## AFF

## Impact

### A2 Readiness

#### No impact to readiness

George 99 (James L. George, former congressional professional staff member for national security affairs, “Is Military Readiness Overrated?” CATO, 5-27-1999, https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/is-military-readiness-overrated)

Military readiness promises to be a major issue when Congress marks up a defense bill later this year. Some members of Congress are already using readiness as a reason to increase funding in the emergency spending bill for the war in Yugoslavia. Most experts cite the initial stages of the Korean War and the Hollow Force of the late 1970s as cautionary examples of being ill-prepared. A closer look at both those examples, however, shows that they really had little to do with readiness. Moreover, the current crisis in Yugoslavia illustrates once again why readiness may be overrated and the funds better spent elsewhere. Although often used as a generic term for all military capabilities, readiness—defined as the ability to respond with appropriate force with little or no warning—is only one of four pillars of military preparedness. The other pillars are force structure, modernization and sustainability. Thus, an effective military force depends on much more than just readiness. Interestingly, the two favorite examples cited by readiness alarmists fail to prove their case. The performance of Task Force Smith, an ill-prepared battalion quickly sent to the front and fairly easily routed by the North Koreans during the initial days of the Korean War, is often cited as the worst case. “No More Task Force Smiths” has become a mantra for the Army. However, critics of Task Force Smith fail to point out that U.S. commanders made the most basic of military mistakes—including grossly underestimating the enemy and sending TFS to an exposed position. When such blunders occur, the end result will be the same whether it is an ill-trained Task Force Smith in Korea or well-trained Marines in Beirut or elite Rangers in Somalia. Moreover, critics also fail to mention that barely a month later the United States stabilized the situation in South Korea, and in another month the Marines conducted their famous Inchon Landing. In fact, without the Chinese intervention, the United States would have won the Korean War a few months after it began. Not bad for a U.S. force that was supposedly ill-prepared. Similarly, the Hollow Force of the late 1970s was not primarily a readiness problem but a combination of many factors—including a military characterized by low morale after Vietnam, serious drug and racial problems, the erroneous induction of too many mentally substandard recruits and low pay eroded further by high inflation. At the same time, major structural changes were transforming the U.S. military, including the introduction of women into the regular forces, the switch from a draft to an all-volunteer force and the initiation of the Total Force Concept that placed more reliance on the Reserves. Given all of that turbulence, no wonder we had a Hollow Force. Often overlooked, however, is how quickly those problems were solved. In some cases, solutions were found without spending a dime. For example, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Thomas Hayward instituted his “Not in my Navy” program of zero tolerance for drugs. The drug problem was solved almost overnight. The induction of too many mentally substandard recruits by mistake which had lowered standards, was identified and corrected. That correction solved most other personnel problems (and should be a warning to people who want to lower standards today). Some members of Congress are now using the crisis in Yugoslavia to get more funds for readiness by arguing that the military is now stretched “too thin.” (Congress doubled President Clinton’s request for $6 billion in emergency spending for the war.) In fact, the situation is quite the opposite. Leaving aside the question of whether the United States should even be involved in Yugoslavia, the new Clinton Doctrine, which does not plan to use ground troops ( a position that is supported by many Republicans), limits the stress placed on the military. Those decisions are all deliberate political actions that have absolutely nothing to do with readiness. Under a well-conceived strategy, even a modestly capable force will probably perform well; but under a poorly conceived strategy, even a force with the highest degree of readiness will probably have serious problems. The experiences of Task Force Smith and the Hollow Force, as well as the invocation of a Clinton Doctrine that eschews the use of ground forces, have major implications. More forces, for example, could be placed in the reserves and scarce funds spent elsewhere. In addition, the military could switch to what Sen. John McCain (R- Ariz.) has called “Tiered Readiness:” a few forces would be kept on expensive ready status and be augmented by reserve forces that could be mobilized if a substantial threat to U.S. security arose. Military readiness is certainly important, and no one is suggesting a return to the truly shallow force of the late 1940s or the Hollow Force of the 1970s. But a close look at those forces shows that their difficulties involved much more than just poor readiness.

#### The welfare state is key to sustaining the American military

Mittelstadt 18 (2018, Jennifer, Jennifer Mittelstadt is a Professor of History at Rutgers University and is the Harold K. Johnson Chair in Military History at the US Army War College; her work about the relationship between the welfare state and the military has been published by the Harvard University Press, “FOR AMERICA, WELFARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR WARFARE”, War On The Rocks, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/05/for-america-welfare-is-essential-for-warfare/)>

In 2015 I published a book called[The Rise of the Military Welfare State](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674286139) that chronicled the history of military benefits and social services in the all-volunteer force. For many in the military, the title constituted fighting words. I didn’t anticipate this when I chose it. Some commenters asked if I thought soldiers were “welfare queens.” Others assumed I was out to cut their benefits. More than a few were angry enough to wish violence on me. If I had a quarter for every incensed email and suspicious question I’ve received, I’d have pocketed far more money than book sales have generated. The title aroused hostility in part due to the widely held belief that the military is separate from civilian life and especially the civilian welfare state. While **military personnel partake of subsidized housing, health care, child care, and many more systems of valuable support**, most Americans – and military personnel – consider those programs “not social welfare,” but a taken-for-granted entitlement in return for the perceived sacrifices of military life. The differentiation between military benefits and welfare goes even further than drawing bright lines between similar programs in different settings. The distinction shapes fundamental choices of where the nation invests in national power. The military and welfare are depicted as opposite poles in a Manichean battle of the budget. Too many political leaders and policy makers set up a zero-sum game scenario in which they pit [“military spending” against “welfare spending”](https://www.ohio.com/akron/editorial/commentary/robert-j-samuelson-the-case-for-increasing-defense-spending), claiming the former is more important than the latter. Others assume that social welfare for civilians creates a weak, dependent society that diminishes national power. The nation must therefore provide funds for worthy “troops” and take them from unworthy “welfare recipients.” For some elected officials, every breath supporting men and women in uniform is matched by a [blast to social welfare spending](http://www.insidesources.com/paul-ryans-exit-spells-trouble-u-s-economy/). These views reflect distorted understandings of social welfare and defense, and, as I’ve learned in spending the past year at the [U.S. Army War College](https://ssl.armywarcollege.edu/), they’re harmful to American national and military power. My conversations with senior leaders have made plain the central role of social welfare in creating the conditions for both military power and national power. The military and welfare are not opposites, **they’re intertwined**. Welfare is short-hand for “social welfare,” which itself derives from “the general welfare” of the populace enshrined alongside “the common defense” in the United States Constitution. While Americans in recent decades have used the word “welfare” pejoratively to signify means-tested programs for the poor, historically welfare had a positive connotation and broader definition. The majority of Americans of the 1950s, including the war hero and [Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower](https://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/domestic-affairs), for example, approved overwhelmingly of “welfare” and “the welfare state.” Health, education, old age pensions, disability protections, workplace safety, minimum wages and maximum hours – all these were properly considered “welfare.” [Even the tax system and subsidized home loans constitute social welfare in the US.](https://press.princeton.edu/titles/6220.html) Some Americans receive social welfare through the government, some through private charities. Most partake of both even when they don’t know it; since the 1930s the government has [subsidized the supposedly “private” employer benefits](https://press.princeton.edu/titles/7551.html) through tax breaks to large companies, all in an effort to deliver as many social and economic supports to as many Americans as possible. These many types of social welfare have built and continue to sustain military power. Take the military’s most basic requirement – fielding a force. The modern U.S. military has never been able to mobilize for war without adequate welfare for its populace. It was precisely the poor health, nutrition and education of many potential draftees during both [**World War I and World War II** that **helped make the case for expanding national social welfare programs**](http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-01995-6.html). Military and Selective Service officials as well as veterans organizations made the case for social welfare programs for military preparedness. [During the Cold War decades, the United States filled out its welfare state](https://www.amazon.com/Eisenhower-Republicanism-Pursuing-Middle-Way/dp/0875803628), improving public education, creating food and nutrition programs, and [fostering physical fitness programs to build “readiness” among youth eligible for the draft](http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15804.html). And since the era of the all-volunteer force began in 1973, **social welfare has become even more essential**. Healthy, able, educated and sound recruits are the sine qua non of the all-volunteer force, and declines in public health and welfare harm the force. Today, standards for military service preclude nearly [70 percent of the youth population](http://time.com/2938158/youth-fail-to-qualify-military-service/) who cannot qualify for service – they are too sick, too physically unfit, or too undereducated. It has not been possible – and **it will not be possible – to fill the ranks to acceptable standards without** [**basic investments in social welfare**](https://www.strongnation.org/missionreadiness). If the military needs strong social welfare programs to fill the force, it also needs them to utilize the force. Military benefits and social services – what I call [the military welfare state](https://aeon.co/essays/how-the-us-military-became-a-welfare-state) – have grown hand-in-hand with the volunteer force in order [to support readiness in garrison and deploymen](https://www.army.mil/article/168539/milley_soldier_readiness_starts_at_home_on_top_quality_army_installations)t. Since the 1970s, the military has expanded social and economic benefits and services to all ranks and created vast new programs such as child care and family support services. [Dozens of social welfare programs](https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/military-benefits-overview.html) allow military personnel to do the jobs they joined to do, and to do them well. Even with the wrap-around services the military provides, military personnel also continue to rely on the civilian welfare state to fill gaps. Military personnel and their families utilize public schools, child welfare services, and [food stamps](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/14/how-presidents-food-stamp-cuts-would-impact-military-families.html), to name but a few civilian social welfare programs. The military has not been able to fulfill its missions – and will not in the future – without military and civilian investments in social welfare. Social welfare also contributes to the national power of the United States. Regardless of what one thinks about role of America in the world today, there is no doubt that one of the main sources of its influence has been a healthy, educated, and productive populace. Critics of welfare argue that the populace would be better off with a much-diminished welfare state replaced by private charities, de-regulation, and self-reliance. Indeed, they believe government welfare programs [diminish the economic productivity and personal initiative of Americans](http://thefederalist.com/2015/04/27/dependency-work-incentives-and-the-growing-welfare-state/). Such a view does not correspond with the historical data on the rise of the United States to the status of a global power and later a superpower, however. As historians have documented, the increasing economic and military might of the United States – and thus its global influence – resulted not from a wildly unregulated free market, but from the better-regulated, well-distributed capitalism of the [Progressive and New Deal state](https://www.amazon.com/America-Great-War-Welfare-State/dp/0195049047), which, along with the [World War II regulation](https://www.amazon.com/Warfare-State-World-Americans-Government/dp/019993035X) and postwar expansions of social welfare like the GI Bill, helped produce the [healthiest, best-educated generation in U.S. (and world) history](https://books.google.com/books?id=tS47FVPKATcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+richest+generation&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjY4eXK3-LaAhUBh-AKHYRtAfAQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=the%20richest%20generation&f=false). Indeed, one way the United States exerted its global power was through [exporting its New Deal capitalism abroad](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674025363). For their part, my students at **the U.S. Army War College seemed intuitively aware of positive relationships between social welfare and national power.** In my “Theory of War and Strategy” course, officers adhered to a broad definition of national power. Among other attributes, they cited key outcomes of social welfare – a productive economy, civic vitality, and social equality and opportunity. Students expressed modesty about the ability to achieve goals through military force alone and insisted on the inter-connected importance of political, economic, and social institutions to address matters of international concern. When we studied the history of the Peloponnesian War, my students expressed doubts about the long-term viability of the highly unequal Spartan society that directed all its national resources to war. And they identified tragedy in the imperial over-reach of Athens, a city-state whose relative equality and social and cultural investments ought to have sustained its flourishing role in the larger Greek world. Similarly, during an exercise ranking the power of the world’s states, military power never functioned as their sole criterion. **Education, human development, and resultant economic power topped their lists.** It’s no coincidence that **eight of the ten most powerful nations they listed feature** [**significant social safety nets**](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1124119303499/SSNPrimerNote25.pdf), as defined by the World Bank. In large, complex 21st century societies, **organized social welfare programs contribute to national power**. Maligning welfare and genuflecting to the military are staples of today’s partisan politics, where politicians stoke the worst fears and deepest passions of their electoral bases. But for those who claim to support U.S. national power and military readiness there is little excuse for reductionist thinking about social welfare programs. Yes, meaningful discussion must take place about how to make sure investments in both social welfare and military spending are ethical and sustainable. But no serious reckoning of national security can falsely decouple the two. Pitting military spending against social welfare might be popular for [some versions of politics](https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2018/01/look-congress-2018-agenda-budgets-social-programs-and-maybe-infrastructure;%20http://www.dailyindependent.com/news/get-ready-for-a-congressional-budget-blowout/article_dc207bba-ffb1-11e7-89be-bf5848d5) in the United States today, but it’s also **dangerously wrong.**

