

The American Revolution and Independence (1775-1783)

In 1761, after the French Indian wars, tension grew between the American thirteen colonies and George III's Great Britain.

The colonists resented being heavily taxed by Great Britain (to finance the military defence of the territories) while not being represented in the British parliament as British citizens.

The **1765 Stamp Act** triggered general opposition and the tax was never collected. Groups of patriots were formed to advocate the principle of "no taxation without representation".

In **December 1773** they organized the destruction of shiploads of British tea in the harbour of Boston, an episode known as the "**Boston Tea Party**" to protest against undue Tea tax.

A first **Continental Congress** gathered in Philadelphia in 1774 to oppose British taxation and the revolutionary war started in 1775 with the battle of Lexington and Concord (April 1775), won by militia men who fought to protect weapon supplies collected in Concord and attacked by British troops.

Declared traitors to the British Crown, the members of the Congress signed the **Declaration of Independence** of the United States of America on **July 4th 1776**.

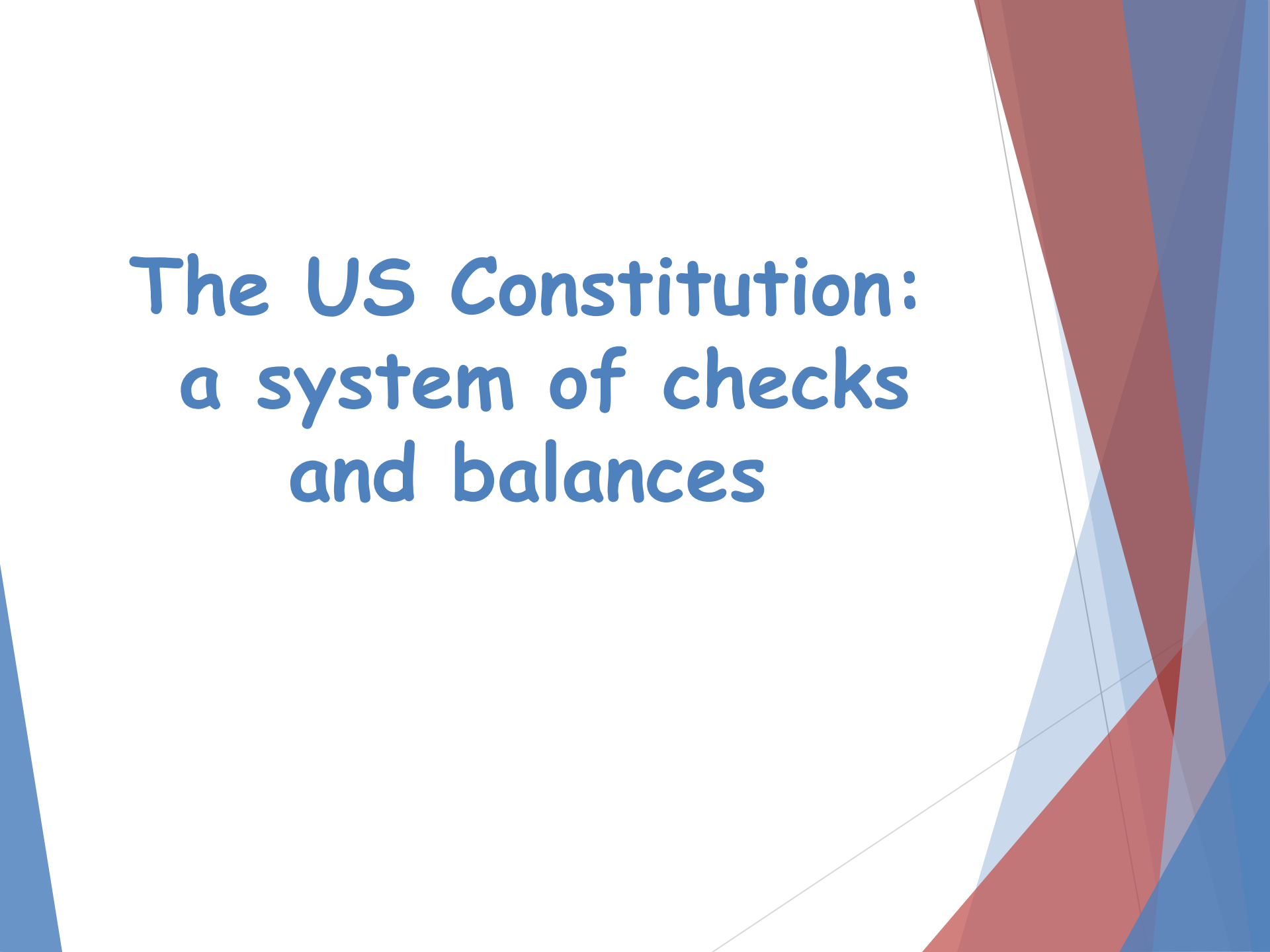
Its second sentence reads:

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'

- ❖ In 1777 the new nation adopted "**The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union**" a first step toward the **1787 Constitution**.
- ❖ The American victory at the battle of Saratoga (New York State) in 1777 is seen as the turning point of the war.
- ❖ **The support of foreign allies** also proved decisive in the conflict: secretly supplying the colonies with weapons and ammunitions since 1776, France openly entered the war in 1778 together with Spain and the Dutch Republic.
- ❖ The war came to an end in **1783** with the **Treaty of Paris** by which Great Britain officially recognized the USA as an **independent nation**.

The milestone documents

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/list>



The US Constitution: a system of checks and balances

The Constitution was influenced by **the Enlightenment**,
by Montesquieu's view on the necessity to separate the
three branches of power
by John Locke's view on the necessity to limit the
powers of governments to protect man's natural rights

- The US Constitution was adopted by the thirteen States in 1788.
- 27 amendments were added to its original text.
- The 1st Amendment (1791, part of the *Bill of Rights*, i.e. the fundamental first 10 Amendments) asserts the freedom of speech, of the press, the right to assembly and to practice one's religion freely.
- The 13th Amendment (1865) abolished slavery.
- The 14th established the right to vote for all citizens (1870).

The constitution is based on four founding principles

- Republicanism (and its corollary, popular representation)
- Separation of powers
- Federalism
- Defense of personal liberties
- A rampart protecting citizens against arbitrary rules or absolutism: proper representation of people, direct suffrage, limitation of elective terms.
- The separation of powers is a protection against an excessive concentration of authority and works on the basis of regular checks and balances.



