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## Trump Policies Center Stage as Parties Prepare for 2026 Elections

August 3, 2025

— Categories: General News



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As Congress adjourns for its summer recess, Republicans and Democrats are setting their strategies for the 2026 midterm elections, with both sides grappling with internal challenges and shifting public sentiment.

Republicans, now in control of both the House and Senate, are using the August break to promote elements of former President Donald Trump's legislative agenda, particularly the so-called "big, beautiful bill." While parts of the bill remain unpopular in national polling, GOP leaders believe certain provisions can win over skeptical voters.

Democrats, meanwhile, are contending with historically low approval ratings for their party. In response, they are leaning on local candidates to differentiate themselves from national party figures and reframe their campaigns around district-specific issues. Party leaders are hoping this approach, along with voter fatigue over controversial GOP policies, will revive their fortunes in key battlegrounds.

With Democrats needing to flip three House seats and four Senate seats to regain control of Congress, both parties are investing heavily in recruitment and messaging. Redistricting has generally favored Republicans, particularly in states where they hold legislative majorities, complicating the Democratic path to a majority.

In the Senate, Democrats face a more difficult map. Most Republican-held seats up for election in 2026 are in solidly conservative states. However, Democratic strategists remain cautiously optimistic.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, who leads the Democratic Senate campaign committee, said she sees growing public resistance to Republican plans, particularly those involving cuts to federal health programs.

“I think the Republican majority is at risk because of a series of recruitment failures, damaging primaries, and their very toxic plan that slashes Medicaid and spikes costs,” Gillibrand said.

Republicans are not taking the election lightly. Alex Latham, executive director of the Senate Leadership Fund, emphasized that the party is confident but vigilant.

“We feel very confident. Certainly not complacent, but confident,” Latham said. “We’re taking nothing for granted.”

As campaign season accelerates, both parties will be testing their messaging and candidate strength ahead of what is expected to be a fiercely contested election cycle.