#### GOP win means end of support for Ukraine – turns allied commitments

**Kaonga ’22** ( Gerrad Kaonga is a US news reporter, “Russian TV Suggests GOP Midterm Wins Will Scupper U.S. Support For Ukraine,” Newsweek, <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-state-tv-gop-republican-midterms-win-us-support-ukraine-war-russia-1714180>, 6/9/2022)

A Russian TV host has suggested that if **Republicans win** the U.S. midterms, **support for Ukraine** will begin to **dwindle**. A video of state TV host Vladimir Solovyov making these claims has begun circulating on social media. The video has so far been viewed over 80,000 times after being posted by the Daily Beast's Julia Davis. "This compilation of clips explains why the Russians think they're winning and don't need to negotiate," she tweeted. "We don't need to participate in any negotiations, because time is on our side, the tempo is working in our favor." As the conversation between the host and other political scientists and commentators, Solovyov claimed the support for Ukraine would change in the U.S. **after** the **midterms**. "[If the Republicans prevail in November] a lot will change, of course a lot will change, "Solovyov said. "**They will** calmly **say**: '**Why** do we need to be involved and **send so much of our own money**?' "Republicans will come **and** say, '**why** the hell do we **need** a **corrupt, Nazi Ukraine**?' "They will ask, 'Whom are we supporting? Yes, Russia is bad and the sanctions will stay, but why keep throwing so much money over there [when] our schools lack funding, we have plenty of our own problems. "'Instead of fortifying the border with Mexico, helping our small businesses, we've given that money to corrupt Ukraine and no one knows where it went." Newsweek has contacted Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for comment. As the Democratic Party prepares for crucial midterm elections, where Republicans could be poised to retake the House of Representatives and the Senate, Joe Biden's approval rating sits at a near-record low. The president's approval rating has shown no sign of significant improvement as the country experiences high inflation with just over six months to go until Americans go to the polls on November 8. Poll tracker FiveThirtyEight assessed Biden's approval rating by analyzing a wide variety of polls and using its own system of pollster ratings.

### A2 Econ

#### Economic decline doesn’t cause war – stats prove

Clary 15 Christopher Clary, Ph.D. in Political Science from MIT, Postdoctoral Fellow, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, “Economic Stress and International Cooperation: Evidence from International Rivalries,” April 22, 2015, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=2597712

Do economic downturns generate pressure for diversionary conflict? Or might downturns encourage austerity and economizing behavior in foreign policy? This paper provides new evidence that economic stress is associated with conciliatory policies between strategic rivals. For states that view each other as military threats, the biggest step possible toward bilateral cooperation is to terminate the rivalry by taking political steps to manage the competition. Drawing on data from 109 distinct rival dyads since 1950, 67 of which terminated, the evidence suggests rivalries were approximately twice as likely to terminate during economic downturns than they were during periods of economic normalcy. This is true controlling for all of the main alternative explanations for peaceful relations between foes (democratic status, nuclear weapons possession, capability imbalance, common enemies, and international systemic changes), as well as many other possible confounding variables. This research questions existing theories claiming that economic downturns are associated with diversionary war, and instead argues that in certain circumstances peace may result from economic troubles.

#### No econ impact

**Walt 20** [Stephen M. Walt is the Robert and Renée Belfer professor of international relations at Harvard University. “Will a Global Depression Trigger Another World War?”, May 13th, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/13/coronavirus-pandemic-depression-economy-world-war/]

On balance, however, I do not think that even the extraordinary economic conditions we are witnessing today are going to have much impact on the likelihood of war. Why? First of all, if depressions were a powerful cause of war, there would be a lot more of the latter. To take one example, the United States has suffered 40 or more recessions since the country was founded, yet it has fought perhaps 20 interstate wars, most of them unrelated to the state of the economy. To paraphrase the economist Paul Samuelson’s famous quip about the stock market, if recessions were a powerful cause of war, they would have predicted “nine out of the last five (or fewer).”

Second, states do not start wars unless they believe they will win a quick and relatively cheap victory. As John Mearsheimer showed in his classic book Conventional Deterrence, national leaders avoid war when they are convinced it will be long, bloody, costly, and uncertain. To choose war, political leaders have to convince themselves they can either win a quick, cheap, and decisive victory or achieve some limited objective at low cost. Europe went to war in 1914 with each side believing it would win a rapid and easy victory, and Nazi Germany developed the strategy of blitzkrieg in order to subdue its foes as quickly and cheaply as possible. Iraq attacked Iran in 1980 because Saddam believed the Islamic Republic was in disarray and would be easy to defeat, and George W. Bush invaded Iraq in 2003 convinced the war would be short, successful, and pay for itself.

The fact that each of these leaders miscalculated badly does not alter the main point: No matter what a country’s economic condition might be, its leaders will not go to war unless they think they can do so quickly, cheaply, and with a reasonable probability of success.

Third, and most important, the primary motivation for most wars is the desire for security, not economic gain. For this reason, the odds of war increase when states believe the long-term balance of power may be shifting against them, when they are convinced that adversaries are unalterably hostile and cannot be accommodated, and when they are confident they can reverse the unfavorable trends and establish a secure position if they act now. The historian A.J.P. Taylor once observed that “every war between Great Powers [between 1848 and 1918] … started as a preventive war, not as a war of conquest,” and that remains true of most wars fought since then.

The bottom line: Economic conditions (i.e., a depression) may affect the broader political environment in which decisions for war or peace are made, but they are only one factor among many and rarely the most significant. Even if the COVID-19 pandemic has large, lasting, and negative effects on the world economy—as seems quite likely—it is not likely to affect the probability of war very much, especially in the short term.

#### Republican victory isn’t good for the economy – they’ll pursue the same flawed spending and tax policies

Mitchell 17 Daniel J. Mitchell was a senior fellow at the Cato Institute who specialized in fiscal policy, particularly tax reform, international tax competition, and the economic burden of government spending. Prior to joining Cato, Mitchell was a senior fellow with the Heritage Foundation, and an economist for Senator Bob Packwood and the Senate Finance Committee. His work has been published in numerous outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Villanova Law Review, Public Choice, Emory Law Journal, Forbes, USA Today, Offshore Investment, Playboy, and Investor’s Business Daily. He has appeared on all the major TV networks, and has given speeches in almost 40 states and more than 30 countries. Mitchell earned a PhD in economics from George Mason University. “Republicans Embrace Bad Economics and Bad Policy,’ August 15, 2017, https://www.cato.org/blog/republicans-embrace-bad-economics-bad-policy

To be blunt, Republicans are heading in the wrong direction on fiscal policy. They have full control of the executive and legislative branches, but instead of using their power to promote Reaganomics, it looks like we’re getting a reincarnation of the big‐​government Bush years. As Yogi Berra might have said, “it’s déjà vu all over again.” Let’s look at the evidence. According to The Hill, the Keynesian virus has infected GOP thinking on tax cuts. Republicans are debating whether parts of their tax‐​reform package should be retroactive in order to boost the economy by quickly putting more money in people’s wallets. **That is nonsense**. Just as giving people a check and calling it “stimulus” didn’t help the economy under Obama, giving people a check and calling it a tax cut won’t help the economy under Trump. Tax cuts boost growth when they reduce the marginal tax rate on productive behavior such as work, saving, investment, or entrepreneurship. When that happens, people have an incentive to generate more income. And that leads to more national income, a.k.a., economic growth. Borrowing money from the economy’s left pocket and then stuffing checks (oops, I mean retroactive tax cuts) in the economy’s right pocket, by contrast, **simply reallocates national income**. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why the economy didn’t get much benefit from the 2001 Bush tax cut, especially when compared to the growth‐​oriented 2003 tax cut. Unfortunately, Republicans haven’t learned that lesson. Republicans have taken steps in the past to ensure that taxpayers directly felt the benefits of tax cuts. As part of the 2001 tax cuts enacted by President George W. Bush, taxpayers received rebate checks. The article does include some analysis from people who understand that retroactive tax cuts aren’t economically beneficial. …there are also drawbacks to making tax changes retroactive. …such changes would add to the cost of the bill, but would not be an effective way to encourage new spending and investments. “It has all of the costs of the tax cuts but none of the economic benefits,” said Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget President Maya MacGuineas, who added that “you don’t make investments in the rear‐​view mirror.” I’m not always on the same side as Maya, but she’s right on this issue. You can’t encourage people to generate more income in the past. If you want more growth, you have to reduce marginal tax rates on future activity. By the way, I’m not arguing that there is no political benefit to retroactive tax cuts. If Republicans simply stated that they were going to send rebate checks to curry favor with voters, I’d roll my eyes and shrug my shoulders. But when they make Keynesian arguments to justify such a policy, I can’t help but get upset about the economic illiteracy. Speaking of bad economic policy, GOPers also are pursuing bad spending policy. Politico has a report on a potential budget deal where everyone wins…except taxpayers. The White House is pushing a deal on Capitol Hill to head off a government shutdown that would lift strict spending caps long opposed by Democrats in exchange for money for President Donald Trump’s border wall with Mexico, multiple sources said. So much for Trump’s promise to get tough on the budget, even if it meant a shutdown. Instead, the back‐​room negotiations are leading to more spending for all interest groups. Marc Short, the White House’s director of legislative affairs, …also lobbied for a big budget increase for the Pentagon, another priority for Trump. …The White House is offering Democrats more funding for their own pet projects. The only good news is that Democrats are so upset about the symbolism of the fence that they may not go for the deal. Democrats show no sign of yielding on the issue. They have already blocked the project once. Unfortunately, I expect this is just posturing. When the dust settles, I expect the desire for more spending (from both parties) will produce a deal that is bad news. At least for those of us who don’t want America to become Greece (any faster than already scheduled). Republican and Democratic congressional aides have predicted for months that both sides will come together on a spending agreement to raise spending caps for the Pentagon as well as for nondefense domestic programs. So let’s check our scorecard. On the tax side of the equation, we’ll hopefully still get some good policy, such as a lower corporate tax rate, but it probably will be accompanied by some gimmicky Keynesian policy. On the spending side of the equation, it appears my fears about Trump may have been correct and he’s going to be a typical big‐​government Republican. It’s possible, of course, that I’m being needlessly pessimistic and we’ll get the kinds of policies I fantasized about in early 2016. But I wouldn’t bet money on a positive outcome.

### Internal link defense

#### No internal link—nothing passes after midterms

Beavers and Everett 22 [Olivia Beavers is a congressional reporter for POLITICO, focusing on House Republicans and GOP leadership. John Burgess Everett is the congressional bureau chief for POLITICO, specializing in the Senate since 2013. POLITICO 1-18-22 How a GOP majority in Congress might handle Biden in 2023 https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/18/gop-majority-congress-biden-2023-527117] 6-26-2022