3 BRANCHES of GOVERNMENT



Constitution

(provides a separation of powers)



Legislative (makes laws)



Congress



Senate

100 elected senators total;
2 senators per state



House of Representatives

435 elected representatives total;
representatives based on each state's population



Executive

(carries out laws)



President



Vice President



Cabinet

Nominated by the president and must be approved by the Senate (with at least 51 votes)



Judicial

(evaluates laws)

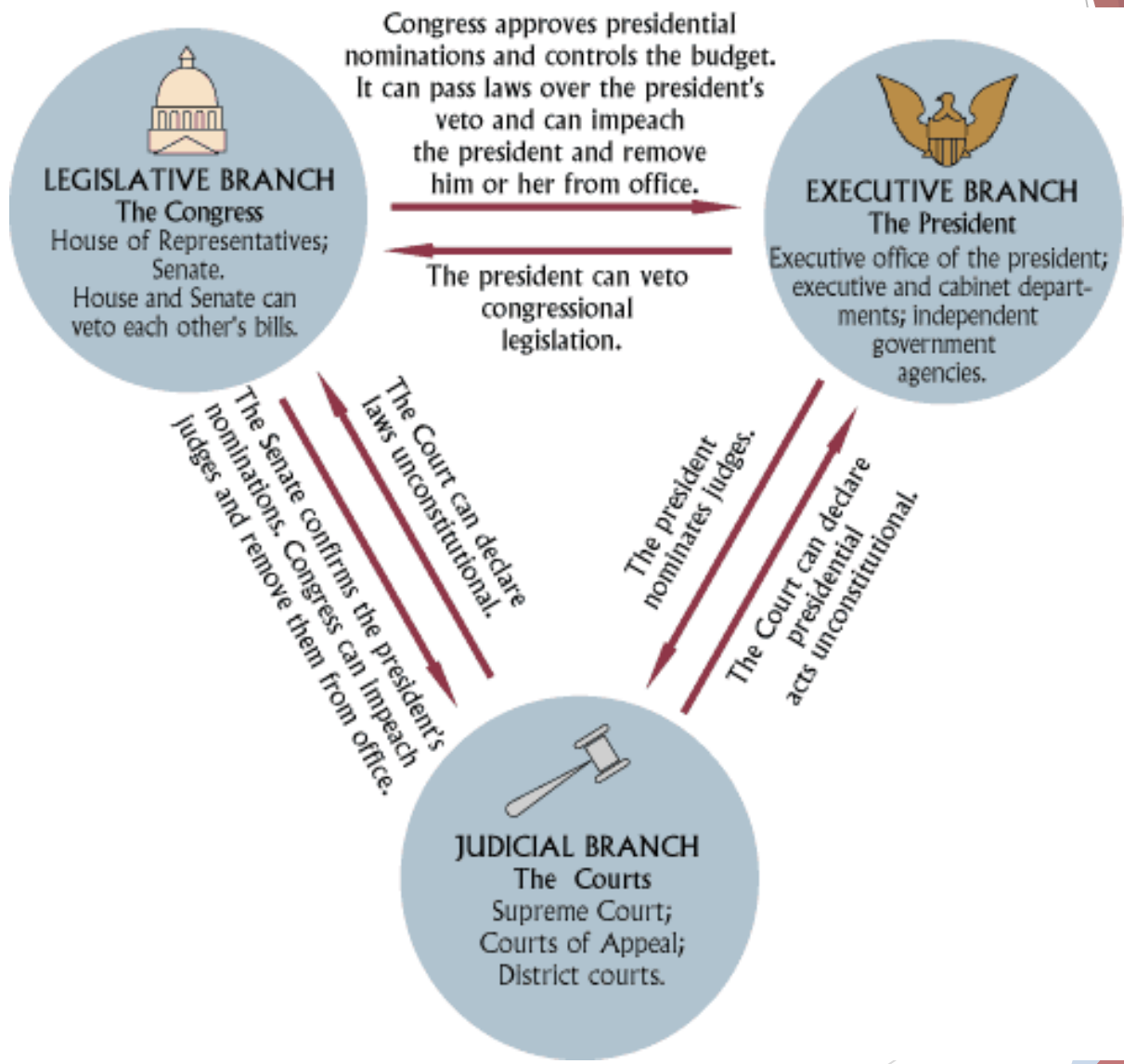


Supreme Court

9 justices nominated by the president and must be approved by the Senate (with at least 51 votes)



Other Federal Courts



THE BALANCE OF POWERS

- The veto procedure allows the president to exercise a limited legislative power (since his veto can be overruled by a second vote in Congress with a two-third majority)
- Congress may **impeach** a President (i.e. charge him with an offence committed in office) on condition that the House should approve the articles of impeachment and the Senate should then confirm the decision by a two-third majority vote.
- The executive holds the power to nominate Supreme Court judges (with the consent of the Senate), but the latter being appointed for life can exercise control over the laws passed in Congress and the President's decisions, regardless of political conditions or party rule.

The legislative branch

Congress: The Capitol



The House of Representatives

- chaired by the **House Speaker** who belongs to the majority party (the third most important political figure after the President and the Vice president).
- There are **435 Representatives** elected for **two years**: their number in each state is in proportion to its population (hence a decennial census conducted every year ending in "0"). There is no limit in the number of terms.
- Only the House of Representatives can bring charges of **impeachment** and introduce revenue bills.

