender, November 10, 2022., Philadelphia Inquirer

Two days after a series of stinging defeats in Pennsylvania, some Republicans in the state focused their ire on the man who has long stood at the center of their party: Donald Trump.

“If anything should be taken away from this election, it’s that we should be over Trump. If you’re not a Never Trumper yet, you should be an Over-Trumper now,” said Matthew Brouillette, the head of Commonwealth Partners, an influential conservative group in the state. “He had his moment in the sun for four years, and it’s time for him to retire from politics.”

Josh Novotney, a Republican operative in Philadelphia, said there’s been widespread blame on Trump within GOP circles after the party lost marquee races for governor and U.S. Senate, all three of the state’s competitive U.S. House races, and possibly the state House.

Trump’s presence, several Republican leaders said, continues to motivate Democrats, and his endorsements have elevated flawed candidates who fit his personal piques.†

“I’ve even heard in very Trump parts of the city and the state that he is an albatross, he is hurting us, and he needs to go,” Novotney said. “We can’t win races if he continues to be the head of the party.”

The party’s national committeeman in Pennsylvania, Andy Reilly, said Trump’s late rally in Westmoreland County and hints he would soon announce another run for president weren’t helpful.

“His presence, I think, helped the Democrats’ claims about a threat to democracy,” Reilly said, though he argued those claims were overblown. “It was not constructive for the president to be hinting about his announcement.”

All spoke after Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.) on Wednesday night laid his party’s weak midterm showing at Trump’s feet, saying his endorsements led the party to nominate candidates in his own mold — ones who underperformed.

“I do think this probably accelerates the erosion of his influence,” Toomey said in an interview Wednesday.

He was one of more than a dozen Republican elected officials, strategists, or party leaders interviewed by The Inquirer for this story. Several worried that while Trump retains a fervent base, his abrasive style has repelled suburban swing voters, a critical bloc for the GOP in a state where Democrats outnumber them in party registration.

Republicans’ suburban support has plunged since Trump’s 2016 run.

It’s hardly the first time Republican elites have gnashed their teeth over Trump or declared him a fading force. To this point, they’ve always been proven wrong, and often hopped back on board with the former president.

But after midterm elections in which Republicans felt they blew major advantages — from high inflation to an unpopular President Joe Biden — the chorus has grown much louder. And this time party insiders have an alternative on the table: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who dominated his reelection campaign in a key swing state, and is widely seen as a potential presidential candidate in 2024.

The attempt to push Trump overboard nationally, and particularly in Pennsylvania, comes at a fraught moment. Trump has hinted he could launch a reelection campaign as soon as early next week. And Pennsylvania, which he won in an upset in 2016, remains both a key battleground and a point of personal pride for the former president, who comes back frequently for his signature rallies, including twice since September alone.

Trump’s endorsement this year helped carry Pennsylvania Republican Senate candidate Mehmet Oz through a tight GOP primary. He also endorsed GOP gubernatorial nominee Doug Mastriano, though well after it became clear Mastriano was likely to win. Still, Mastriano was closely affiliated with Trump as a populist culture warrior who elevated lies about a stolen 2020 election and paid for buses to Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6, 2021.

As Republicans tried to make the midterms about Biden, Trump put himself in the spotlight.

“If he had sat quiet for six months and said nothing and had no rallies and not hinted that he would have run again, I think we’d have carried the Senate easily and won the House by more,” said Jeff Piccola, the former Republican chairman in York County, a GOP stronghold.

Not only did Trump endorse bad candidates, Piccola said, he undermined others by dropping verbal grenades on Bill McSwain, who was running for governor, and Dave McCormick, an Oz rival for Senate.

Trump continues to have significant support in deep red, rural places like Cambria County, said Jackie Kulback, the GOP chair there.

But she added, “I think we’re a purple state and that President Trump’s support in Cambria County hasn’t diminished at all, but if you go into the suburbs, he just doesn’t have the support that he once did.”