Republicans are feeling so good about their chances of retaking Congress this fall that they’re already debating their governing relationship with President Joe Biden. And they’re divided over how to handle their potential big wins. With Biden and Democrats floundering right now, the GOP is increasingly favored to vault back to partial power in Washington by flipping the House, and potentially also the Senate, in the coming midterms. What comes next isn’t quite clear: Some Republicans are mulling ways to collaborate with Biden on issues like trade, energy or tech; others are prepared to go scorched-earth as their party eyes the bigger prize of retaking the White House in 2024. The GOP’s pro-bipartisanship camp may not have a lot of space in 2023 to work with the president: funding the government and raising the debt ceiling will be a major challenge, given how often House and Senate Republicans diverge on critical pieces of legislation. And former President Donald Trump will continue trying to influence the party’s direction, criticizing Senate GOP Leader Mitch McConnell and anyone else who steps out of line with his combative politics. Given those dynamics, there’s no unified GOP agenda for voters to examine this fall — other than an up-or-down vote on Biden and congressional Democrats’ record. Republicans aren’t sure what will happen next if they actually win. “It’s really going to be a referendum on him and his administration and on the Democrat leadership in the Congress,” John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican who is also running for reelection this fall, said of Biden. “So we need to stay out of our own way.” “It’s really important for us to highlight our differences, how we would do it differently,” the South Dakotan added. “And then … have some things that we would do or could do if there was a willingness to work together.” House GOP plots to keep advantage for 2022 midterms For now it’s Democrats, holding shaky but singular power in Washington, consuming the Capitol’s oxygen as they struggle to enact Biden’s agenda. But the GOP’s splits over whether to work with Biden, even now from the minority, would become the nation’s central political story if it retakes part or all of Congress this fall. With that victory would come the messy job of actually governing, preventing credit defaults and government shutdowns at a minimum. And just as a trio of conservative senators once battled former President Barack Obama on all fronts as they sought the White House, there’s a stable of Senate and House Republicans with national political ambitions that could cut against any attempts to collaborate with Biden. Not to mention the passel of Republicans disinterested in the presidency who are already signaling they’ll push to block Biden at every turn. “Putting a stop to his agenda is the first thing that we would do, because that’s presumably what people would be voting for,” said Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), a potential 2024 GOP White House hopeful who led the objections to Biden’s election certification. “The message would be: If we’re in the majority, we need to stop what he’s currently doing.” Still, the most powerful Senate Republican has indicated an openness to work with Biden. Already feeling bullish on his party’s chances this fall, McConnell said in a late-September interview: “I don’t think people send us here to do nothing.” “When you have a closely divided government, or a divided government,” McConnell added then in previously unreported comments, “I think the American people are saying, ‘We know you have some big differences, and either of you may not be able to move the ball the way you’d like to. But why don’t you look for things you agree on, and do those?’” McConnell pointed to trade as a potential area of future cooperation with Biden. As Senate majority leader during the last two years of Obama’s administration, McConnell famously blocked the president from filling a Supreme Court vacancy and slowed other judicial confirmations to a trickle. McConnell won’t say how he’d handle a Supreme Court vacancy if one comes up in 2023 or 2024 and he controls the Senate, though Democrats are positive he wouldn’t fill one for Biden either. Yet McConnell also cut a deal with Obama to fast-track new trade deals that then-Democratic leader Harry Reid did not lend a hand with. McConnell later clinched a bipartisan transportation deal with Obama and Democrats. As minority leader during this Congress, McConnell signed off on a huge Biden-backed infrastructure bill and after repeated threats that he would do otherwise, allowed the debt ceiling to increase. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and House Republicans opposed those accommodations by the Kentucky Republican — as did Trump. And unlike McConnell, McCarthy and his conference are in the thrall of the party’s former president. That means the House Freedom Caucus and other allies of the former president will be trying to maximize Democrats’ losses even at the expense of legislation some rank-and-file Republicans would otherwise support, particularly in the Senate. When asked about areas House Republicans could team up on with the Biden administration, Georgia Rep. Drew Ferguson, a member of GOP leadership, replied tersely: ”On anything that’s not socialist.” That public posturing reflects a real concern among some Republicans that Biden might not be willing to pivot from his current agenda of expanding social and climate programs, and gutting the filibuster to pass elections reform, in order to work with Republicans on what would probably be small-bore issues. With a bipartisan infrastructure package already law, there’s fewer obvious opportunities for collaboration with the other party at the moment. Rep. John Curtis (R-Utah) suggested immigration as an avenue for partnership. House Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) wants to work with Biden on battling inflation. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) said Republicans could talk to Biden about making Social Security “more sustainable.” But it’s hard to imagine a split government delivering on even one of those big-ticket items. And some Republicans are already downplaying any ideological intersection with Biden after the past year. “Are we going to get the president that was a self proclaimed dealmaker in the Senate for his entire career? Are we going to get the guy that’s down in Georgia [for] a face-saving speech to his base because he can’t get something through the Senate?” asked Rep. Kelly Armstrong (R-N.D.). “A lot of it depends on which president we get.” Indeed, Armstrong and other Republicans singled out the tone of Biden’s speech in Georgia last week, in which the president suggested that lawmakers who oppose Democrats’ voting rights legislation will be on the same side of history as segregationists and the head of the Confederacy. McConnell quickly condemned Biden’s remarks, calling them “beneath his office,” and Biden later sought to clarify that he hadn’t made that direct comparison about the GOP leader. One telling metric: Even Republicans who voted to impeach Trump last year aren’t sure whether they can find any substantive common ground with Biden if they are in the majority. “Boy, my answer would have been a lot different a year ago,” said freshman Rep. Peter Meijer (R-Mich.), who voted to impeach Donald Trump earlier this year. “I’ve been astounded at the number of areas where we’ll talk with people from the administration. … And then just nothing happens.”

#### Dems holding onto the Senate, staying close to 50 Senators enough to prevent change in agenda

Robison ’22 (Matt Robison, congressional staffer and campaign manager; “Will Democrats Lose in the Midterms? Probably. But It's the Wrong Question”; Newsweek; 5.24.22; https://www.newsweek.com/will-democrats-lose-midterms-probably-its-wrong-question-opinion-1708947)//ccs

If it's the usual one—"Will Republicans take over majorities in Congress?"—then sure, there's a lot of evidence to say yes, they will. But that's not a very profound insight, is it? The President's party has almost always bled seats in midterms, and this year, even a handful of losses will mean a Republican majority. Even Presidents with soaring approval ratings still lose an average of three House seats in midterm elections, and we all know that President Biden's approval is 11 points below his disapproval. Reflecting the Democrats' unpopularity more widely, the "generic ballot" polling question has the Democrats down 2.5 percent. But what if that's the wrong question? NEWSWEEK NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP > I'd argue that there are two much more important questions we should be asking as we close in on November's midterms. Can the Democrats keep things close? Instead of asking whether the Democrats are going to lose their majority—a question we can all agree is best answered with a yes—I'd argue that we should be asking whether the Democrats can keep things close. If you're thinking that "close" only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, think again: There's a huge difference between losing narrowly and getting blown out, for the same reason that you'd rather be down a field goal than two touchdowns at halftime. The Democrats WASHINGTON, DC - APRIL 06: U.S. President Joe Biden (C) signs the Postal Service Reform Act into law during an event with (L-R) Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY), Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC), House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and retired letter carrier Annette Taylor and others in the State Dining Room at the White House on April 6, 2022 in Washington, DC. A part of Postmaster General Louis DeJoy’s controversial 10-year restructuring plan, the law provides $107 billion to modernize and streamline the long-beleaguered Postal Service. CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES NEWSWEEK SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS > For one thing, if Democrats can hold just the Senate, they retain critical levers of power that are currently making a real difference. Consider the fact that President Biden has been getting his nominees for federal judges confirmed at a record pace, offsetting some of President Trump's massive reshaping of the judiciary. The Democratic-led Senate has successfully confirmed 369 of 521 nominees for key agency positions so far, and given congressional gridlock, these are the people shaping most of what is happening in government. As just one example, note that the Trump Administration rolled back 112 environmental rules, 30 of them on emissions. Now, Biden's agencies are overturning those changes, including critical rules on fuel standards, gas pipelines, and methane emissions. They need the leadership in place to keep that going. But even if Democrats lose the Senate, keeping the margins narrow means having to take out fewer Republican office-holders in 2024. That matters because incumbents usually start off with about a three-point election advantage. Moreover, consider the fact that slim House majorities are much harder to manage than fat ones. Just look at Nancy Pelosi's recent headaches; the most vulnerable representatives are always on the hot seat. A big majority allows those swing seat members to go against their party on the toughest votes and look bipartisan. Without that shield, the biggest targets are exposed. The good news for Democrats is that the chances of limiting their losses are actually fairly high. Modeling from highly-regarded analyst Alan Abramowitz suggests that Democrats currently have an even shot to hold the Senate and are on track to lose only about 20 House seats. It's not great, but it's within striking distance, and would be hardly a "shellacking." But there's a second and even better question we should be asking, and it's this: Can Democrats win enough races to protect American democracy from disaster? America is likely facing an existential crisis in 2024 from Big Lie MAGAists planning to subvert elections to reinstate Donald Trump or a near clone. Bill Clinton once said that our priority was to "save Social Security first." Today, the mantra has to be "save democracy first." Can Democrats accomplish that? Yes. Step one is to limit their 2022 losses for the reasons noted above, and also because if they can stay positioned to win back enough seats in 2024, it lowers the chances that Republicans can pull another Eastman Memo maneuver, muck with the electoral count, and have the election decided by cronies in the House. Second, Democrats must focus on keeping the Big Lie cabal from winning strategically important offices and legislative majorities in swing states. Closely divided bodies that could flip in 2022 include chambers in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Secretaries of State will be at the epicenter of the assault on elections, so Democrats must hold offices like Michigan and flip offices in states like Arizona, Georgia, and Nevada. Just to give a sense of the stakes, in Colorado the Democratic Secretary of State, a person who has received countless death threats, is up against a Republican county clerk facing criminal charges for tampering with voting equipment and who a judge barred from overseeing elections. In Pennsylvania, the Republican nominee for governor is a leading voice in the election denial movement and gets to pick the Secretary of State. Democrats must win as many of these critical races as possible. And is that do-able? Yes. Posing the right question means focusing on what you really care about. Democratic doomscrolling of the midterm election is understandable—it has the same appeal as watching the Johnny Depp trial—but what has to matter most is making sure there are still elections to care about in the future, to say nothing of the broader aim the party is supposed to stand for: an inclusive and ever-expanding vision of opportunity. Those are the real goals. And yes, Democrats can still achieve them, even if they lose in the midterms. Of course, the Democrats could still turn this around completely: There are historical outliers where the President's party held serve, and plenty of times where Republicans nominated such extreme candidates that they lost winnable races. But in general, the basic positioning of the parties tends to hold in the runup to an election, while jolts to the race tend to work against the party that holds the White House. Which is why Democrats should be focused on the achievable goals that are very much in reach.

### Dems good – climate

#### Republican win locks in climate change and pollution

Kolbert 20 Elizabeth Kolbert has been a staff writer at The New Yorker since 1999. Previously, she worked at the Times, where she wrote the Metro Matters column and served as the paper’s Albany bureau chief. Her three-part series on global warming, “The Climate of Man,” won the 2006 National Magazine Award for Public Interest. In 2010, she received the National Magazine Award for Reviews and Criticism. She is the editor of “The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2009” and the author of “The Prophet of Love: And Other Tales of Power and Deceit,” “Field Notes from a Catastrophe,” and “The Sixth Extinction,” for which she won the Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction in 2015. She received the Blake-Dodd Prize, from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, in 2017. Her latest book is “Under a White Sky: The Nature of the Future.” “An Earth Day Reminder of How the Republicans Have Forsaken the Environment ,” April 22, 2022, https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/an-earth-day-reminder-of-how-the-republicans-have-forsaken-the-environment

The idea for Earth Day came to Gaylord Nelson all of a sudden one day in the middle of 1969. That summer, “teach-ins” about the Vietnam War were all the rage. It occurred to Nelson, then the junior U.S. senator from Wisconsin: How about a “teach-in” about the environment? To attract the widest possible audience, Nelson, a Democrat, invited Representative Pete McCloskey, a Republican from California, to co-chair the event. The response was way more enthusiastic than either man had anticipated: on April 22, 1970, some twenty million Americans—a tenth of the country’s population—took to the streets. It was the largest public demonstration in U.S. history, and, as Jamie Henn, one of the founders of 350.org, has put it, it “had bite.” By the end of the year, a Republican President, Richard Nixon, had created the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This was followed in relatively short order by the passage of the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. All of these measures were approved with overwhelming bipartisan support. Today, as Earth Day turns fifty, it’s hard to imagine more dolorous circumstances for the occasion. covid-19 has forced online (or cancelled) virtually all the celebrations and protests that had been planned for the anniversary. The Trump Administration has barely even taken the day off from gutting the nation’s environmental regulations. (Last week, the Administration weakened rules governing the emission of mercury and other toxic chemicals from power plants; late last month, it weakened fuel-efficiency standards for cars and light trucks.) Meanwhile, in Congress, environmental protection has become such a thoroughly partisan issue that across-the-aisle collaborations like Nelson and McCloskey’s are rarer than Amur leopards. Owing to this divide, **environmental problems** that have emerged since 1970 **have** simply **gone unaddressed**. Congress has not passed—or even really come close to passing—a single piece of legislation aimed at addressing climate change. (All the steps taken by the Obama Administration to try to curb carbon emissions were done through regulation.) Precisely at the “moment when such legislative action is most needed,” James Morton Turner, a professor at Wellesley College, and Andrew Isenberg, a professor at the University of Kansas, have written, it has become “almost politically unimaginable.” How and why this happened is the subject of Turner and Isenberg’s recent book, “The Republican Reversal: Conservatives and the Environment from Nixon to Trump.” The two trace the G.O.P.’s turn against conservation to Ronald Reagan, who equated environmentalism with pessimism, and pessimism with a lack of patriotism. Reagan combined a sunny faith in the future with an equally sunny indifference to facts. Running for President in 1980, he claimed that acid rain was not caused by power-plant and auto emissions, as scientists had shown, but by the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, in Washington State, earlier that year. Also during the campaign, he declared that “eighty per cent of our air pollution stems from hydrocarbons released by vegetation.” Once elected, Reagan appointed Anne Gorsuch—an inexperienced ideologue (and the mother of the future Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch)—to head the E.P.A. Among her first moves was to propose slashing the agency’s budget by more than forty per cent. One staffer complained that morale was so low there was “no known scientific method to measure it.” Since Reagan, control of the White House has, of course, swung between the parties, as has control of Congress. Throughout the swings, anti-environmentalism has only become that much more entrenched in G.O.P. politics. (McCloskey, it’s worth noting, switched his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat, in 2007, at the age of seventy-nine.) A great deal of money has changed hands to help change minds; according to the Web site Open Secrets, which tracks federal campaign contributions, the oil-and-gas industry contributed nearly twenty-four million dollars to House and Senate Republicans during the past election cycle, compared with five million to Democrats. But, according to Turner and Isenberg, money is only part of the equation; the other part is votes. For Republican politicians, there’s **no incentive to**, say, **back legislation to limit climate change**: “Neither their corporate donors nor evangelicals nor the struggling Rust Belt workers who voted for Trump in 2016 see any advantage to it.” The situation is such that, as Aaron Huertas, who works with WeCanVote.US, recently pointed out, were Democrats inclined to pass meaningful climate legislation, they’d need to win not just the Presidency this fall but also a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Can this situation be changed? Certainly the hour is late and the facts—if you happen to be concerned about such things—are stark. What the original Earth Day showed is that, when Americans are mobilized, remarkable things are possible. What the past few years have shown is that Americans can be mobilized by the most remarkable falsehoods. To say that the future of the world depends on which of these tendencies prevails is at this point, unfortunately, no exaggeration.