A few maps to help



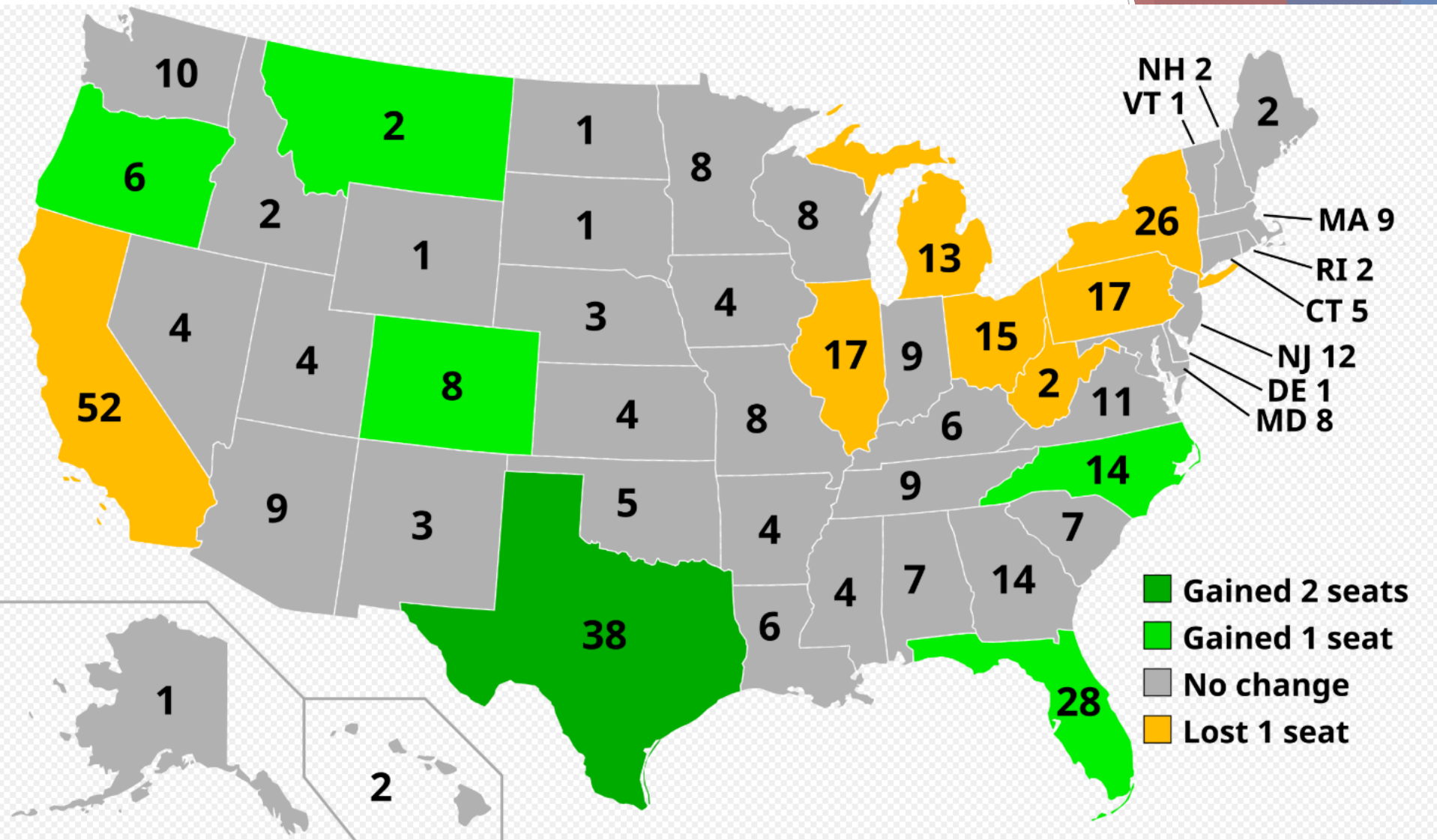
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/19th_Congressional_District_National_Wall_Map.pdf

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/map>

Congressional districts in the United States are electoral divisions for the purpose of electing members of the United States House of Representatives.

The number of voting seats within the House of Representatives is currently set at 435, with each one representing an average of 761,169 people following the 2020 United States census. The number of voting seats has applied since 1913

The Bureau of the Census conducts a constitutionally mandated decennial census whose figures are used to determine the number of congressional districts to which each state is entitled, in a process called "apportionment".



- Each state is responsible for the redistricting of districts within their state
- Redistricting must take place if the number of members changes following a re-apportionment,
- or may take place at any other time if demographics represented in a district have changed substantially.
- Setting the boundaries of states' congressional districts is the responsibility of state governments, who often **gerrymander** districts for various reasons

U.S. House Election Results

Republicans have won a majority in the House, but some of those seats could become vacant as members join the [Trump administration](#).