Even Lou Barletta, the former congressman who was one of the first elected Republicans in the country to endorse Trump in 2016, was critical.

“He interfered with the primary here when there was no reason for it,” Barletta said. (Barletta, like other Republicans in the gubernatorial race, had wanted Trump’s endorsement and was trying to present himself as the strongest alternative to Mastriano).

A ‘scapegoat’

Still, some Republicans warned about writing off a former president who remains the most popular figure within the party. They argued the blame should fall on Mastriano, who lost the governor’s race by nearly 15 percentage points, and the state party for failing to rally the GOP around an alternative.

“Whether you like him or not, he shouldn’t be the scapegoat for every problem that happens to the Republican Party,” said Jim Worthington, a vocal Trump supporter from Bucks County who served on the former president’s health and fitness council.

He said party insiders were the ones who failed to turn out the Republican vote and answer Democratic attacks on abortion.

“Some of the elites in the party absolutely will despise that he will announce” a presidential run, Worthington added. “The rank and file, the blue-collar voter, is going to love it because he’s their champion.”

Rob Gleason, who chaired the state party when Trump won Pennsylvania and the presidency noted that Mastriano got nearly 42% of the vote in Pennsylvania, despite a threadbare campaign.

“That’s the bottom base for Donald Trump,” Gleason said. “And that’s a pretty hefty base.”

The implication: Trump could still win a GOP primary with his enduring support, even if party insiders don’t like it.

“This particular election, I don’t think, is a referendum on the value of the president’s endorsement,” said Dave Ball, the Republican chair in Washington County.

He said Trump “maybe overstretched the brand a little” by putting his imprint on so many races but remains the leader of the GOP. “I don’t think anybody is close to displacing him in that role yet.”

‘Clearly still the leader’

Bill Bretz, the Republican chair in Westmoreland County, pointed to the huge crowd at Trump’s rally in his home county Saturday, one that included hardcore Trump supporters and a significant chunk of the state’s congressional delegation.

“He’s clearly still the leader of the Republican Party,” Bretz said.

But for some Republicans, that’s the problem.

Reilly, like Gleason, pointed to Mastriano’s support as a benchmark for Trump. But while Gleason said it shows Trump’s strength in a primary, Reilly said it also illustrates the limitations of candidates who fail to expand their support.

“In order to win statewide, we need candidates who have appeal to the center and can appeal beyond the party base,” Reilly said. “I think the Democrats effectively used him to move swing voters in their direction.”

Article #6: Republican Pat Toomey blames Donald Trump for GOP’s election failures in Pennsylvania

“The more MAGA a candidate was, the more they tended to underperform even in their own states,” said Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.), who blamed Trump for a GOP “debacle” in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

by Jonathan Tamari, Philadelphia Inquirer, Nov 10, 2022

Republican Sen. Pat Toomey said former President Donald Trump bears significant blame for the “debacle” Tuesday that left the GOP struggling to capitalize on Democratic weakness in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, and urged his party to move away from Trump’s influence.

Toomey, of Pennsylvania, predicted that the GOP’s massive failures in his home state, and shortcomings elsewhere, would diminish Trump’s standing while elevating Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

“Last night across the country was a terrible night for Donald Trump, and an excellent night for Governor DeSantis,” Toomey said. “The more MAGA a candidate was, the more they tended to underperform even in their own states.”

In an interview with The Inquirer, Toomey blamed Trump for elevating GOP nominees who mimicked the former president, and then struggled to win despite record high inflation, low approval ratings for President Joe Biden, and worries about crime.

“I don’t think there’s a discrete moment where the party breaks with Trump in one fell swoop,” Toomey said. “I think Donald Trump’s influence gradually but steadily declines, and I think it accelerates after the debacle that he’s responsible for to some degree.”

Toomey praised one Trump-endorsed nominee, Pennsylvania’s Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mehmet Oz.