#### Warming leads to extinction

Kareiva 18, Ph.D. in ecology and applied mathematics from Cornell University, director of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, Pritzker Distinguished Professor in Environment & Sustainability at UCLA, et al. (Peter, “Existential risk due to ecosystem collapse: Nature strikes back,” *Futures*, 102)

In summary, six of the nine proposed planetary boundaries (phosphorous, nitrogen, biodiversity, land use, atmospheric aerosol loading, and chemical pollution) are unlikely to be associated with existential risks. They all correspond to a degraded environment, but in our assessment do not represent existential risks. However, the three remaining boundaries (climate change, global freshwater cycle, and ocean acidification) do pose existential risks. This is because of intrinsic positive feedback loops, substantial lag times between system change and experiencing the consequences of that change, and the fact these different boundaries interact with one another in ways that yield surprises. In addition, climate, freshwater, and ocean acidification are all directly connected to the provision of food and water, and shortages of food and water can create conflict and social unrest. Climate change has a long history of disrupting civilizations and sometimes precipitating the collapse of cultures or mass emigrations (McMichael, 2017). For example, the 12th century drought in the North American Southwest is held responsible for the collapse of the Anasazi pueblo culture. More recently, the infamous potato famine of 1846–1849 and the large migration of Irish to the U.S. can be traced to a combination of factors, one of which was climate. Specifically, 1846 was an unusually warm and moist year in Ireland, providing the climatic conditions favorable to the fungus that caused the potato blight. As is so often the case, poor government had a role as well—as the British government forbade the import of grains from outside Britain (imports that could have helped to redress the ravaged potato yields). Climate change intersects with freshwater resources because it is expected to exacerbate drought and water scarcity, as well as flooding. Climate change can even impair water quality because it is associated with heavy rains that overwhelm sewage treatment facilities, or because it results in higher concentrations of pollutants in groundwater as a result of enhanced evaporation and reduced groundwater recharge. Ample clean water is not a luxury—it is essential for human survival. Consequently, cities, regions and nations that lack clean freshwater are vulnerable to social disruption and disease. Finally, ocean acidification is linked to climate change because it is driven by CO2 emissions just as global warming is. With close to 20% of the world’s protein coming from oceans (FAO, 2016), the potential for severe impacts due to acidification is obvious. Less obvious, but perhaps more insidious, is the interaction between climate change and the loss of oyster and coral reefs due to acidification. Acidification is known to interfere with oyster reef building and coral reefs. Climate change also increases storm frequency and severity. Coral reefs and oyster reefs provide protection from storm surge because they reduce wave energy (Spalding et al., 2014). If these reefs are lost due to acidification at the same time as storms become more severe and sea level rises, coastal communities will be exposed to unprecedented storm surge—and may be ravaged by recurrent storms. A key feature of the risk associated with climate change is that mean annual temperature and mean annual rainfall are not the variables of interest. Rather it is extreme episodic events that place nations and entire regions of the world at risk. These extreme events are by definition “rare” (once every hundred years), and changes in their likelihood are challenging to detect because of their rarity, but are exactly the manifestations of climate change that we must get better at anticipating (Diffenbaugh et al., 2017). Society will have a hard time responding to shorter intervals between rare extreme events because in the lifespan of an individual human, a person might experience as few as two or three extreme events. How likely is it that you would notice a change in the interval between events that are separated by decades, especially given that the interval is not regular but varies stochastically? A concrete example of this dilemma can be found in the past and expected future changes in storm-related flooding of New York City. The highly disruptive flooding of New York City associated with Hurricane Sandy represented a flood height that occurred once every 500 years in the 18th century, and that occurs now once every 25 years, but is expected to occur once every 5 years by 2050 (Garner et al., 2017). This change in frequency of extreme floods has profound implications for the measures New York City should take to protect its infrastructure and its population, yet because of the stochastic nature of such events, this shift in flood frequency is an elevated risk that will go unnoticed by most people. 4. The combination of positive feedback loops and societal inertia is fertile ground for global environmental catastrophes Humans are remarkably ingenious, and have adapted to crises throughout their history. Our doom has been repeatedly predicted, only to be averted by innovation (Ridley, 2011). However, the many stories of human ingenuity successfully addressing existential risks such as global famine or extreme air pollution represent environmental challenges that are largely linear, have immediate consequences, and operate without positive feedbacks. For example, the fact that food is in short supply does not increase the rate at which humans consume food—thereby increasing the shortage. Similarly, massive air pollution episodes such as the London fog of 1952 that killed 12,000 people did not make future air pollution events more likely. In fact it was just the opposite—the London fog sent such a clear message that Britain quickly enacted pollution control measures (Stradling, 2016). Food shortages, air pollution, water pollution, etc. send immediate signals to society of harm, which then trigger a negative feedback of society seeking to reduce the harm. In contrast, today’s great environmental crisis of climate change may cause some harm but there are generally long time delays between rising CO2 concentrations and damage to humans. The consequence of these delays are an absence of urgency; thus although 70% of Americans believe global warming is happening, only 40% think it will harm them (http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/). Secondly, unlike past environmental challenges, the Earth’s climate system is rife with positive feedback loops. In particular, as CO2 increases and the climate warms, that very warming can cause more CO2 release which further increases global warming, and then more CO2, and so on. Table 2 summarizes the best documented positive feedback loops for the Earth’s climate system. These feedbacks can be neatly categorized into carbon cycle, biogeochemical, biogeophysical, cloud, ice-albedo, and water vapor feedbacks. As important as it is to understand these feedbacks individually, it is even more essential to study the interactive nature of these feedbacks. Modeling studies show that when interactions among feedback loops are included, uncertainty increases dramatically and there is a heightened potential for perturbations to be magnified (e.g., Cox, Betts, Jones, Spall, & Totterdell, 2000; Hajima, Tachiiri, Ito, & Kawamiya, 2014; Knutti & Rugenstein, 2015; Rosenfeld, Sherwood, Wood, & Donner, 2014). This produces a wide range of future scenarios. Positive feedbacks in the carbon cycle involves the enhancement of future carbon contributions to the atmosphere due to some initial increase in atmospheric CO2. This happens because as CO2 accumulates, it reduces the efficiency in which oceans and terrestrial ecosystems sequester carbon, which in return feeds back to exacerbate climate change (Friedlingstein et al., 2001). Warming can also increase the rate at which organic matter decays and carbon is released into the atmosphere, thereby causing more warming (Melillo et al., 2017). Increases in food shortages and lack of water is also of major concern when biogeophysical feedback mechanisms perpetuate drought conditions. The underlying mechanism here is that losses in vegetation increases the surface albedo, which suppresses rainfall, and thus enhances future vegetation loss and more suppression of rainfall—thereby initiating or prolonging a drought (Chamey, Stone, & Quirk, 1975). To top it off, overgrazing depletes the soil, leading to augmented vegetation loss (Anderies, Janssen, & Walker, 2002). Climate change often also increases the risk of forest fires, as a result of higher temperatures and persistent drought conditions. The expectation is that forest fires will become more frequent and severe with climate warming and drought (Scholze, Knorr, Arnell, & Prentice, 2006), a trend for which we have already seen evidence (Allen et al., 2010). Tragically, the increased severity and risk of Southern California wildfires recently predicted by climate scientists (Jin et al., 2015), was realized in December 2017, with the largest fire in the history of California (the “Thomas fire” that burned 282,000 acres, https://www.vox.com/2017/12/27/16822180/thomas-fire-california-largest-wildfire). This catastrophic fire embodies the sorts of positive feedbacks and interacting factors that could catch humanity off-guard and produce a true apocalyptic event. Record-breaking rains produced an extraordinary flush of new vegetation, that then dried out as record heat waves and dry conditions took hold, coupled with stronger than normal winds, and ignition. Of course the record-fire released CO2 into the atmosphere, thereby contributing to future warming. Out of all types of feedbacks, water vapor and the ice-albedo feedbacks are the most clearly understood mechanisms. Losses in reflective snow and ice cover drive up surface temperatures, leading to even more melting of snow and ice cover—this is known as the ice-albedo feedback (Curry, Schramm, & Ebert, 1995). As snow and ice continue to melt at a more rapid pace, millions of people may be displaced by flooding risks as a consequence of sea level rise near coastal communities (Biermann & Boas, 2010; Myers, 2002; Nicholls et al., 2011). The water vapor feedback operates when warmer atmospheric conditions strengthen the saturation vapor pressure, which creates a warming effect given water vapor’s strong greenhouse gas properties (Manabe & Wetherald, 1967). Global warming tends to increase cloud formation because warmer temperatures lead to more evaporation of water into the atmosphere, and warmer temperature also allows the atmosphere to hold more water. The key question is whether this increase in clouds associated with global warming will result in a positive feedback loop (more warming) or a negative feedback loop (less warming). For decades, scientists have sought to answer this question and understand the net role clouds play in future climate projections (Schneider et al., 2017). Clouds are complex because they both have a cooling (reflecting incoming solar radiation) and warming (absorbing incoming solar radiation) effect (Lashof, DeAngelo, Saleska, & Harte, 1997). The type of cloud, altitude, and optical properties combine to determine how these countervailing effects balance out. Although still under debate, it appears that in most circumstances the cloud feedback is likely positive (Boucher et al., 2013). For example, models and observations show that increasing greenhouse gas concentrations reduces the low-level cloud fraction in the Northeast Pacific at decadal time scales. This then has a positive feedback effect and enhances climate warming since less solar radiation is reflected by the atmosphere (Clement, Burgman, & Norris, 2009). The key lesson from the long list of potentially positive feedbacks and their interactions is that runaway climate change, and runaway perturbations have to be taken as a serious possibility. Table 2 is just a snapshot of the type of feedbacks that have been identified (see Supplementary material for a more thorough explanation of positive feedback loops). However, this list is not exhaustive and the possibility of undiscovered positive feedbacks portends even greater existential risks. The many environmental crises humankind has previously averted (famine, ozone depletion, London fog, water pollution, etc.) were averted because of political will based on solid scientific understanding. We cannot count on complete scientific understanding when it comes to positive feedback loops and climate change.