215
Democrats

220
Republicans

+2 net gain

218
FOR CONTROL



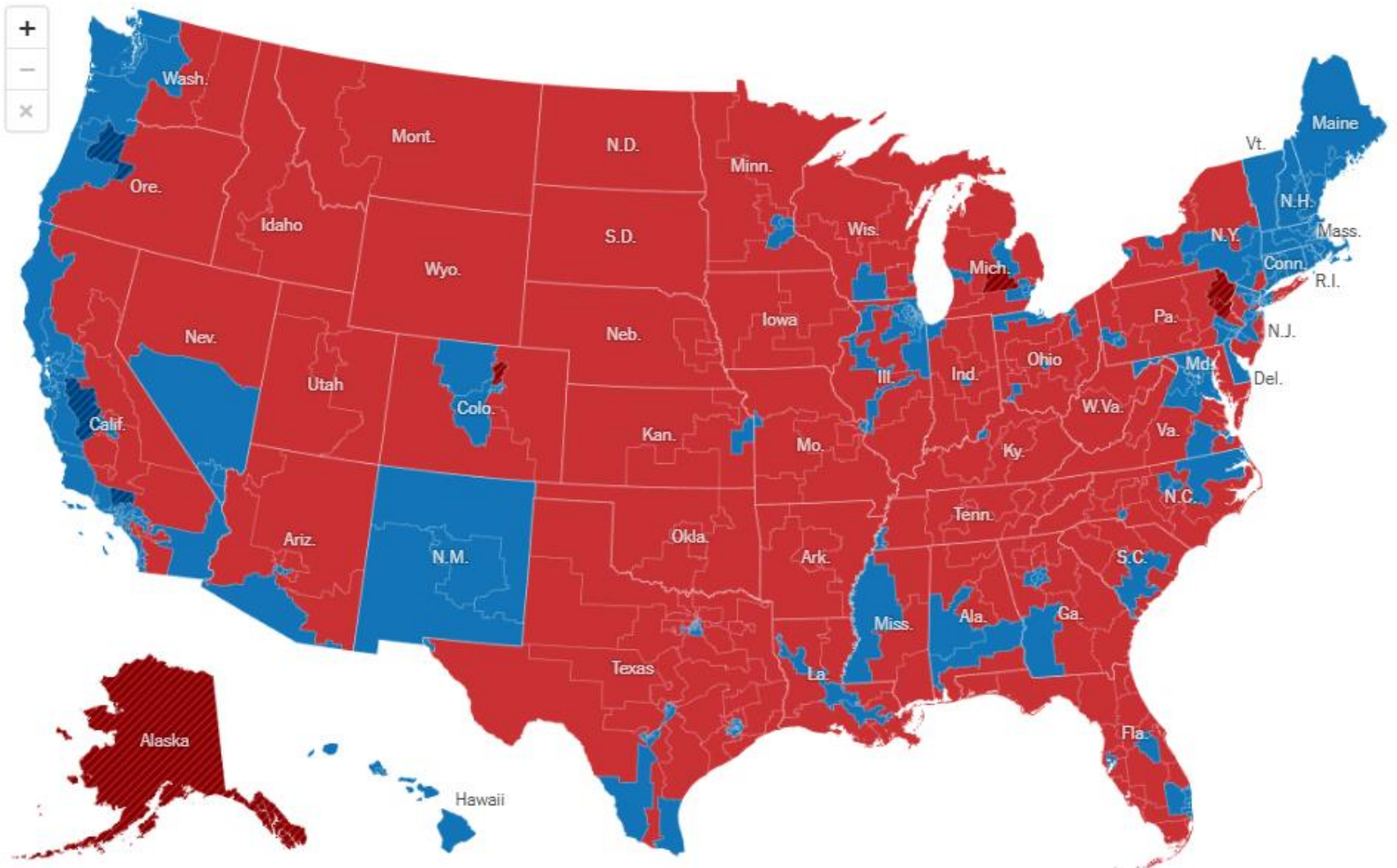
Proportional map

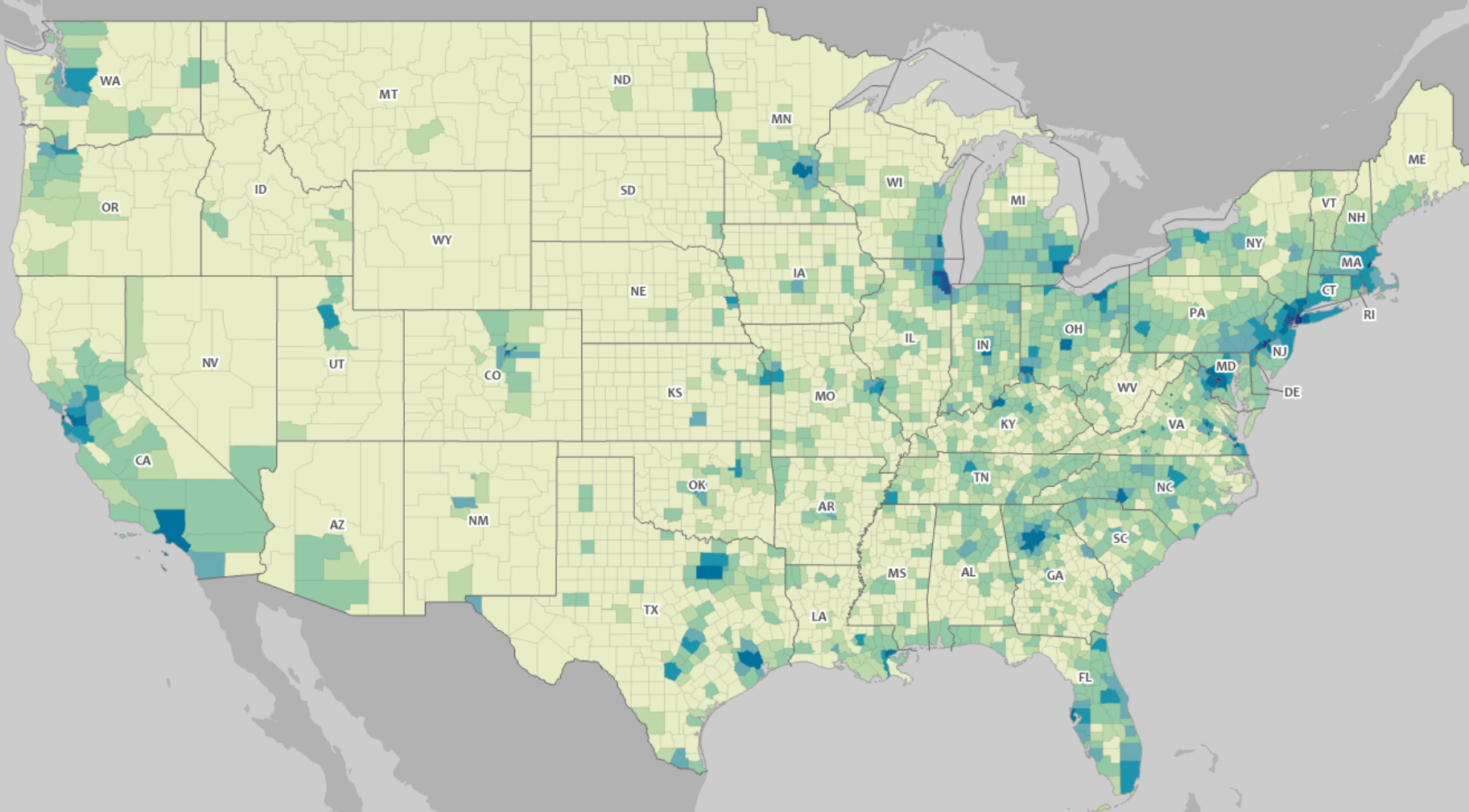


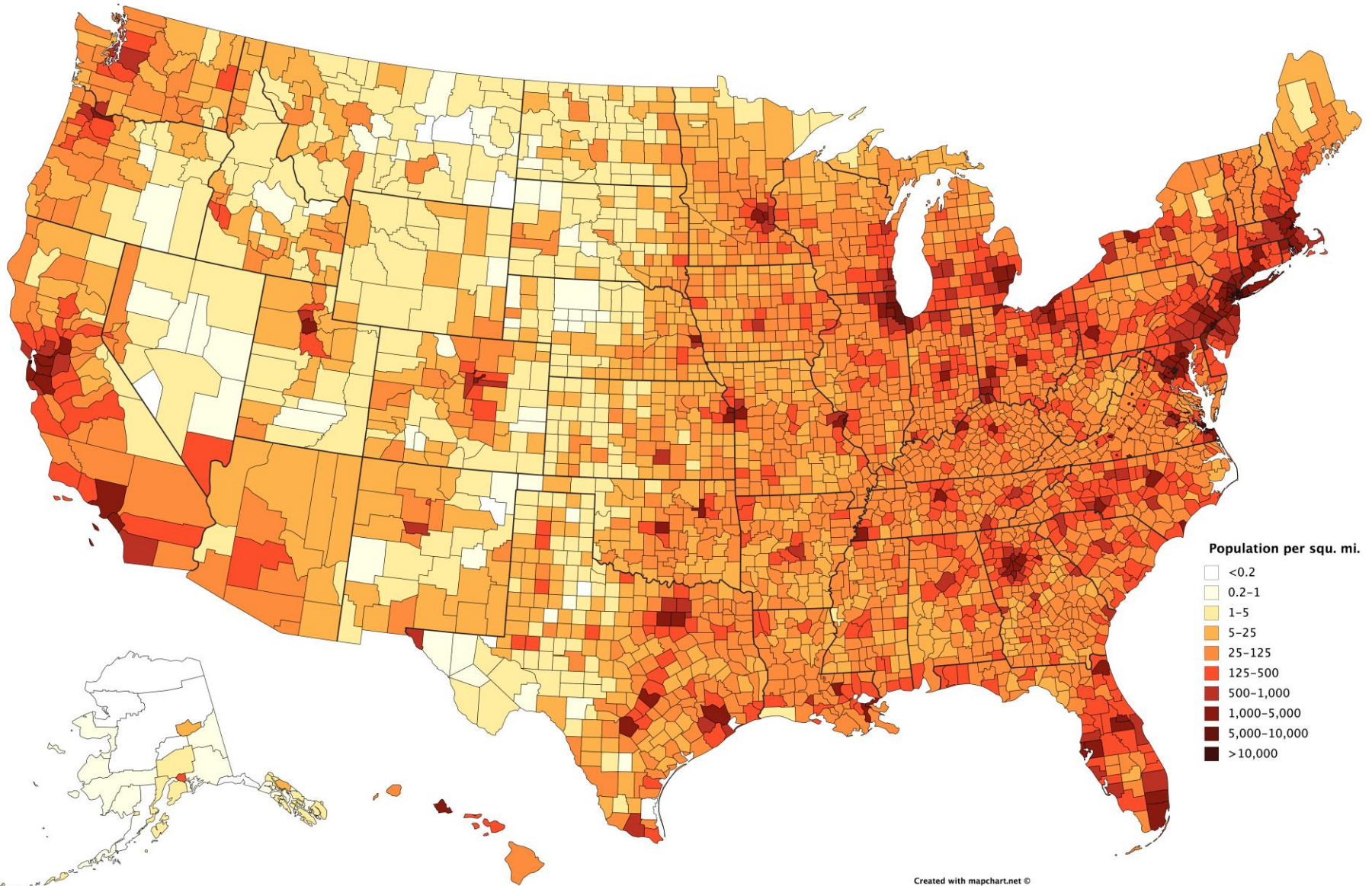
District map



Flips are not shown for states with new district boundaries.