But he pointed to several other Trump picks who struggled. Georgia Senate nominee Herschel Walker, for example, was locked in a neck-and-neck race while Gov. Brian Kemp coasted to victory, he pointed out. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine won by more than 25 percentage points, as Trump’s handpicked Senate candidate in Ohio, J.D. Vance, slogged to a victory by a little more than 6 points, forcing the GOP to expend resources in a relatively red state.

“The party needs to recognize the facts on the ground. Like I said, when the primary criteria is allegiance to Donald Trump, the outcomes weren’t very good,” said Toomey, who has been sharply critical of Trump.

In Pennsylvania, Toomey, a staunch fiscal conservative, said the entire Republican ticket was weighed down by Doug Mastriano, the gubernatorial candidate who rose to prominence as a Trump acolyte and lost Tuesday to Democrat Josh Shapiro by double digits.

“Mastriano’s loss was on an epic scale, and it is very hard for down-ballot candidates to overcome that,” Toomey said.

As Mastriano struggled, Republicans lost every major race in Pennsylvania, including the critical U.S. Senate contest and three competitive U.S. House races — and may have lost control of the state House for the first time in more than a decade.

In a comment directed at Mastriano that could in some ways apply to Trump, Toomey added, “We can’t nominate candidates who are completely unable to expand beyond a very narrow base. That’s never been a good strategy politically. It’s still not a good strategy politically.”

Toomey, who declined to seek reelection this year, supported Trump for president in 2016 and 2020, and voted for most of the former president’s policies. But he broke sharply with Trump when the former president tried to overthrow the 2020 election results, and the senator voted to convict in Trump’s second impeachment trial.

Toomey supported Oz, who lost to Democratic Lt. Gov. John Fetterman. But he kept his distance from Mastriano, who elevated Trump’s election lies and was outside the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, riot.

As for who might emerge as the new center of gravity for the GOP, Toomey said DeSantis looks like one early option.

“Right now Governor DeSantis is looking like a Republican’s dream: Enormously successful governor, enormously popular, he won by 19 points in a state that we used to assume was extremely competitive,” Toomey said. “He’s got all the strengths without the baggage.”

But Trump hasn’t shown signs of going away. He has hinted he could announce another run for president in the coming days.

“I think it’s very, very possible that if he runs, he won’t end up being the nominee, but he certainly does start off as a front-runner,” Toomey said. But he argued that Trump’s behavior after the 2020 election “disqualifies him from holding any office.”

Article #7: Candidates who backed overturning Trump loss are rebuffed

Election deniers who backed Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election failed in some of their highest-profile races

by NICHOLAS RICCARDI, Associated Press

Updated

Nov 9, 2022

Republicans made a striking decision earlier this year to nominate candidates for top statewide posts in swing states who backed overturning President Donald Trump's loss in 2020. Most of those candidates lost in the midterm election.

Doug Mastriano, who commissioned buses to take Pennsylvanians to the Jan. 6, 2021, protests in Washington failed in his bid to become that state's governor. Kristina Karamo, a community college instructor who spread misinformation about voting on Twitter even on Election Day, was crushed by Michigan's Democratic secretary of state.

Mathew DePerno, an attorney who filed a lawsuit spreading Trump's election lies in Michigan in 2020, lost his bid to be that state's attorney general. Audrey Trujillo, a political novice who cheered Trump's defiance of the vote in 2020, was defeated for New Mexico secretary of state.

Two such races remained too close to call on Wednesday — Arizona and Nevada. And in more conservative states, from Indiana to Kansas, election conspiracy theorists still won key positions.

Many observers argued that the 2022 midterm election has shown that imperiling democracy is not politically successful.

“It turns out that trying to overturn an election is not wildly popular with the American people,” said Whit Ayres, a veteran Republican pollster.