### Dems good – laundry list

#### Democrats win is good – federal judges, GOP agenda, investigations, 2024 Senate

Zhouli 22 [Li Zhouli. "Why a Democratic Senate majority still matters ⁠— even if they lose the House". 5-2-2022. Vox. [https://www.vox.com/2022/5/2/23048641/senate-majority-democrats-control-midterms. 6-25-2022](https://www.vox.com/2022/5/2/23048641/senate-majority-democrats-control-midterms.%206-25-2022).] – AL

If Democrats lose the House this fall, as they’re widely expected to, their ability to do ambitious bills will be all but moot. Given Republican opposition, it’s likely most legislation, barring must-pass measures like appropriations, will be dead on arrival. That prompts the question: Does it matter if they lose the Senate, too? In fact, holding their majority in the upper chamber is still extremely important for a number of reasons, perhaps none more so than the courts. If elected, a Democratic Senate would be able to confirm more of President Joe Biden’s judicial nominees, including any upcoming theoretical Supreme Court pick. Even without the House, they could approve judges for district courts, circuit courts, and the high court with a simple Senate majority. And that’s not the only benefit: Keeping this majority would also mean that lawmakers could set their own floor agenda and reject bills approved by a GOP-led House. Senate Democrats could ensure, too, that hearings and committee time aren’t used on investigations of Biden and other members of his administration. “Given that it will be investigations on steroids over in the House, the question is how the Senate could serve as a buffer,” says Democratic strategist Jim Manley, a former staffer for former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Securing that buffer won’t be easy as the prospects for Democrats this fall are looking increasingly grim. Due to the backlash the president’s party typically faces, and other factors like the country’s ongoing struggles with inflation, Democrats are likely to see some major losses in the House and have no room for error in the Senate. Because of the 2022 Senate map and candidates’ past patterns of bucking national trends, however, Democrats have a slightly better chance of sustaining their narrow hold on the upper chamber. Three reasons Senate control matters Democrats would be pretty limited legislatively under divided government — but there are still three key areas where Senate control matters. Judges “The main difference between a split Congress and one controlled by Republicans completely would be Biden’s ability to fill judicial and other vacancies,” says Kyle Kondik, managing editor of Sabato’s Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia. A GOP Senate majority would be able to vote down Biden’s judicial nominees (including any that come up on the Supreme Court), block them wholesale from consideration, and pressure the White House to pick what they perceive as more moderate options. Republican lawmakers have already signaled that they may not consider Biden’s nominees. In April, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell wouldn’t commit to giving a Supreme Court pick a hearing in 2023 if the Republicans retook their majority. It’s something he’s done before: During the Obama administration, McConnell notably blocked Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland from ever getting a hearing by arguing that his nomination was in an election year. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) has said that the “Garland rule” could be used if a high court vacancy comes up in 2024. Such opposition could seriously stymie Biden’s efforts on the courts: In his first year, Biden appointed the most federal judges of any president since Ronald Reagan, including more women, more people of color, and more public defenders than his predecessors. His attempts to continue doing so would be severely constrained without a Democratic Senate majority. Since these judges have lifetime appointments, their appointments have long-term impacts that extend far beyond the administration that nominated them. Trump and a Republican-controlled Senate confirmed more than 200 judges during his presidency, many of whom have contributed to pivotal decisions on immigration policy, mask mandates, and abortion rights. Setting legislative priorities In the majority, Democrats would be able to set the floor schedule and ignore bills that Republicans send over from the House. “It’s crucial to keep the Senate if only to serve as a bulwark against every bad idea that House Republicans are going to think of when they try to send them over to the Senate,” said Manley. If Republicans had Senate control, any bills that passed both chambers could still be vetoed by Biden. In the process, however, they could force vulnerable Democrats to take difficult votes on contentious issues. Similarly, Republicans could use tools like the Congressional Review Act and budget resolutions for messaging votes. Using the CRA, lawmakers could try to undo rules recently imposed by the Biden administration. If a simple majority in both chambers disapproves of a rule, they can pass a resolution trying to repeal it. Biden could also veto this, but Democrats would be pushed to take tough votes on the administration’s policies in the interim. Budget resolutions also only require a simple majority to pass the Senate and could be another forum for Republicans to score political points. Using these resolutions, which are also subject to a presidential veto, they could approve changes to the tax code or spending on climate programs and reproductive health. Investigations Republicans have already vowed to serve as a check on the Biden administration once they retake the majority in either chamber. House Republicans, for example, have announced plans to investigate the business practices of the president’s son Hunter Biden, and even pursue impeachment of certain Cabinet members. “Immediately, the House Republicans are going to start investigating the White House and the administration, basically looking for anything to embarrass the administration as much as they can,” says Neilan Chaturvedi, a political science professor at Cal Poly Pomona. While a GOP-controlled House would be able to dedicate time and resources to these efforts, a Democrat-controlled Senate could make sure that their chamber’s committees didn’t focus hearings on these issues. Additionally, the Senate could attempt to avoid a trial if the House approves articles of impeachment for an administration official. “The House could go ahead and vote to impeach, but there is some ambiguity about whether or not the Senate is compelled to hold a trial,” said George Washington University political science professor Sarah Binder. Democrats’ 2022 wins could decide control of the Senate for years Democratic wins this cycle would cushion potential losses the party could experience in the next election. Since senators hold six-year terms, anyone elected in 2022 would play a major role in preserving the party’s numbers for Congressional terms to come. “I think it matters more down the line because Democrats are staring at a really brutal map in 2024,” says Cook Political Report’s Jessica Taylor. As Vox’s Andrew Prokop has explained, Democrats aren’t currently defending any seats in states that Trump took in 2020. The four most contentious Democratic seats that are up — Nevada, Georgia, New Hampshire, and Arizona — are all places Biden won. Two other swing seats currently held by Republicans — Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — are also places Biden previously won, putting them in Democrats’ potential reach. The 2024 map, however, is far more challenging. That year, Democrats will be defending Sen. Joe Manchin’s seat in West Virginia, Sen. Jon Tester’s seat in Montana, and Sen. Sherrod Brown’s seat in Ohio, all states that voted for Trump in the last election. Additionally, several other Democrat-held seats will be up in states like Arizona, Michigan, and Maine. Essentially, the more seats Democrats can win in 2022, the better position they’ll have to withstand any shake-ups two years from now.

## Uniqueness

### Non-unique

#### Democrats are likely to win the midterms – Trump, GOP candidates, unemployment

McNally 02/09/22 Joel McNally is a national-award-winning newspaper columnist and a longtime political commentator on Milwaukee radio and television. After graduating from Indiana University, Joel worked for two years at The Chicago Tribune and for 27 years at The Milwaukee Journal where he won a National Headliners Award for “Consistently Outstanding Local Column” and numerous state and local journalism awards. Since 1997, Joel has written a column for the Shepherd Express where he also was editor for two years. “ Don’t Believe Everything You Hear about Republicans Winning the Midterms,” Shepard Express, February. 09, 2022, https://shepherdexpress.com/news/taking-liberties/don%E2%80%99t-believe-everything-you-hear-about-republicans-winning-/

Despite everything you’ve heard, there are still plenty of reasons Democrats could do much better in November’s midterm elections than Republicans and much of the media expect. In fact, the future of American democracy depends on it. Democrats certainly know in normal election years a new president’s party historically loses congressional seats in the first midterms because opponents angry over losing power are more motivated than the winners to vote in low-turnout midterms. But every American also should realize there will never be another normal election year in this country until Republicans free themselves from the control of their defeated president and the violent militias and hate groups that support him who refuse to accept the results of free and fair elections. Rather than distancing themselves from their divisive, unpopular president who was thrown out of office after a single term by the largest voter turnout in history, Republican leaders who know better have joined a lunatic fringe within their party in supporting Donald Trump’s preposterous lie President Biden somehow stole the election by manufacturing millions of fraudulent votes. Extreme Candidates As a result, Republicans will be saddled with a lot of extreme candidates in those November midterms they’re so confident of winning. Adding to the chaos will be Trump himself campaigning for the worst among them who are running against Republicans he wants to punish for accepting accurate election results or condemning his supporters’ terrorist attack on the Capitol. Trump is one of the best agents Democrats have to get out the vote in their party. In the past two national elections, Democrats set new voter turnout records in the 2018 midterms flipping 40 seats to gain House control and in 2020 defeating Trump. 2022 could make it three in a row. The absurd Republican candidates in the midterms include at least five running for House seats who actively participated in that violent Jan. 6 insurrection. A New Hampshire candidate promises to run from prison if he’s incarcerated for breaking into the Capitol. The Ron Johnson Opportunity Wisconsin already provided a prime opportunity in the midterms for Democrats to increase Senate control by flipping the seat held by Ron Johnson, a national embarrassment who’s denied the violence of the attack resulting in five deaths and serious brain injuries to police beaten with iron pipes, hockey sticks and baseball bats. He’s discouraged vaccinations during the latest surge of a new, highly contagious COVID variant endangering the lives of the unvaccinated. Johnson could be joined on the midterm ballot by former Republican Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch running against Democratic Gov. Tony Evers. Kleefisch enthusiastically supports Trump’s fraudulent election claims and Michael Gableman’s corrupt investigation into Biden’s victory in Wisconsin for Assembly Republicans that’s expected to recommend new Wisconsin voting restrictions. All but the most dimwitted Republican leaders have to realize how dangerous Trump and his violent supporters are to the future of democracy. But they believe they need Trump’s supporters to win the midterms. They’ll worry about controlling the contempt for democracy in their party later. By then, they’ll be the ones under control. The Good News So here’s some more positive news about how much better the political landscape could be for Democrats in those fall midterms. The media have been warning us Republican state legislatures can easily win control of the House of Representatives with their usual corrupt gerrymandering of congressional districts in response to the 2020 census. Surprise, it’s not happening. The latest analysis by David Wasserman, redistricting expert for the non-partisan Cook Political Report, concludes redistricting is on track to create a congressional map slightly less biased in favor of Republicans than it’s been for the past decade. It should actually add a few more Biden-won districts. Wisconsin was specifically cited for one of the biggest ironies. After the racist anti-Obama tea party elections of 2010, Wisconsin and other Republican states drew such extremely gerrymandered maps it’s difficult for Republicans to make them any worse. In some Republican states, nonpartisan commissions and courts also are making a difference. Here’s more positive news for Democrats you haven’t heard nearly enough about. Nobel-prize-winning economist and columnist Paul Krugman described the first year of Biden’s presidency as “a year of spectacular economic recovery.” In early November, a Federal Reserve survey of economists predicted a year-end unemployment rate of 5.8%. Instead, November’s unemployment was 4.2% declining further to 3.9% in December. If supply chain problems keep easing in the coming year to reduce inflation, Biden’s economic success will continue. Here’s more. Not even Joe Manchin or Kyrsten Sinema want their party to be the minority in the Senate after the midterms. They’ll vote for a substantial new package of Biden’s Build Back Better legislation before long to improve the everyday lives of ordinary Americans. Biden and Democrats could go into the midterms in good shape after another successful year. That would be very good news for American democracy.

### Non-unique – Roe

#### Outrage over Roe vs Wade overturn flips the script on midterms - democrats will win now

Morgan 06/24 [Morgan, David, reuters.com, “With Roe overturned, U.S. Democrats turn abortion battle to November midterms”, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/with-roe-overturned-us-democrats-turn-abortion-battle-november-midterms-2022-06-24/> Date accessed: June 24th 2022]

WASHINGTON, June 24 (Reuters) - **Leading Democrats sought to turn Friday's Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade into a rallying cry for the November elections**, warning of grim consequences for women, contraception and gay marriage if Republicans regain control of Congress. In a 5-4 ruling powered by its conservative majority, the high court overturned the 1973 landmark decision that had recognized a woman's right to an abortion, and had legalized it nationwide, for nearly half a century. The decision was greeted as a stunning victory by anti-abortion Republicans and other conservatives, while Democrats and abortion-right activists protested what they described as a step backwards for the rights of American women. But with control of the House of Representatives and the Senate at stake in the Nov. 8 midterm elections, Democrats also warned that the rights of women and others would face further dangers if Republicans regain control of Congress. "The Republicans are plotting a nationwide abortion ban. They cannot be allowed to have a majority in the Congress to do that," said House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the chamber's top Democrat, told reporters. "It is clear that we just have to win a majority in November. Everything is at stake," added Pelosi, a Catholic who was barred from taking communion last month by the archbishop of San Francisco because of her support for abortion rights. **About 71% of Americans - including majorities of Democrats and Republicans - say decisions about terminating a pregnancy should be left to a woman and her doctor, rather than regulated by the** government, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling. Democrats hope **voter anger about the Supreme Court's decision will help them retain their razor-thin margins of control in the House and Senate**. With President Joe Biden's approval rating slumping, most forecasters have so far favored Republicans' chances of winning a majority in at least the House. "This fall, Roe is on the ballot. Personal freedoms are on the ballot. The right to privacy, liberty, equality are all about it," Biden said on Friday. It was not clear how easily Democrats could use the abortion rights message to mobilize support. Despite having control of the White House and both chambers of Congress for nearly 18 months, Biden and his Democratic allies have disappointed their core supporters with repeated failures on hot-button issues including abortion, voting rights and social spending. Efforts to reform the Senate filibuster and overcome Republican opposition to the Biden agenda have been hamstrung by opposition from within their own party, specifically Democratic Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. Even their success at enacting moderate gun-safety legislation proved uninspiring to strong gun-control advocates and was overshadowed twice by the Supreme Court, which broadly expanded gun rights a day before overturning Roe v. Wade. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said voters would now have a clear choice between Democrats and "MAGA Republicans," using an acronym for allies of former President Donald Trump. "Elect more MAGA Republicans if you want nationwide abortion bans, the jailing of women and doctors and no exemptions for rape or incest. Or, elect more pro-choice Democrats to save Roe," Schumer said in a statement. House Republicans welcomed the ruling and talked openly about a path forward to "end abortion in this country." "The Supreme Court's decision overturning Roe v. Wade, overturning that flawed decision finally allows states and Congress to protect life in ways that we never were able to for the last 50 years," Representative Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, told reporters.