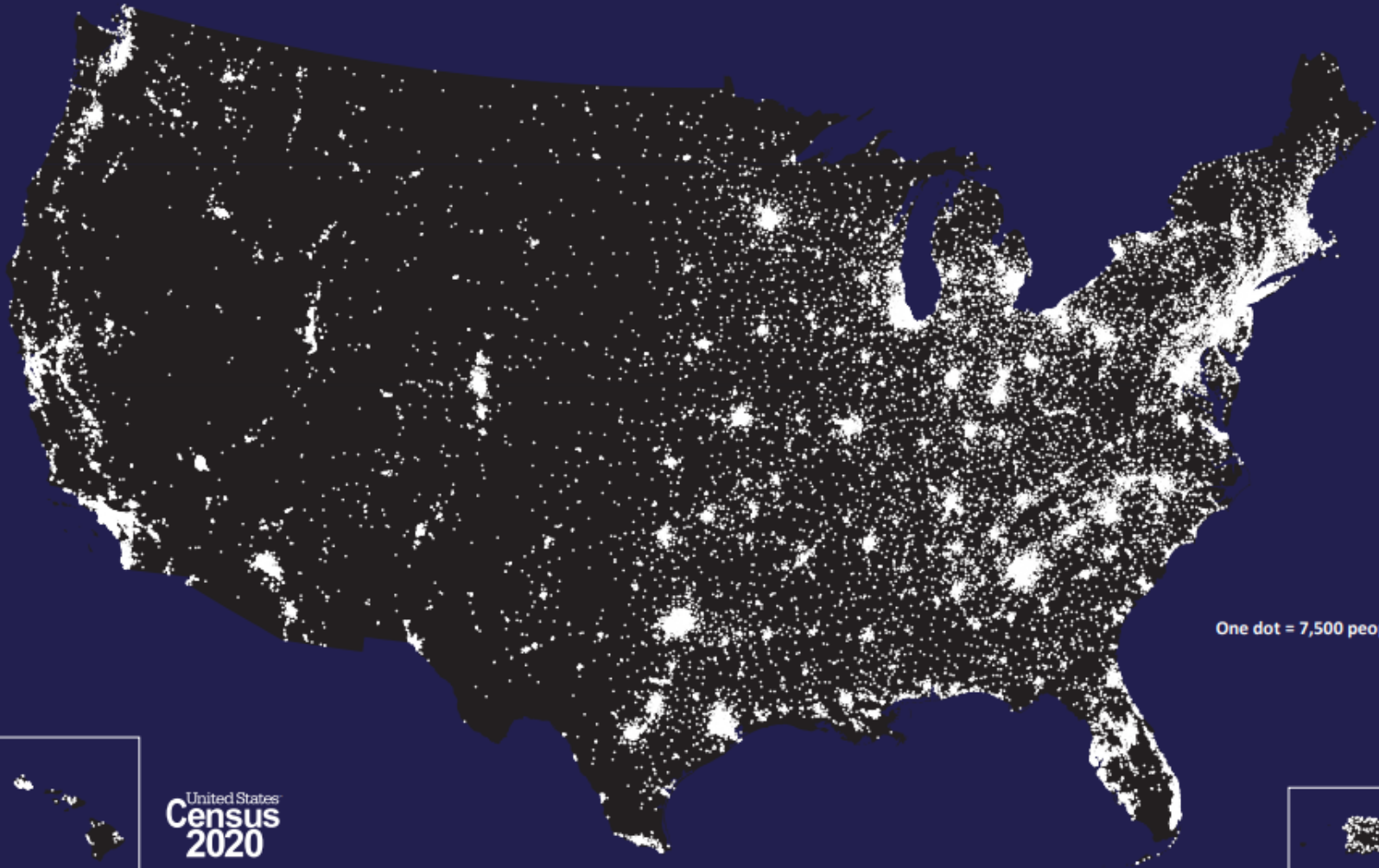




Population per squ. mi.

- <0.2
- 0.2-1
- 1-5
- 5-25
- 25-125
- 125-500
- 500-1,000
- 1,000-5,000
- 5,000-10,000
- >10,000