That even extends to Arizona, Ayres added, where a prominent former television newscaster-turned-election-conspiracy-theorist, Kari Lake, remains in a tight race for governor against Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, whose campaign has been widely panned.

“The fact that it is close with a very polished, very good Republican candidate and a very weak, very unpolished Democratic candidate tells you how much of a weight election denial is on a Republican candidate,” Ayres said.

Lies and conspiracy theories about elections burrowed deeply into the 2022 Republican field, with nearly one-third of the party's 85 candidates for governor, secretary of state and attorney general embracing Trump's efforts to overturn his 2020 loss.

About half of those won — almost all of them incumbents, except for candidates such as Kris Kobach, a member of Trump's 2016 voter fraud commission who won the race for attorney general in Kansas, and Chuck Gray, a Wyoming state representative who ran unopposed for secretary of state in that heavily Republican state.

More significant are the outcomes in the six states that clinched Joe Biden's win in 2020 and where Trump and his allies disputed his loss.

In most of those states, as in most of the country, the secretary of state is the top election official while the governor and attorney general often play key roles in voting rules and certifying election results.

In Georgia, Trump unsuccessfully backed a slate of election conspiracy theorists in the GOP primary in May, seeking revenge against incumbent Republicans who rebuffed his requests to overturn his loss.

On Tuesday, Trump lost bids to install supporters in three more of those pivotal states. In Pennsylvania, Mastriano would have had the power to appoint a secretary of state to oversee voting, but he was routed in the governors race by Democratic Attorney General Josh Shapiro. In Wisconsin, Trump's pick for governor, Tim Michels, lost to Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, dooming Republican dreams of disbanding or significantly overhauling the state's bipartisan election commission.

In Michigan, Karamo and DePerno had been key players in spreading misinformation about Trump's loss in 2020. Along with Tudor Dixon, the party's nominee for governor who repeated Trump's election lies, they provided a drag on the GOP ticket that contributed to Democrats capturing full control of the statehouse for the first time in decades.

In two other competitive states — Minnesota and New Mexico — GOP candidates for secretary of state who echoed Trump's election lies lost badly, performing worse than the top of their respective tickets.

“There are more of us pro-democracy Americans who are not Democrats — who look at the Republican Party and say ‘That is not for me’ — and that was borne out last night,” said Jeff Timmers, a former chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

Nevada and Arizona will continue to test that idea as ballots are tallied in their close races for top statewide posts.

Nevada is where former state lawmaker Jim Marchant organized a coalition of election conspiracy theorists to run for voting posts nationwide as he himself ran for his state's secretary of state position.

Democracy advocates were optimistic on Wednesday, especially as some Republicans conceded their losses without alleging mass fraud.

“We’re seeing a bit of a scramble for the right message” among election deniers online, said Emma Steiner, who monitors disinformation for Common Cause.

She said concessions from candidates including Dixon in Michigan and Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania make “it a little more difficult for election deniers to continue.”

But even as advocates celebrated, they kept a wary eye on Arizona and Nevada and acknowledged that Trump has inflicted grave damage on the trust in democracy that helps bind the country together.

“Without a doubt, election denial is alive and well, and this is a continuing threat,” said Joanna Lydgate of States United, which has sought to publicize the danger of election conspiracy theorists. But she took solace in Tuesday's results.

“It was a really good night for democracy,” Lydgate said.

Article #8: As voters head to the ballot box, our divided nation must demand civility in politics | Editorial #1

After yet another bitter campaign season, a call to dial down the acidic rhetoric and recognize the value of constructive dialogue.

by The Editorial Board

Nov 8, 2022, The Philadelphia Inquirer

Election Day is finally here. After a barrage of campaign ads on TV, voters across the country now have their chance to speak.

Early vote totals indicate a record turnout for a midterm election. Despite the increase, roughly half of eligible citizens are unlikely to vote. Given the stakes — including voting rights and abortion rights — one must wonder what it will take to get voters to the polls.