#### Democrats are going to win because of Roe

**Khaled ’22** ( Fatma Khaled is a staff writer at Newsweek, “Republicans Fear Abortion Ruling Will 'Bail the Dems Out' in 2024, Midterms,”, Newsweek, <https://www.newsweek.com/republicans-fear-abortion-ruling-will-bail-dems-out-2024-midterms-1719179>, 6/25/2022)

Still, some **Republicans believe** that the **Supreme Court's decision** will backfire **against their party**, including former President Donald Trump, who privately told his advisers that **overturning Roe** is "**bad** **for Republicans**" as it could potentially impact some key voters such as suburban women, The New York Times reported Friday. Jason Roe, the former executive director of the state Republican Party in Michigan, said he is "nervous" about the political implications of the Court's decision, according to Politico, because "the opportunities we should have with suburban women become more complicated when that issue is on the table, and I think it puts us on defense." One Trump adviser said that the former president is "convinced it won't help him in the future," referring to abortion, according to The Washington Post on Friday, and that it is better if other issues became the primary focus in the wake of the midterms and the 2024 election. However, the **Court's ruling** might work **in the Democrats'** favor, according to a former GOP congressman, who preferred to be anonymous. "**The** only **thing** [Democrats] have got **going for them is** the **Roe** thing, which is what, 40 years of settled law that will be changed that will cause some societal consternation," the congressman told Politico. "And can they turn that into some turnout? I think the answer is probably 'Yes.'" "Maybe instead of losing 45 seats, they lose 30," he added. "There will be a few seats that Republicans would have won without [the abortion rights decision], and they may not win them now." Meanwhile, a Republican operative familiar with polling in state and federal races, who also spoke with Politico on the condition of anonymity, noted that overturning Roe impacts swing voters who lean Republican. "It takes a sizeable bloc of voters who were leaning [Republican], and **it gives them reason to vote Democrat**," he said. "And they haven't had any reason to vote Democrat in quite a while." Political commentator S.E. Cupp told CNN on Friday that politically she "can't imagine a better voter turnout engine than this ruling for Democrats" in the midterms. "And you can make the argument that the Republicans' legislative victories and the Supreme Court victory by a conservative court are regressive, they're taking us backwards. Whether you like them or not, you can't deny the fact that they're going backwards...They're taking us back to a different time when these weren't rights," she said, and added: "It really does feel anachronistic with where the country is, and so I think that's a good message for Democrats." Newsweek reached out to political scientist at Georgetown University Hans Noel, the spokesperson for Republican political strategist Sarah Longwell, and Republican political strategist Danny Diaz for comment.

### Uniqueness overwhelms

#### The Democrats will be wiped out – history, Biden approval, inflation, secondary issues

Hulsman 5-14 [John C. Hulsman is the president and managing partner of John C. Hulsman Enterprises, a prominent global political risk consulting firm. 5-14-2022 The Case For A Republican Clean Sweep In The 2022 Midterms – OpEd Eurasia Review https://www.eurasiareview.com/14052022-the-case-for-a-republican-clean-sweep-in-the-2022-midterms-oped/] 6-26-2022

In 2020, my firm reached one of its peaks, correctly calling close but clear wins for the Democrats in the House of Representatives and the presidency, as well as precisely predicting the 50-50 split in the Senate. For all our pride in this, the 2022 midterms are just around the corner, with a new set of political imperatives that need to be mastered. So, without further ado, here we go: The 2022 midterms will result in a Republican wipeout of the Democrats, with the GOP gaining upwards of 30 seats in the House and one or two in the Senate, giving them full control of the Congress. Here is the case for our bold prediction.

First, the historical record is squarely against President Joe Biden and the Democrats. Since 1870, only four elections out of 38 resulted in the party holding the White House losing fewer than five seats, which is the size of the party’s present paper-thin majority in the House. Traditionally, the country tends to have so-called buyer’s remorse after the first two years of a presidency, either faulting the new team for failing to live up to its campaign promises or conversely fearing the new White House is trying to do too much. In either case, the opposition party has been supported 34 out of 38 times as an institutional check on the new president’s power.

The rare exceptions to these overwhelming numbers merely prove the rule. Only exceptional circumstances (such as George W. Bush benefiting from the rally-round-the-flag sentiment prevailing after 9/11) or presidents possessing exceptional political skills (such as Franklin Roosevelt and Bill Clinton) buck this historical near-inevitability.

To put it mildly, Biden has neither of these attributes going for him. In the past generation, the best guide to a party’s congressional results has been the president’s approval numbers, as House elections have increasingly become nationalized referendums on the occupant of the White House. The RealClearPolitics’ average of polling finds Biden’s approval ratings under water, with only 42 percent supporting him, while 53 percent disapprove of the job he has been doing. Far from bucking the historical trend, Biden’s polling looks set to make it even worse than usual.

Second, out-of-control 8 percent inflation is seen as by far the most important issue in polling and the Biden White House entirely owns it. No one is buying that this is “Putin’s price hike,” as the president has feebly taken to saying in an effort to pass the policy failure on to the Russian leader. This is not working out in the country for the simple reason that the beast of inflation had already loosed its chains well ahead of the Ukraine war starting in late February. The timing simply does not work for rampant inflation to be anything other than primarily a Western institutional failure.

While spikes in energy and food prices have resulted directly from the conflict, they amount to only the icing on the cake. As former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers has made incisively clear, the Biden White House and the Federal Reserve greatly overestimated the damage the COVID-19 pandemic would do. As a result, the overegged economy had to deal with 15 percent extra federal spending even as it quickly bounced back. The obvious result of this pouring gasoline on to a roaring fire is the present 8 percent-plus inflation the US has and the cost-of-living crisis that flows naturally from it. Stagflation (the US economy declined in the first quarter of the year) absolutely destroyed the presidency of Jimmy Carter 40 years ago. It is now doing the same to the hapless Biden White House.

Third, a series of important but secondary issues — all seen as traditional weaknesses of the Democratic Party — are coming back to bite them. A crime wave in American inner cities has been blamed on earlier suicidal calls by the left wing of the party to defund the police. And illegal immigration at the southern border, another traditional weakness of the party, has swollen to a torrent. Finally, America’s families are sick of recalcitrant (overwhelmingly Democratic) teachers’ unions who indefensibly seem to want their members to stay home for ever, however badly the country’s children are doing educationally after years of distance learning. Parents blame the unions for this calamity, along with their woke allegiance to a critical race theory that paints America as irredeemably racist. The self-hatred of the Democratic progressive left is generally a bad political platform; it is badly wounding the party in general.

Worse still for the Democrats, none of these things are likely to change. The historical numbers are what they are; inflation is unlikely to dramatically trend downwards, and immigration and the crime wave will not be greatly altered in the next few months. There is no avoiding the reality that a Democratic Party wipeout in the midterms is by far the most likely outcome of the 2022 race. This call is an easy one to make.

#### Clean sweep for GOP – history, Biden, coalition, generic ballot, candidate strength, enthusiasm, fundraising, primary turnout

Greenblatt 5-27 [Alan Greenblatt -- Senior Staff Writer. Alan covers politics as well as policy issues for Governing. He is the coauthor of a standard textbook on state and local governments. He previously worked as a reporter for NPR and CQ and has written about politics and culture for many other outlets, print and online., 5-27-2022 You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year Governing https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year] 6-26-2022

For Democrats this year, the only real question is whether the elections will be only moderately bad or completely terrible. If you think like a weather forecaster, all kinds of data point to a major storm. By basically every metric you can think of — fundraising, candidate recruitment, voter enthusiasm, demographic shifts — a big wave is forming that will sweep hundreds of Democrats out of office, up and down the ticket. The main reason isn’t hard to suss out. Every president can count on his party losing seats in midterms, but President Biden’s approval ratings are particularly bad. On average, 41 percent of Americans approve of the job he’s doing, compared with 54 percent who disapprove. “That is one of the lowest marks of any president since World War II,” says Henry Olsen, a conservative analyst at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. “Unless that changes, I would expect a solid Democratic defeat.” Granted, President Donald Trump’s approval ratings were similarly bargain basement in 2018 — but then, Republicans lost control of the House that year, along with seven governorships. The more important comparison, at any rate, is not with Trump but with Biden himself. Biden won the presidency in 2020 by 4.5 points. If he’s down 13, that represents a huge drop in support, which seriously imperils his party. Swing voters have swung hard against Biden. His net approval rating among independents is roughly minus 20. That’s a group he carried in 2020 by 13 points, according to exit polls. We’ve already witnessed a demonstration of how the president’s numbers can drag down other Democrats. Last November, Biden’s net disapproval numbers were 12.5 percent points lower than his victory margin in 2020. Guess what? The swing from Biden’s share of the vote to that won in 2020 by the Democratic candidates for governor was 12 points. Gov. Phil Murphy managed barely to hold on in New Jersey, but Democrat Terry McAuliffe lost the governorship to Republican Glenn Youngkin in Virginia — a state Biden had carried a year earlier by 10 points. Now, Biden’s numbers are even lower than they were back in November. This means any Democrat who won their last election by less than double-digit margins should be nervous. That certainly includes vulnerable governors such as Tony Evers of Wisconsin and Laura Kelly of Kansas. “The president’s dismal ratings are what people care about the most,” says GOP consultant David Carney. “It could be a bloodbath up and down the ballot, from the school board to Congress." There are several known unknowns that could shift the landscape between now and Nov. 8. Inflation might tick lower and the war in Ukraine may have played out in a way that helps Biden politically. Perhaps Tuesday’s school shooting in Texas will activate voters in a way that other mass shootings have failed to do. An NPR/Marist poll released last week found that the expected Supreme Court action to overturn Roe v. Wade should help energize Democrats. Sixty-six percent of Democrats said it would make them more likely to vote this fall, versus 40 percent of Republicans. “There are two big things that we don’t know yet how they will play: The first one is the Jan. 6 committee and its hearings, and the second one is this abortion decision,” says Lara Brown, a political scientist at George Washington University. “Depending on how those capture the attention of the country and different demographics, I do think that can impact the magnitude of what ever wave the Republicans are looking at.” But in the weeks since Justice Samuel Alito’s majority opinion on abortion law was leaked, there’s been no evidence of a surge in Democratic participation in primaries or early voting. Not even any real uptick. “I’d be surprised if Roe v. Wade did not energize the marginal Democratic voter, the sort that would usually vote in the presidential race but not necessarily in the midterm, but that only gets you so far,” Olsen says. “The real game is the swing voter.” Undoing Obama’s Coalition Biden’s old boss, Barack Obama, put together a winning coalition during his presidency, combining college-educated whites with young, Black and Latino voters. The danger for Democrats is that Biden appears to be unraveling that coalition. About the only groups still solidly in his camp are dedicated members of the Democratic base, such as Black voters and college-educated women. Biden carried close to two-thirds of Hispanic voters in 2020, but their shift toward Trump, compared to 2016, was notable, especially in states such as Florida and Texas. In the Texas primaries in March this year, participation in GOP primaries was up dramatically in heavily Hispanic portions of South Texas that traditionally have been overwhelmingly Democratic. An NPR/Marist poll released last month found that 52 percent of Latinos say they’re more likely to support Republican candidates for Congress; just 39 percent favor Democrats. Young voters have been a particular problem for Biden. Voters under 30 favored Biden over Trump, 60 percent to 39 percent, in 2020, but they’ve soured on him since. Biden’s approval rating among young voters has dropped by 18 points over the past year, according to a Harvard Institute of Politics poll – which is in line with what other pollsters are finding. Even as Democrats shed support among Latinos, young voters and parents, the party’s longstanding problem with working-class white voters continues to worsen. The April NPR/Marist poll found Democrats are only favored by a third of white voters without college degrees, compared to 55 percent who say they are likely to support Republicans. “The people who are left backing Biden are the people who would back any Democrat under anything except extreme circumstances,” Olsen says. “That’s a terrible place to be in for an election. You’ve lost America’s middle.” Generically Bad The NPR/Marist poll asked what is known as a generic ballot question — are you more likely to favor a Republican or a Democrat — rather than asking about any individual candidates who might be on the ballot. Candidates do matter. Republicans were notably unhappy that Pennsylvania voters decided to nominate conspiracy-minded state Sen. Doug Mastriano for governor last week, viewing him as more likely to lose in November than other potential picks. Similarly, Republican officials in Missouri are hoping another candidate can coalesce enough support to stop Eric Greitens, who resigned as governor in disgrace in 2018 amid multiple scandals, from winning nomination to the Senate. Republicans left winnable seats on the table in 2010 and 2012 by nominating “unacceptable” candidates unable to win in the general election, as Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky himself said last month. “From an atmospheric point of view, it’s a perfect storm of problems for the Democrats,” McConnell said. “How could you screw this up? It’s actually possible. And we’ve had some experience with that in the past.” McConnell was referring to the 100-seat Senate, which is currently tied. There are relatively few Democratic seats in play this year, meaning each race will count enormously. Still, Republicans have enough opportunities not only to win the majority but come away with a total of perhaps 53 or 54 seats. The GOP needs only five seats to take control of the 435-member House. Redistricting has turned out to be more or less a wash, but on net Republicans gained a slight advantage. A lot of GOP-tilted seats have been fortified against all but the worst-case scenarios, while Democrats hold more seats that are marginal. They’ll have little protection in a wave year. There’s hardly any ticket-splitting, with voters favoring candidates of one party or the other up and down the ballot. There are only 16 seats in the House where the district voted one way for president in 2020 and the other for Congress. The players matter, but sometimes the playing field matters more. In the most competitive House districts, generic Republicans are leading generic Democrats by 47 percent to 39 percent. That’s according to internal polling by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Even bad candidates can win in the right environment, which this is shaping up to be for Republicans. “We’re going to have a lot of people winning that no one ever heard of,” Carney says. Messaging and Money The abortion issue may help Democrats politically in a couple of ways. It could help inspire young voters who don’t like the GOP but aren’t Biden stans. It also gives the party something to talk about. Since the Alito leak, Democrats have been much more full-throated in support of abortion rights than Republicans have been about its demise. Democrats would like to think they can easily convince voters that Republicans can’t be trusted since they support the election lies of a twice-impeached coup leader. But if tying Republicans to Trump were a winning strategy, it would have paid off for McAuliffe in Virginia, who certainly tried it. Republicans aren’t made of Teflon. The very term “culture war” suggests there are two sides battling, so efforts to ban books or restrict the teaching of racial history and gender identity won’t play well with everyone. “The more the party focused on these culture war issues, I actually believe the less it will help them in the suburbs,” says Brown, the George Washington University professor. But culture war issues motivate the party’s base. And, to appeal to swing voters, Republicans have plenty of other clubs with which to beat Biden and the Democrats. Maybe you’ve already heard this, but inflation has jumped the most in four decades. Gas prices, already at a retail average of $4.60 per gallon, may well go higher with summer travel demand — perhaps as high as $6. Homicides have increased dramatically since 2019, fueling a return to “tough on crime” rhetoric among Republicans. It's all easy fodder for an opposition party to run on. Polls indicate that voters trust the GOP more, by significant margins, when it comes to inflation and the economy in general. Republicans are enjoying their biggest advantage regarding the crime issue in decades. All of this is reflected in how partisans are responding. The gap between the numbers of Democrats and Republicans retiring from Congress is the highest it’s been in decades. At the legislative level, Republicans are leaving fewer seats open than Democrats. Republicans raised $170 million from January to March through WinRed, an online fundraising platform. That still lags the Democrats’ ActBlue, which has traditionally been much more robust, but represents nearly a one-quarter jump for WinRed over the same period in 2020. The Republican Governors Association raised $33 million in the first quarter of the year, which was nearly $10 million more than the Democratic Governors Association. The Republican State Leadership Committee brought in just over $10 million, compared with $6.5 million for the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. Who Will Turn Out? In the end, voter behavior matters most of all. Again, the GOP has a big advantage. A slew of polls have showed large and indeed growing gaps in terms of levels of enthusiasm about voting this year between Republicans and Democrats. But we don’t have to rely strictly on polls any more. We’re still relatively early in the primary season, but Republicans are showing up in ways that Democrats are not. In the first 10 states to hold primaries this year, Republicans received 61 percent of the total vote, according to an analysis by GOP pollster John Couvillon. The party generating more enthusiasm in primaries has fared quite well in the last few midterms. Democrats received 54 percent of the primary vote in 2018 — a solid midterm year for them — while Republicans got 55 percent in both 2010 and 2014, landslide years for the party. It’s true that primary turnout isn’t a perfect measure, since not all races are equally competitive. On Tuesday, for example, Stacey Abrams was unopposed for the Democratic nomination for governor of Georgia, while GOP Gov. Brian Kemp faced a contentious, if ultimately easy, contest against former Sen. David Perdue. Turnout on the GOP side increased by a half-million votes, compared to the 2018 primary. But looking at the total picture, it’s clear more Republicans are turning out. A lot more Republicans. Overall Republican primary turnout is up 32 percent, while Democratic turnout has actually declined 3 percent. All this paints a pretty grim picture for Democrats. They’re running behind on the issues that concern voters most. Their leader is losing support among key constituencies. Their potential candidates are less likely to run, while their voters are less likely to turn out. It’s clear that Republicans will be stronger at the end of the year than they are now. It’s not yet possible to say how much stronger, but if anyone offers to bet you Democrats will retain power in Congress, take their money. At the state level, GOP victories may not be as momentous, but that’s only because they already hold majorities among governors, legislators and legislative chambers. For Republicans, it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas will fall early this year, on Nov. 8.