2020 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES AND PUERTO RICO



One dot = 7,500 people

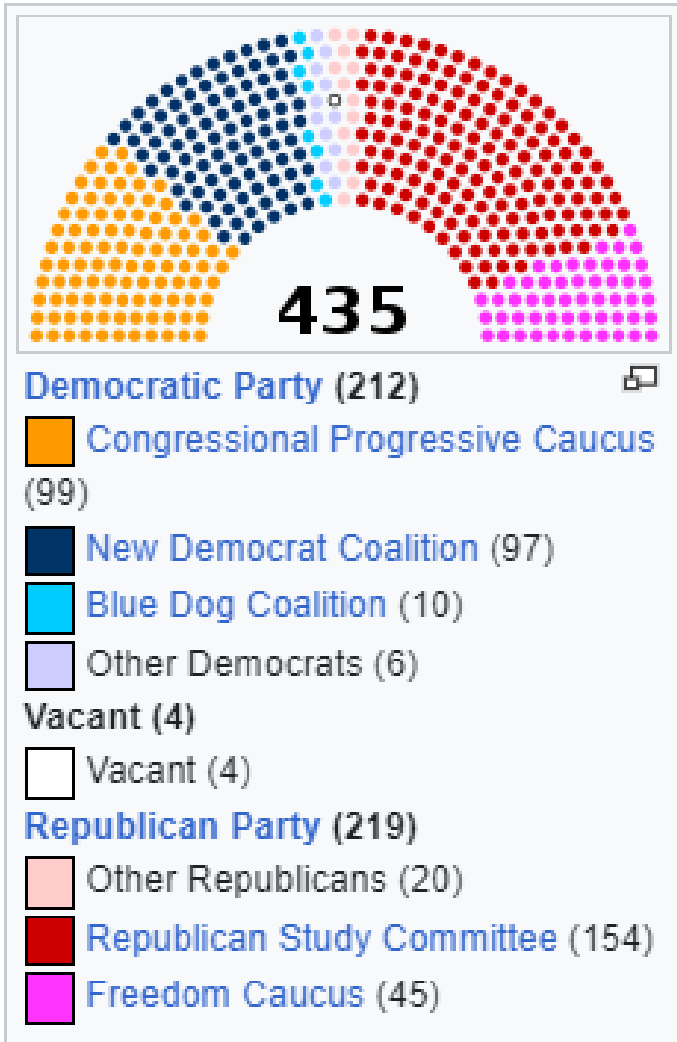


United States
Census
2020



2020 Census results

<https://maps.geo.census.gov/ddmv/map.html>



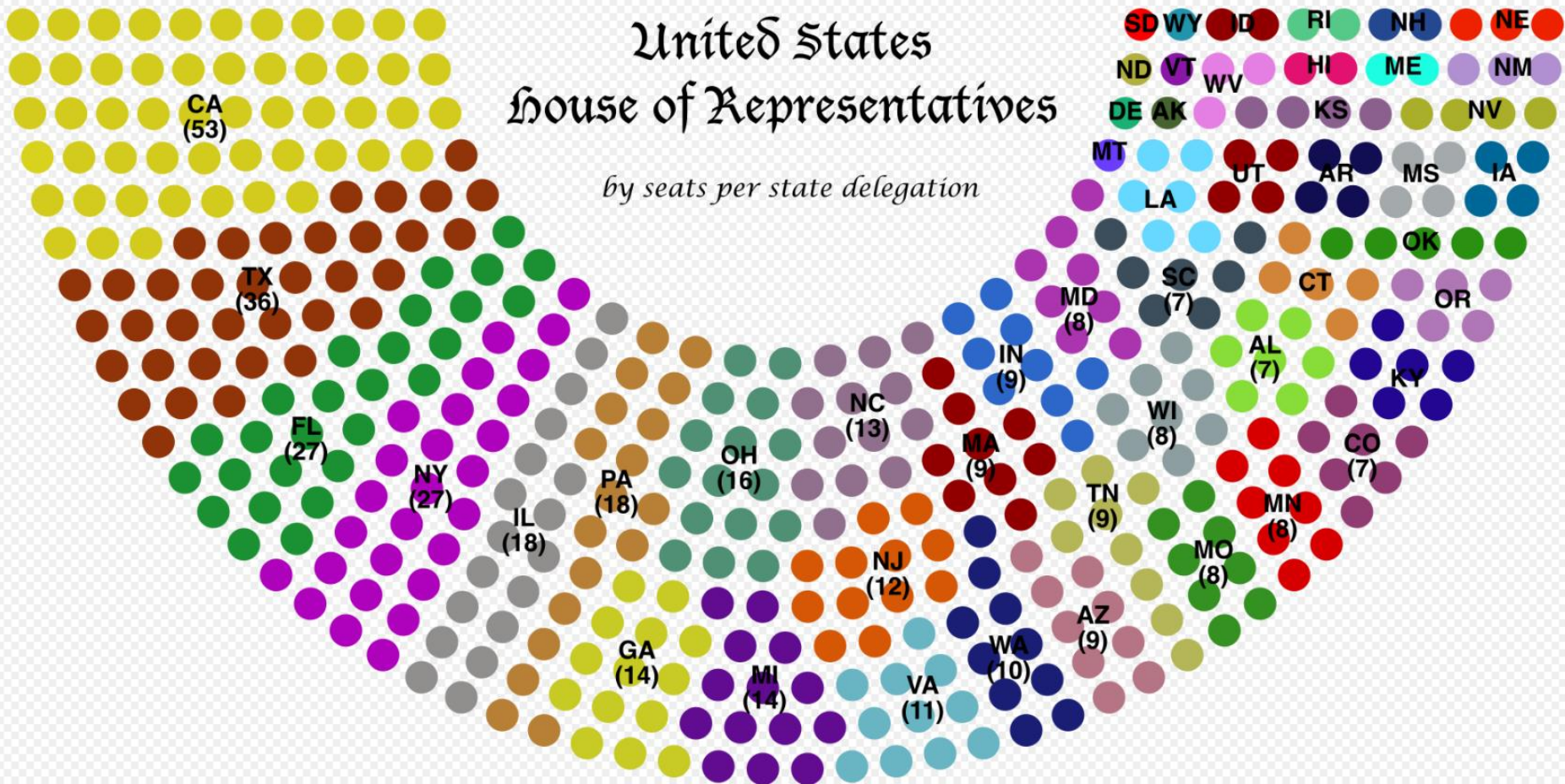
Freedom Caucus

It is generally considered to be the most conservative and furthest-right bloc within the House Republican Conference. The caucus was formed in January 2015 by a group of conservatives and Tea Party movement members, with the aim of pushing the Republican leadership to the right.

The caucus is positioned right-wing to far-right on the political spectrum. The group takes hardline conservative positions and favors social conservatism and small government, along with right-wing populist beliefs such as opposition to immigration reform.

United States House of Representatives

by seats per state delegation



The Speaker of the House

Mike Johnson (Oct 25 2023)



The House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries



The Senate



The Senate

- It is composed of **100 Senators**, two for each state, elected **every six years**. There is no limit in the number of terms.
- They are chaired by **the Vice President**.
- They have the sole power to **ratify treaties** and try cases of impeachment of officials (including the President) decided by the House of Representatives.