The closeness of recent elections underscores how much each vote matters.

It is also worth remembering that we may not know all of the results in key states, including Pennsylvania, for several days. That is because Pennsylvania and some other states do not begin counting mail-in votes until Election Day.

A simple fix would be to allow the counting of mail-in ballots to begin before Election Day, but Republican lawmakers in several states have opposed such a move.

Sadly, extremist Republicans have been undermining democracy for several years. Donald Trump led the assault on election integrity while he was still in the White House. It ultimately led to the deadly insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021.

Many Republican candidates have adopted Trump's playbook, where the election results only count if they win. Likewise, many Republican candidates refuse to engage with the media and instead spread disinformation through social media.

This board has seen it up close. In the May primaries, we wanted to endorse a Republican candidate for governor and Senate, but the candidates refused to meet with us. Doug Mastriano, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, banned the press at his rallies and often ignored interview requests. In the fall, only Bob Healey, the Republican nominee for Congress in New Jersey's 3rd District, met with us.

Critics will correctly point out that this board largely supports policies associated with Democratic candidates. But the board has endorsed Republican candidates in the past and remains eager to hear their ideas to better inform the public about their positions.

For better or worse, the media is a sounding board for the public. A basic requirement of being a public official is engaging with the public. Officials who hide from the media are not well suited for the public arena.

To be sure, Republicans and Democrats spend too much time in their ideological bubble. As a result, we are more divided than ever. There is concern of more political violence to come, like the recent attack on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband.

Politics isn't a blood sport. Each election has a real impact on people's lives. The goal shouldn't be to win at any cost. Surely, there is still more that unites us than divides us.

What is the solution?

Here's a start: Everyone on both sides — at the local, state, and federal levels — must recognize the value of civil, constructive dialogue. Politicians need to engage with the media, even those they perceive as opponents, the way Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has done during appearances on Fox News.

Dial down the heated rhetoric. Let's approach each other with mutual respect and explain our views without shouting but with facts. It may not change minds, but it will help others understand your point of view while listening to theirs.

Voting is the best way to ensure every voice is heard. Making sure every vote is counted is also the best tonic for a healthy democracy.

It may be naïve to expect lawmakers to suddenly do the right thing. That is why it is important to demand better and vote.

Article #9: A caustic election cycle ends with Pa. voters opting to preserve abortion rights and defend democracy | Editorial #2

Voters understood the stakes. They picked decency over fringe in electing Josh Shapiro for governor and John Fetterman for Senate.

by The Editorial Board

Philadelphia Inquirer

Nov 9, 2022

In the end, Pennsylvania voters picked common sense over scare tactics.

Most of those who went to the polls in the commonwealth saw through the creepy commercials, heated rhetoric, and disinformation. They opted instead to take a stand for abortion rights and democracy.

Voters understood the stakes. They decided they didn't want a governor who marched with insurrectionists, trafficked in QAnon conspiracies, and promoted racist and antisemitic tropes. And they didn't want an out-of-touch, celebrity doctor from New Jersey who votes in Turkey and thinks abortion is murder to be a U.S. senator in Pennsylvania.

Voters picked fitness over fringe in electing Josh Shapiro for governor and John Fetterman for Senate.

While the economy remains on voters' minds, most understood the election was about more than gas and food prices that elected officials have little control over.

Basic rights regarding a woman's ability to make choices about her own body and the future of free and fair elections were on the line. That trumped the Republican fearmongering regarding crime, inflation, and unfounded election fraud claims.

Voters were motivated by the U.S. Supreme Court's wrongheaded decision to overturn a nearly 50-year-old precedent in *Roe v. Wade*. They don't want elected officials, including local ones, banning all abortion with no exceptions. And they don't want elected officials who undermine elections.

Gov.-elect Shapiro's campaign was a triumph for decency and democracy. He appealed to a broad base of voters and stood up for women's rights. Shapiro has a record of working across the aisle. He wants to lift all boats and not pit one group against another — goals that are at once refreshing and a model of how government should work.