## Link

### A2 Win for Biden

#### Russia actually not a win for Biden in the mind of voters

Vakil 02/25/22 Caroline Vakil is currently a breaking news reporter at The Hill where I cover a range of political and national interest stories. I am especially passionate about covering housing/infrastructure and transportation. Throughout my various work experiences, I've enjoyed exploring how to apply my reporting and research across different platforms including newspapers, magazines, TV, and a podcast. “62 percent of voters say Putin wouldn’t have invaded Ukraine if Trump were president: poll” The Hill, February 25, 22, https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/595919-62-percent-of-voters-say-putin-wouldnt-have-invaded-ukraine-if-trump/

A majority of American voters say that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not have invaded Ukraine had former President Trump still been in office, according to a new survey released on Friday. A new Harvard Center for American Political Studies (CAPS)-Harris Poll survey released Friday found that **62 percent** of those polled believed Putin would **not be moving against Ukraine if Trump had been president**. When looking strictly at the answers of Democrats and Republicans, 85 percent of Republicans and 38 percent of Democrats answered this way. However, 38 percent of all Americans polled believed that Putin would have invaded Ukraine even if Trump had been president. Trump’s critics contend that the former president’s relationship with Putin was extremely cozy. For example, Trump publicly called for Russia to be admitted to the G-7 and has repeatedly criticized Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Biden administration has staunchly defended the independence of Ukraine. The House twice impeached Trump, the first time related to his opposition to providing Ukraine with military aid. A majority of Americans polled — **59 percent** — also said they believed that the Russian president moved on Ukraine because Putin **saw weakness in President Biden**, while 41 percent said that it was not a factor in Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine. Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine late Wednesday, President Biden condemned what he described as an “unprovoked and unjustified attack” and expressed solidarity with Ukraine. The U.S. has imposed sanctions on Russian financial institutions, Russian elites and their family members, the Nord Stream 2 AG — the parent company of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline — and, the White House confirmed Friday, Putin himself, among other entities. However, the U.S. has resisted calls to kick Russia out of the SWIFT international banking system, despite appeals from Ukrainian officials and some U.S. lawmakers. The polling comes after Biden has suffered low approval ratings in recent months. Since taking office, the president has had to navigate a multitude of issues, including a lingering COVID-19 pandemic, a chaotic evacuation from Afghanistan, infighting among Democrats over the administration’s legislative agenda and now the invasion of Ukraine. The Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll survey was conducted between Feb. 23 and Feb. 24 with 2,026 registered voters. The survey is an online sample drawn from the Harris Panel and weighted to reflect known demographics. As a representative online sample, it does not report a probability confidence interval.

#### No one cares about foreign policy during midterms.

Cook 22 (Charlie Cook. Cook is an American political analyst for the Cook Political Report. “Foreign Policy Unlikely to Save Democrats in the Fall”. National journal. February 2022. https://www.cookpolitical.com/analysis/national/national-politics/foreign-policy-unlikely-save-democrats-fall)

Biden’s 41 percent overall approval rating in Gallup was bracketed by a [47 percent approval on handling the coronavirus](https://news.gallup.com/poll/390086/biden-ratings-economy-foreign-affairs-russia-near.aspx), 36 percent on handling “the situation with Russia,” 37 percent on the economy, and 40 percent for foreign policy. Given how monolithic partisans are in their approval ratings and actual voting, it is always useful to look only at independents, the ‘jump ball’ Americans. Biden’s overall rating among them was 35 percent (5 points below his approval among all adults). His best marks were on dealing with the coronavirus (45 percent approval), followed by foreign policy (37 percent), Russia (35 percent), and the economy (30 percent). It is pretty clear the president and his administration’s denial of the threat of inflation and slow reaction to it was exceedingly damaging to him. (While we are on the subject, it is fascinating to see Senate Democrats, after so passionately advocating for more infrastructure spending this past year, propose suspending the gasoline tax for the rest of the year, no matter that the gas tax is the primary regular funding source for transportation infrastructure. Panic is never pretty.) While we don’t know the trajectory that the Russia/Ukraine crisis will take, and there are [many factors that can impact on midterm elections](https://www.vox.com/22899204/midterm-elections-president-biden-thermostatic-opinion), we do know that in the absence of a large number of U.S. military deaths, Americans rarely vote on foreign-policy issues, particularly in midterms. The state and direction of the economy, particularly [change in real disposable personal income](https://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/post/2022-midterm-forecast), is far more determinative. Turnout and the relative levels of enthusiasm between the two parties’ bases is key. There was a big gap heading into the 2018 midterm elections with, as usual, the party out of power much more motivated going into the fall of that year—though the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court nomination did a lot to close the gap in predominantly rural areas, which helped Republicans actually score a net gain in the Senate while getting hosed (a political science term) in the House. Right now, Democrats are the party suffering from a lack of motivation among their base. If someone wanting a read on a midterm is only going to watch two things, it should be a president’s approval rating and the [generic congressional ballot test](https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/forecasting-the-2022-midterm-election-with-the-generic-ballot/), both pretty good barometers of which way the wind is blowing and whether it’s light, moderate, or heavy.

#### The plan distracts Democrats – they need to focus on the economy to win midterms

Rosenberg 1/27/22 President, NDN and the New Policy Institute, a think tank based in Washington, DC Prominent American political strategist, thought-leader and commentator An experienced television news producer and highly regarded political strategist and thought-leader, Simon has spent three decades in national media and politics. He is a veteran of two Presidential campaigns, including a senior role in the famous 1992 Clinton War Room. In his current capacity as President of NDN/New Policy Institute, Simon advises leading politicians, Administration officials and policy makers on a wide range of issues here in the United States and abroad. He is a frequent commentator in the national media, appearing regularly in major newspapers and websites, political journals and on cable and network television. A few years ago GQ magazine named him one of the 50 most powerful people in Washington. In this past election cycle, he was a senior advisor to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, helping craft the stategy which netted the Democrats 40 seats and earned the highest vote share by either party since 1986. Simon is a graduate of Tufts University and currently serves on the board of the Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts, where he recently taught a semester-long seminar to undergraduates on American politics. He is a Henry Crown Fellow at the Aspen Institute, a member of the U.S. State Department’s Advisory Committee on International Information and Communications Policy and an advisory board member of the Open Source Elections Technology Institute. Outside of his work with NDN, Simon has advised private corporate and political clients, including Univision, Nanomix, Discourse Intelligence, and the DCCC. He and his wife, Caitlin Durkovich, and their three teenage children live in Washington, DC. “Memo: Dems Need To Focus On Winning The Economic Argument,” January 27, 22, https://www.ndn.org/memo-dems-need-focus-winning-economic-argument