47

Democrats

28 seats not up for election

53

Republicans

38 seats not up for election

Flipped 4 seats

50

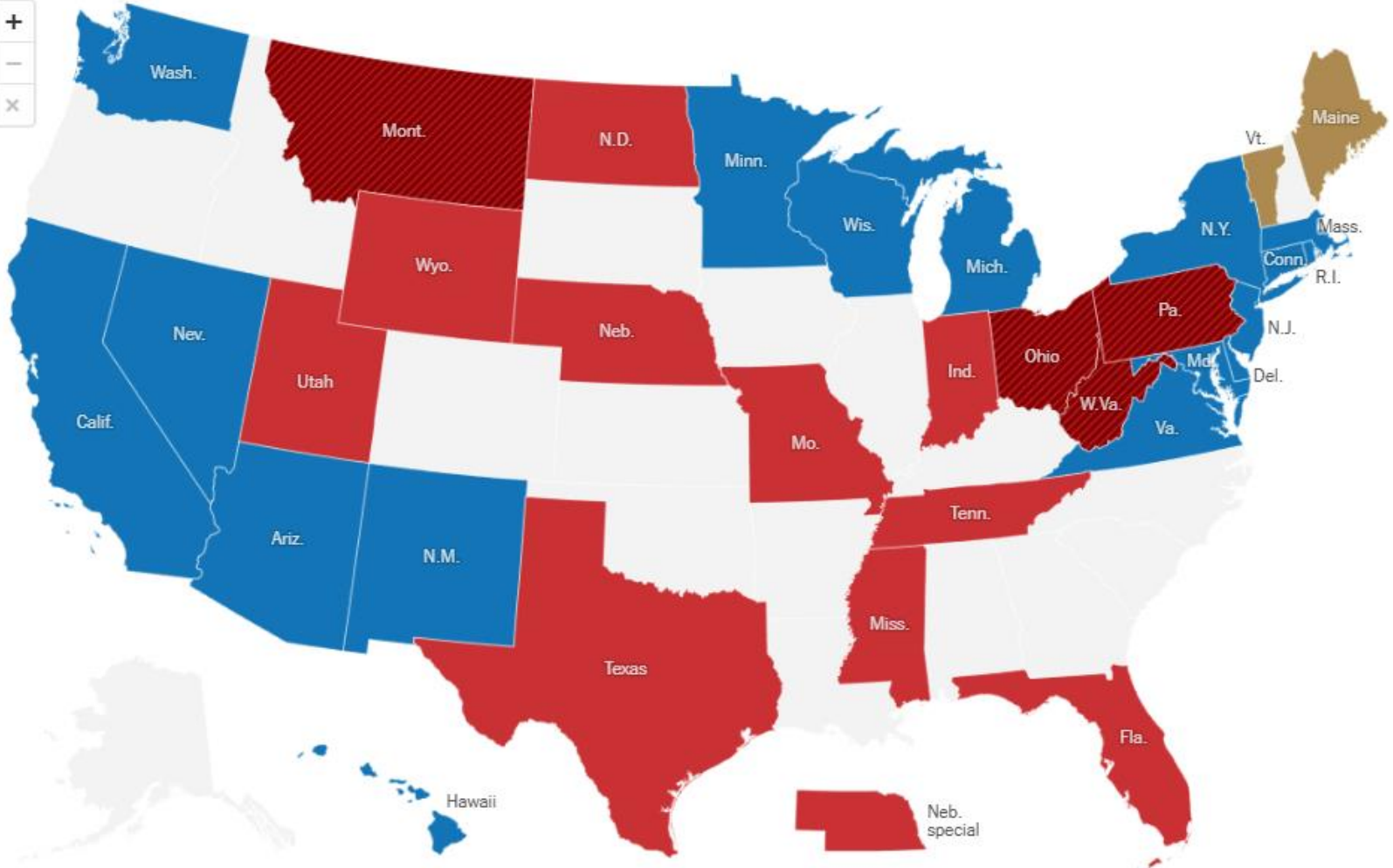


By winner

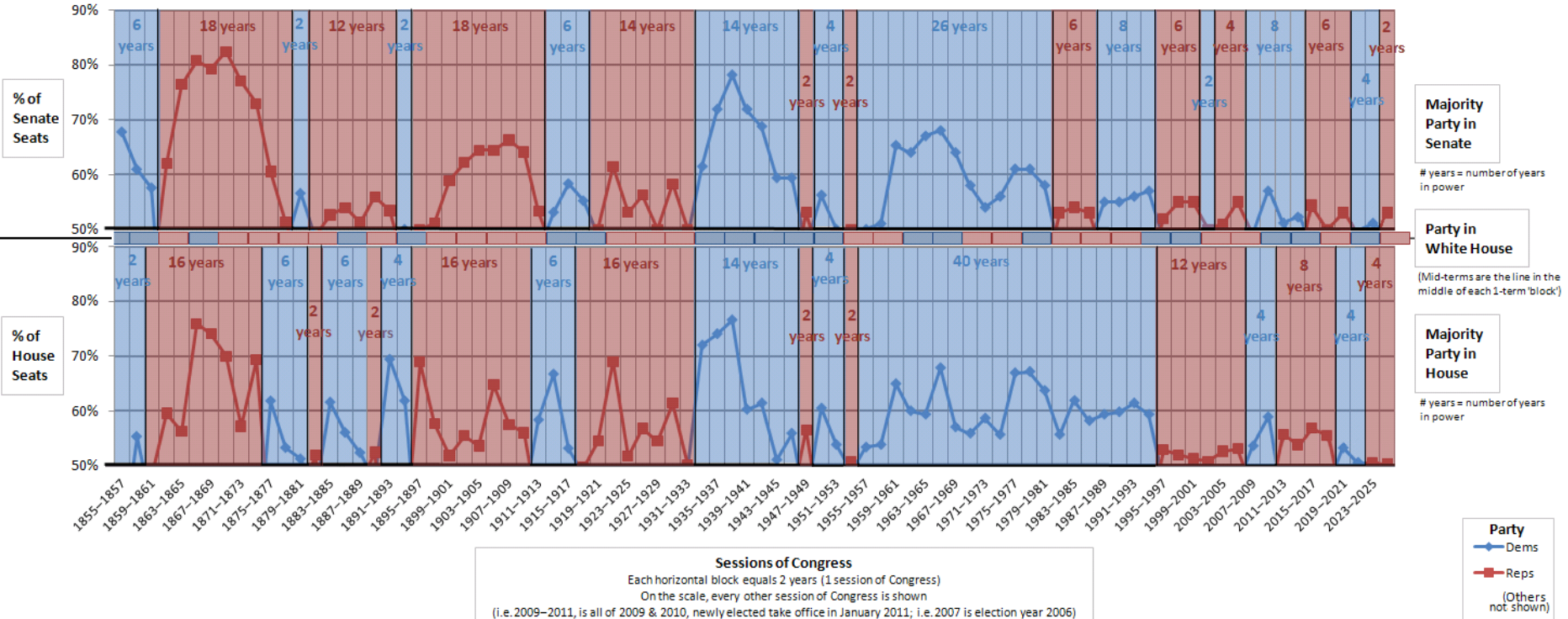


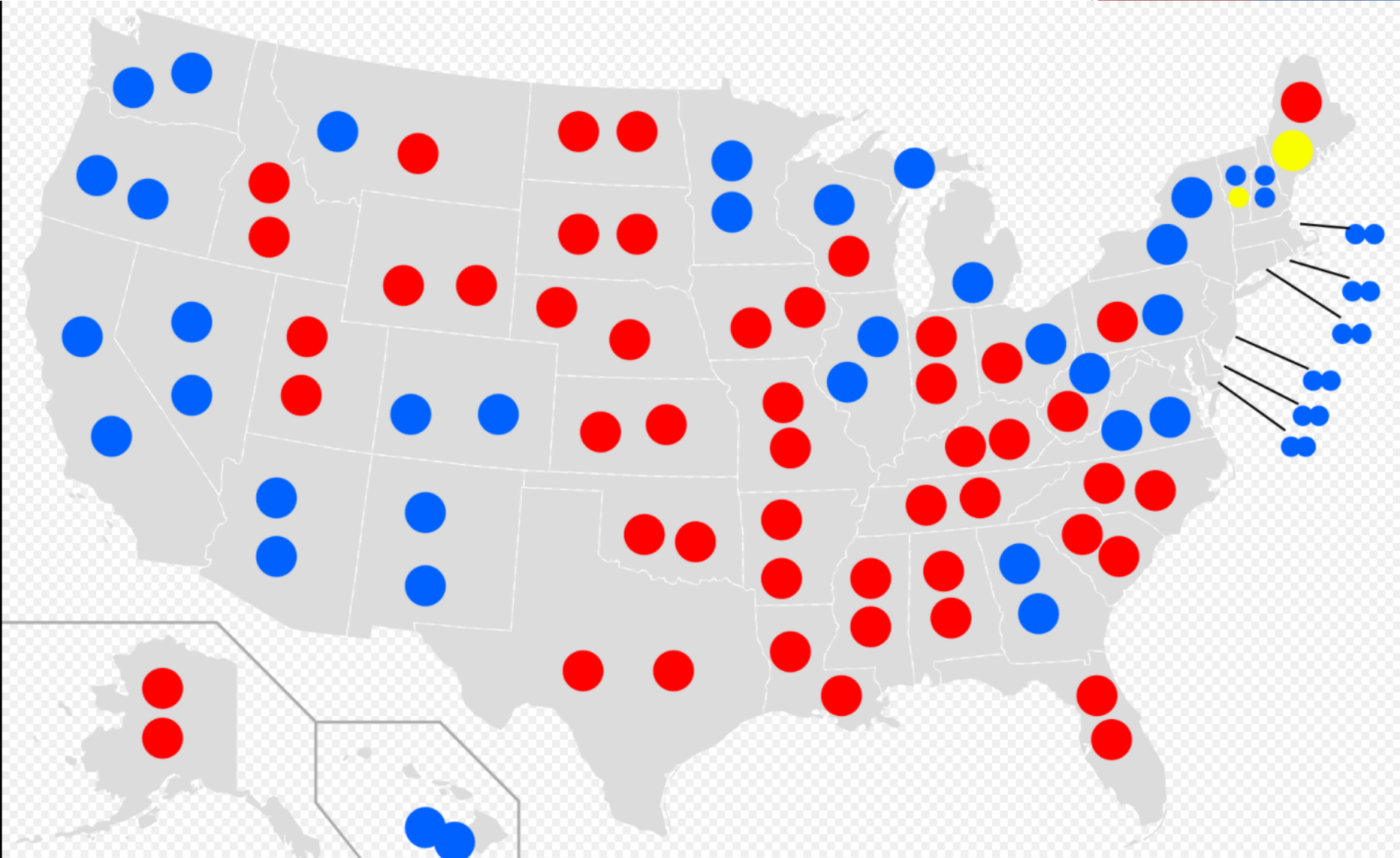
Margin by county

- Dem.
- Rep.
- Other
- Win
- Flip
- No election