By comparison, Republican gubernatorial nominee Doug Mastriano ran a smug and loathsome campaign built on phony election fraud, bizarre conspiracies, racism, sexism, and antisemitism. Mastriano was essentially against everything and everyone except white male dominance.

Mastriano's drag on the GOP was so great the Democrats are poised to take control of the House in Harrisburg for the first time in more than a decade.

Shapiro won handily, but it is beyond disturbing that 42% of voters backed such a vile and unfit candidate in Mastriano.

Likewise, Sen.-elect Fetterman's campaign appealed to average citizens fighting for a living wage, decent health care, equality, and second chances. Along the way, he set an example of bravery by campaigning while recovering from a stroke.

Republican nominee Mehmet Oz mocked Fetterman's speech and auditory issues. But Fetterman was an inspiration for others facing health care hurdles. In the long run, he could help change attitudes regarding disabilities in the workplace.

Meanwhile, most voters saw through Oz's vanity campaign. He is a lightweight, television doctor with no political experience who promoted magic diet pills and dubious COVID-19 cures. He was for abortion rights and gun safety before he was against them, which further highlighted his deeply flawed candidacy. Oz's opulent mansions in New Jersey, Palm Beach, Fla., and elsewhere underscored his total disconnect with everyday Pennsylvanians.

Mastriano and Oz were largely creatures of Donald Trump, whose endorsement helped them win their respective primaries. Their Election Day losses are Trump's losses.

Several other Trump-backed candidates nationwide also struggled. That could dent Trump's grip on the GOP as the twice impeached former president who incited a deadly insurrection appears ready to launch a third campaign for the White House.

Sadly, a number of Republican election deniers won races in Pennsylvania and across the country. But as a crucial swing state, the commonwealth continues to serve as a keystone for our democracy at a perilous time. For that, the country can largely thank voters in Philadelphia and the surrounding suburbs.

Several Senate races remain undecided, but Fetterman's victory could help Democrats keep control of the upper chamber.

Meanwhile, the red wave that Republicans expected to sweep the country fizzled. It is a fitting setback for a GOP that was hijacked by Trump and remains focused on culture wars, conspiracies, autocracy, and bogus election fraud.

Traditionally, whatever party controls the White House suffers big losses during midterm elections. Although President Joe Biden's approval rating remains around 40%, Democrats have a chance to maintain control of the House. Even if Republicans ultimately win more House seats, it will be a slim majority.

When historians look back at the 2022 election, Pennsylvania will have played a starring role. Voters faced a crossroads and chose a bright future over a bleak past.

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Article #10: Democrats have once again proved insensitive to voters' fears

The Economist, November 5, 2022. (Note: This article was published before the election.)

If the Democratic Party could muster the discipline, it would compel prospective candidates to watch a mock presidential debate held by "Saturday Night Live", a comedy sketch show, 34 years ago. During the skit vice-president George H.W. Bush, played by Dana Carvey, stammers through an incoherent answer to a question about his homeless policy, insisting he does not have enough time to explain as, in obvious panic, he tries to run out the clock.

At long last the moderator releases him and turns for a rebuttal to the supremely rational Democratic governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, played by Jon Lovitz. Mr Lovitz shakes his head, raises both hands palms up in a gesture of helplessness, looks into the camera and says, "I can't believe I'm losing to this guy."

The Democrats are having another of their I-can't-believe-I'm-losing-to-this-guy moments. In danger of losing not only their majority in the House but also their one-seat edge in the Senate, they are baffled at how Republican candidates with meagre credentials, extreme positions and fealty to Donald Trump could possibly be popular-and not just in benighted red flyover states but in groovy blue playgrounds like New York and Oregon. Mr Lovitz's plangent notes echoed down through the years when Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House, recently told the New York Times, "I cannot believe anybody would vote for these people."