Winning The Economic Argument – This week we hosted noted economist Rob Shapiro for a terrific discussion of his two recent essays in the Washington Monthly, It’s A Biden Boom – And No One Has Noticed Yet and The Biden Boom Is Bigger Than We Thought. You can watch it here. The two essays make clear that 2021 was a banner year for the American economy, one of the best in the post WWII era – 6m jobs, 5+% GDP growth, record new business formations, real wage gains for the bottom 50% of workers, 5m people gaining health insurance, booming housing and stock markets. There can be no doubt that the **vast majority** of Americans are **better off today than they were a year ago**, and given the daily adversity we all faced due to COVID, we need to tip our hats to the resilience, ingenuity and can do spirit of the American people. The question of why the electorate doesn’t understand that the economy is better, and why Americans give Republicans a big advantage on the economy right now when their recent track while in office is among the worst in American history (3 consecutive recessions) are among the most important questions in American politics today. It is very hard to see how Democrats are competitive in the elections this fall without doing something significant to change voter’s basic understanding of how just much better the economy is today, and how much better the economy has been with Democrats in power over the past 30 plus years (40m of the 42m jobs created since 1989 have been created under Democratic Presidents). As a matter of politics, changing this understanding should be the singular mission of the Democratic Party in 2022. There are many forms a big campaign like this could take, but there are two pieces which Democrats should consider right away: The DNC Leads A Big Conversation About How With Democrats Things Get Better – The DNC should take on this mission, and organize a yearlong education effort involving every element of the party across the country. Power points, videos, fact sheets, web sites should be developed, and every state and local party have to make it be their goal to be loud and proud about the achievements of Joe Biden and the Democrats more broadly this year. Language and arguments should be tested, workshopped. A large multimedia ad campaign should be developed to support the free media effort, and it should run in the second quarter of this year, from mid-April to July 4th. Every Democrat should be asked to contribute to this vital effort, and a target goal of $50m should be established. Voters need to know this information now, not in the fall – that is when candidates have to do their job. Other elements of the center-left family with resources can amplify the effort. At a strategy level the goal should be to **get the Democrats even or ahead with Republicans on the economy** by Labor Day, making it far more likely the election will be competitive this fall. A campaign like this also has the benefit of bringing the party back together around a singular mission, something we think the party can use right now. Elected Officials Do Months of Events Showing How Much Better Things Are – In research NDN did in late 2010 and early 2011, we asked voters who did they need to hear from to know a recovery was taking place. The clear answer was local business people. Voters told us that if they heard it from a brewery which had hired a few more people, or a factory that was going to two shifts, then they would believe a recovery was taking place. That work informed the work of the Obama White House, and Senate and House Democrats over the next few years as we struggled to help people understand a recovery was indeed taking place. Today’s elected Democrats should tear some pages from this playbook, and spend most of their public events in state or district in the coming months with local business people who can validate that things are better. These local leaders could also become stars in campaign ads and videos. The efforts to play up the Infrastructure Bill should be seen as part of this effort, and not stand alone; for there are limits to how much political benefit Democrats will get from things people will not see or feel before November. As the incumbent party, Democrats will be judged this fall largely on whether voters think we’ve done a good job, that things are better. Things are better, and we should spend the next 10 months relentlessly making the case that they are. Every moment we spend talking about things which will not be felt by the election should be understood now as a distraction. We have a vital argument to win this year; one we can win; and one we must win to make the elections competitive this fall. And we need to keep repeating – if we can’t get credit for what we’ve done, it’s unlikely we are going to get credit for things which haven’t happened yet. Things are better. With Democrats things are better. Things are better today than they were a year ago. Let’s get to work people. Final note – we are not as convinced as others that inflation is the central reason Democrats have struggled to break through on the economy this year. For more on that see here. We believe the central reason we haven’t broken through is that we haven’t tried hard enough. That’s a fixable thing, and what this plan tries to address. Does this plan assume the economy stays strong in 2022, and we can keep making the argument? Yep. It is the likely scenario and we should go for it.

### A2 NATO

#### Republicans support NATO expansion, Finland and Sweden will help share the load with military.

**Zengerle ’22** (Patricia Zengerle is a Correspondent for Congress and National Security in the Thomson Reuters, “U.S. Republicans Join Democrats in Backing NATO Expansion Despite Rising Nationalism,” U.S.News, 5/23/2022, https://www.usnews.com/news/top-news/articles/2022-05-23/u-s-republicans-join-democrats-in-backing-nato-expansion-despite-rising-nationalism)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Democratic and Republican U.S. Senate leaders introduced a resolution on Monday backing Sweden and Finland's bids to join NATO, underscoring support for expanding the alliance despite growing nationalism in the Republican party. It will take a two-thirds majority in the 100-member Senate to approve the expansion of the alliance, requiring "yes" votes from at least 17 Republicans along with every Democrat. Many U.S. Republicans have been following the lead of former President Donald Trump - the party's leader - toward more nationalist foreign policy. Trump accused **NATO allies** of **not spending enough on their own defense** and excessively **burdening** **the U**nited **S**tates. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has prompted Finland and Sweden to apply to join NATO. In the Senate, 11 Republicans voted "no" last week against legislation providing $40 billion to help Ukraine, with some saying they wanted the funds director to Americans. Last month, 63 Republican members of the House of Representatives, nearly one-third of the full caucus, opposed a bill reaffirming U.S. support for NATO. The top Senate Republican, Mitch McConnell, and Jim Risch, the top Republican on the foreign relations panel, joined Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and committee chairman Bob Menendez and other senators in introducing the resolution. "We fully support their application to become NATO members and are looking forward to their swift ascension in the coming months," Menendez said in a statement. McConnell referred to **Finland and Sweden** as "strong countries with formidable military capabilities" and said in his statement, "both nations' robust defense funding means their accession **would** meaningfully **bolster our pursuit of greater burden-sharing across the alliance**. I fully support the Senate providing its advice and consent as quickly as possible." (Reporting by Patricia Zengerle; editing by Grant McCool)

#### GOP supports NATO unification, Ukraine a reason.

Livingston 4-6 [Abby Livingston, Washington Bureau Chief, The Texas Tribune 4-6-2022 Texas Republicans who opposed resolution supporting NATO criticize and question its language Texas Tribune https://www.texastribune.org/2022/04/06/congress-nato-support-texas-representatives/] 6-27-2022

**Republican** U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul of Austin is the top House Republican on foreign affairs and voted to **support NATO**. On Wednesday, he sported a blue-and-gold Ukrainian ribbon on his suit jacket at the Capitol. He told The Texas Tribune that **NATO countries are “stepping up**” in ways some countries had **lagged before**. A frequent conservative critique of NATO is that many European countries fall short of the expected standard that all member countries spend at least 2% of their GDP on defense. “NATO is more unified than it’s ever been. Germany now is putting in 2% of their GDP. And they are sending weapons and they are training,” he said. NATO bonds further frayed in recent years, as Trump regularly railed against the alliance. But his criticism did lead to several NATO countries deciding to increase their **defense spending**. Everything changed six weeks ago when Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, a country on the Eastern European frontier that long aspired to join the organization. Several NATO countries located near Ukraine, like Poland, are most impacted by the refugee exodus from Ukraine. At the heart of NATO is an agreement among all 30 countries known as Article 5, which states an attack on one NATO member country is an attack on all NATO allies. The 9/11 attacks on the United States are the single time in the alliance’s existence that Article 5 has been invoked. Former NATO Ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchison addressed the vote in an interview with the Tribune on Wednesday. Hutchison carefully noted she had not read the language in the House resolution but insisted the political establishment is behind NATO. “I know we have **bipartisan support for NATO** — I know that,” she told Tribune CEO Evan Smith, pointing to her former colleagues in the U.S. Senate. “We have that bipartisan support,” she later added. “I’ve seen it.” **U.S. Rep**. Colin Allred, a Dallas Democrat who serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, seemed mystified that so many Texans voted against a resolution supporting **NATO**, noting that the last two Republican presidents prior to Trump — George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush — were NATO boosters. “I really don’t know what to make of it,” he said. “We’ve seen how **important** it is, and I find it really hard to understand.”

### Election interference

#### Foreign interference won’t affect outcomes—no external internet accessibility and too many built in redundancies.

Shaban 16 [Hamza Shaban, Hamza Shaban is a technology policy reporter for BuzzFeed News and is based in Washington, D.C. State Election Officials Confront Fears Of Election Day Hacking, BuzzFeed, 9-9-2016, Accessible Online at https://www.buzzfeed.com/hamzashaban/state-election-officials-confront-fears-of-election-day-hack?utm\_term=.tkb76qeB8#.ju2VRwDeK] SW 9-14-2016

A month after 20,000 private emails from the Democratic National Committee were published online, election officials across the country received a series of warnings from the FBI: Hackers were targeting states’ election websites and, in at least one case, were able to steal voter registration data. The Department of Homeland Security has since created an election cybersecurity action campaign, and US intelligence officials have begun investigating the possibility of a covert Russian intelligence operation that seeks to undermine the integrity of the American election.

But despite the growing concerns over foreign meddling coming from Congress, intelligence experts, and the Clinton campaign, state election officials say American voters have little to fear.

“There are over 9,000 jurisdictions that operate elections at a very local level, so that’s both a blessing and a curse,” Denise Merrill, Connecticut’s secretary of state and president of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), a nonpartisan organization that represents the country’s top state election officials, told BuzzFeed News. “It really saves us from worrying too much about cybersecurity — we have other concerns, but that’s kind of not one of them.”

Merrill was appointed by NASS to join Homeland Security’s special working group on election cybersecurity. The group’s goal is to build closer ties between the federal government and local election officials, and also to consider designating state voting systems as “critical infrastructure,” akin to dams and power grids, granting election offices additional resources and protections from the federal government.

Merrill, along with the secretaries of state and election officials representing California, Florida, Ohio, Minnesota, Colorado, and Iowa, told BuzzFeed News that pre–Election Day simulations, paper trail audits, and the fact that voting machines are not connected to the web provide strong safeguards to the electoral system.

State election officials emphasized that the recent hack into voter registration databases differs from the risks faced by their offices, because these databases aren’t directly tied to voting on Election Day and because voting machines cannot be accessed remotely through the internet. “That’s the voter registration system, which is not at all connected to the actual voting,” Merrill said, adding that in almost every state, voter registration is completed on paper. “There are backup paper systems for every process in our election, and that means cybersecurity is not the concern that it’s being portrayed to be nationally.”

### Emerging tech

#### Americans don’t support emerging tech legislation

Zhang 19 [Baobao Zhang . "Public opinion lessons for AI regulation". 12-10-2019. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/research/public-opinion-lessons-for-ai-regulation. 6-23-2022.] -AL

An overwhelming majority of the American public believes that artificial intelligence (AI) should be carefully managed. Nevertheless, as the three case studies in this brief show, the public does not agree on the proper regulation of AI applications. Indeed, population-level support of an AI application may belie opposition by some subpopulations. Many AI applications, such as facial recognition technology, could cause disparate harm to already vulnerable subgroups, particularly ethnic minorities and low-income individuals. In addition, partisan divisions are likely to prevent government regulation of AI applications that could be used to influence electoral politics. In particular, the regulation of content recommendation algorithms used by social media platforms has been highly contestable. Finally, mobilizing an influential group of political actors, such as machine learning researchers in the campaign against lethal autonomous weapons, may be more effective in shifting policy debates than mobilizing the public at large. Algorithms used to recommend content on social media have increasingly come under scrutiny. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube use machine learning to suggest media content and advertisements that optimize for user engagement. Civil society groups and researchers have expressed concerns that these algorithms help spread misinformation, proliferate digital propaganda, create partisan echo chambers, and promote violent extremism. Unlike facial recognition technology that could more readily be managed at the local or state level, social media platforms have users across the U.S. and around the world. California has sought to regulate online bots and protect consumer privacy, setting the terms of the debate for federal regulations. However, it remains to be seen if the federal government will follow the way of California or oppose the state’s policies. In the U.S., legislation to regulate social media platforms has stalled because of the divergent policy priorities of the two parties. In light of Russian intervention in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Congress has held several hearings to investigate and castigate tech companies. The techlash from the left and the right are different: Democrats prioritize the prevention of digital manipulation and consumer privacy while Republicans focus on alleged bias against conservatives. Democratic senators have introduced legislation that would increase transparency for online campaign advertisements and require tech companies to safeguard users’ sensitive data. Republican lawmakers have accused social media platforms of censoring conservative viewpoints, despite evidence to the contrary. The Trump White House is reportedly drafting an executive order to combat this alleged bias. The American public is concerned about the lack of accountability by tech companies that operate social media platforms, but does not agree on policy solutions. According to a report from the Pew Research Center, 51% of the U.S. public thinks that tech companies should be regulated more than they are now. At the same time, Americans indicate that they have greater trust in tech companies than the U.S. federal government to manage the development and use of AI in the best interests of the public, per data from the Center for the Governance of AI. The public is evenly split on whether there should be regulation of content recommendation algorithms based on political affiliations or political viewpoints, according to a 2017 Harvard/Harris Poll survey. The partisan division among lawmakers in Congress is also reflected in public opinion. There exists a stark asymmetry in how Republicans and Democrats perceive bias in social media platforms and tech companies. While 54% of Republicans think it is very likely that social media platforms censor political viewpoints, only 20% of Democrats do, according to a survey from the Pew Research Center. Conversely, while 53% of Democrats think major tech companies support the views of liberals and conservatives equally, only 28% of Republicans feel the same way. With political gridlock hindering governmental regulation of algorithms used by social media platforms, tech companies have tried to answer their critics through industry self-regulation. Nevertheless, industry self-regulation is not immune to underlying conflicts in American politics. For instance, Google’s AI ethics board dissolved after the company’s employees and outside civil society groups protested the inclusion of Heritage Foundation president Kay Coles James and drone company CEO Dyan Gibbens on the board.