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## 2026 U.S. Senate Races: 11 States That Could Tip the Balance

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The 2026 midterm elections are set to reshape the U.S. Senate, where Republicans currently hold a slim 53–47 edge. With multiple high-profile retirements and contested seats, both parties are gearing up for a series of closely watched races across the country. Here are 11 states that could prove decisive:

## **1. North Carolina**

Senator Thom Tillis (R) will not run for another term. Former Democratic Governor Roy Cooper has entered the race. On the Republican side, RNC Chair Michael Whatley, who has received Donald Trump's endorsement, is the frontrunner. The primary is scheduled for 3 March.

## **2. Michigan**

Senator Gary Peters (D) is retiring. Former Representative Mike Rogers is favoured to win the Republican nomination. Democrats Haley Stevens and Mallory McMorrow are leading contenders. The primary takes place on 4 August.

## **3. Georgia**

Senator Jon Ossoff (D) is seeking re-election. Republican challengers include Representatives Buddy Carter and Mike Collins. Trump's endorsement is expected to play a key role. The state holds its primary on 19 May.

## **4. Texas**

Senator John Cornyn (R) faces a primary challenge from State Attorney General Ken Paxton, who leads early polling. Democrat Colin Allred, a former congressman, has also entered the race. The primary is set for 3 March.

## **5. South Carolina**

Senator Lindsey Graham (R) will be challenged by conservative policy adviser Paul Dans. Graham has secured Trump's endorsement. The state's primary elections are on 9 June.

## **6. Maine**

Senator Susan Collins (R) has not confirmed whether she will seek re-election. Governor Janet Mills (D) may run. Democrat David Costello and others have already launched campaigns. Primaries are scheduled for 9 June.

## **7. Minnesota**

Senator Tina Smith (D) is stepping down. Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan and Representative Angie Craig are the leading Democratic candidates. Republicans Royce White and Adam Schwarze are also running. The primary is on 11 August.

## **8. Ohio**

Appointed Senator Jon Husted (R) is running to secure a full term. Democrats are hoping

former Senator Sherrod Brown returns to the race. With changing voter trends, Ohio could be closely contested.

## **9. New Hampshire**

Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D) will not seek another term. Representative Chris Pappas (D) and former Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown (R) are running. The outcome may hinge on turnout in suburban and rural areas.

## **10. Iowa**

Senator Joni Ernst (R) is running for re-election and remains the favourite. Democrats J.D. Scholten, Zach Wahls, and Nathan Sage have declared their candidacies. The primary is on 2 June.

## **11. Nebraska**

Senator Pete Ricketts (R) is pursuing a full term. Independent candidate Dan Osborn, who came close in 2024, is running again. Though not aligned with either major party, Osborn has previously attracted Democratic financial backing.

With Senate control hanging in the balance, the outcome in these states is expected to influence U.S. legislative priorities heading into the next decade.