Yet under almost any circumstances it would be astonishing if the Democrats held onto their flimsy majorities (and they still have a good shot at doing so in the Senate). The party of the serving president has lost seats in 36 of the 39 midterm elections since the Civil War. The most recent exception was the midterm election following the 9/11 attacks. For that reason, this is shaping up as a fairly typical midterm cycle.

That reality has been obscured for months by another midterm dynamic that is almost as predictable: the party in power tends to talk itself into believing this time things will be different. The Democrats saw two factors disrupting the pattern this year. The Supreme Court struck down a federally protected right to abortion, and Donald Trump hit the campaign trail, reminding most Americans how much they disliked him just as the January 6th committee and a Justice Department investigation into possibly purloined classified documents gave them more reasons to do so.

These developments do matter. Usually in midterms, partisans of the president are apathetic, and many do not turn up to vote, as during the "blue wave" midterm of 2018. This year a large Democratic turnout may limit the party's losses. But the court's decision and Mr Trump's antics, so shocking to Democrats, do not seem to be enough to make Democratic candidates acceptable to most in- dependent voters, let alone many Republicans.

So Democrats have reason to wonder what they are doing wrong. Former President Barack Obama says Democrats can be a "buzzkill", annoying people with outrage at minor mistakes. Senator Bernie Sanders says Democrats must sharply contrast their economic plan with Republicans'. What is also clear is that Democrats need, once again, to learn from the travails of Mr Dukakis.

Mr Bush's campaign tied Mr Dukakis to Willie Horton, a convicted murderer who raped a woman and stabbed her boyfriend while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison. Democrats accused Mr Bush of stoking racism, because Mr Horton was black and his victims white; Mr Dukakis noted he inherited the furlough program from a Republican. They were right, but they failed to address fears of crime or persuade voters that a "Massachusetts liberal", as Mr Bush branded him, shared their sense of urgency.

Across the country this fall, Republicans threw Democrats on defence with an advertising blitz focused on crime. They spent \$64.5m on such ads in the first three weeks of October alone, one quarter their total spent on ads in that period, according to CNN. With some types of crime on the rise after Democrats flirted with radical-chic ideas such as defunding the police, it was a predictable attack. But many Democrats were caught flat-footed.

In New York the Republican running for governor, Congressman Lee Zeldin, opposes abortion rights and refused to certify Donald Trump lost in 2020. Yet he closed to within single digits of Kathy Hochul, the Democratic governor, with slashing attacks over crime. In a recent debate, he sounded like a hysterical caller to 911 as he described "people who are afraid of being pushed in front of oncoming subway cars, they're being stabbed, beaten to death on the street with hammers." When Ms Hochul responded that "data is still being collected" and "sound policy" beats "sound bites," she was taking a page from the Dukakis playbook.

Paging Snake Plissken

In a state where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans more than 2 to 1, Ms Hochul has a margin for error. But the party's failure to inoculate itself on crime has made the climb steeper for Democrats who have run excellent campaigns in red or purple states, like Tim Ryan, who is running for Senate in Ohio.

Yes, Republicans are being demagogues. Asked on Fox News about the attack on Ms Pelosi's husband, Paul, Ronna McDaniel, the party chair, turned her answer into an assault on Democratic laxity. "If this weren't Paul Pelosi," she said, "this criminal would probably be out on the street tomorrow." But Democrats, smart and righteous as they imagine themselves, should not condescend by being astonished that voters could fall for the other guy. Before 2024, they need instead to learn to hold two jostling ideas in their minds at once. They need to recognize that just as Americans would be more open to citizenship for immigrants who entered illegally if the border were secure, they would be more supportive of police reform if they felt the streets were safe.

In fairness to the real Mr Dukakis, a good man, he did not blame voters for choosing the other guy. "I lost because I ran a lousy campaign," he said.