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Tim Sheehy, Montana's Republican Senate candidate, addresses former President Donald Trump's rally in Bozeman, Mont., Aug. 9. Control of the Senate appears likely to flip this fall, as one of the most endangered Democrats, Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, trails Sheehy in polls.

# Republicans poised to take control of Senate, poll shows

BY SHANE GOLDMACHER  
NYT News Service

Control of the Senate appears likely to flip from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party this fall, as one of the nation's most endangered Democrats, Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, trails his Republican challenger in his bid for reelection, according to a new poll from The New York Times and Siena College.

Tester, who first won election to the Senate in 2006, is winning over moderate and independent voters and running far ahead of the Democrat at the top of the ticket, Vice President Kamala Harris. But that does not appear to

be enough to survive in Montana, a conservative state where former President Donald Trump is ahead by 17 percentage points and where control of the Senate hangs in the balance.

Tim Sheehy, a wealthy Republican businessperson and a former Navy SEAL who has never held public office, leads Tester 52% to 44%, the poll shows. Sheehy's lead is a 7-point advantage without rounding.

Democrats currently hold a 51-seat Senate majority. But with Republicans already set to pick up a seat after the retirement of Sen. Joe Manchin, I-W.Va., who caucuses with Democrats, the party cannot afford to lose additional seats.

In fact, the party's only hope is to secure a 50-50 split and to have Harris win the White House, allowing her running mate, Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota, to provide the crucial tie-breaking vote as vice president.

At least seven other Democratic-held Senate seats are competitive this fall, including in the presidential battlegrounds of Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada and Wisconsin. In late September, a series of Times/Siena surveys in four of those races, as well as in Ohio, found Democrats ahead, though narrowly in some cases.

The problem is that the Democratic Party has scarce opportunities to flip any Republican-held seats in 2024 to make up for any potential losses, such as in Montana.

The best opportunity, according to new Times/Siena polling, may be in Texas, which Democrats have long dreamed of flipping but where they have fallen well short in recent years. Sen. Ted Cruz, a Republican seeking his third term, leads his Democratic challenger, Rep. Colin Allred, 48% to 44%, according to a Times/Siena poll in Texas.

And in Florida, a Times/Siena poll found that Sen. Rick Scott, the Republican incumbent, is comfortably ahead of Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, his Democratic rival, by an even wider margin, 49% to 40%.

Both Cruz and Scott lead by smaller margins in their states than Trump is ahead of Harris.

A third potentially competitive Republican-held seat has emerged in recent weeks, though the reelection bid of Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb., was not included in the polls. Fischer is running against an independent, Dan Osborn, and Republicans have recently come to her campaign's aid with advertising.

# Millions without power as Florida begins recovery

BY JOHN YOON  
NYT News Service

Florida residents were returning to their homes Friday to begin a long recovery after Hurricane Milton carved a path of destruction through the state. Millions of customers remained without power.

The storm leveled homes along its path, flooded coastal communities and areas of central Florida, and spawned deadly tornadoes on the state's Atlantic Coast.

Florida's preparations – including its building code and dire warnings from officials that prompted

one of the largest evacuations in the state's history – probably limited the impact. The hurricane also largely spared the densely populated cities in the Tampa Bay area from the high storm surge that officials had feared.

Still, Milton killed at least 13 people, most of them in the eastern part of Florida. The cleanup from the damage could take weeks or months for some residents, many of whom were still recovering from Hurricane Helene two weeks ago.

Here's what we're covering:

● **Rising death toll:** Officials attributed at least 13 deaths in Florida to the

storm. They were killed by tornadoes, falling trees and medical emergencies during the storm, and in cleanup efforts afterward, officials said.

● **Rescues and recovery:** More than 990 people have been rescued since Milton made landfall Wednesday night, officials said. Thousands of rescue workers and National Guard troops were deployed to save people and address flooding and infrastructure damage, including to roads and the drinking water system.

● **Power outages:** More than 2 million customers remained in the dark across Florida as of Friday morning. At one point Thursday, more than 3.4 million were without power, according to the website poweroutage.us. Officials were working to fix power lines and in some places use generators as a temporary measure.



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