Control of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives: 1855–2027



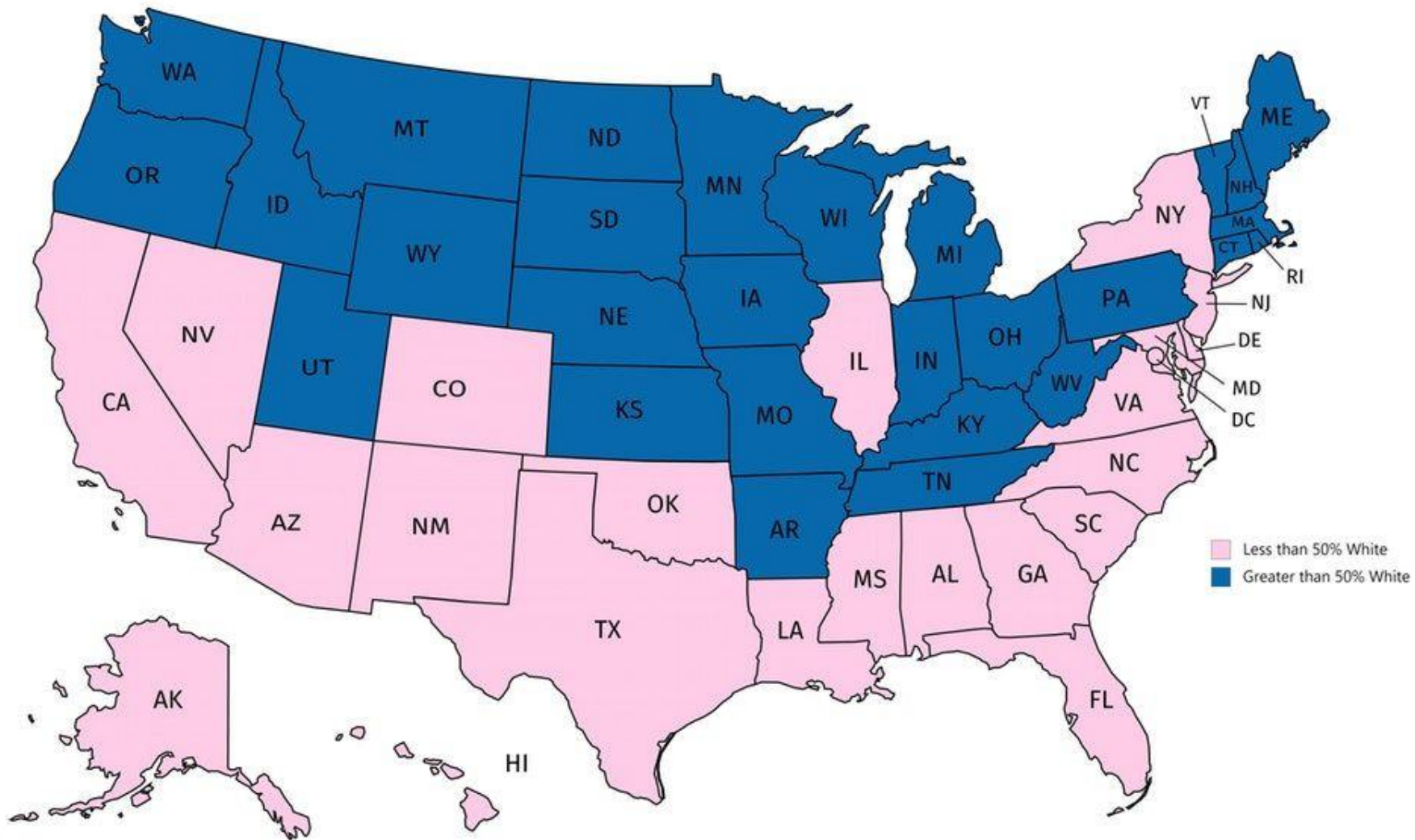


The Distribution of Population Across the U.S. States



Senate Popular Vote and Share of Population Represented

Election Year	Seats Won by Party Caucus on Election Day		Proportion of 50-State Population Represented		3-Election Cycle Aggregate	Three-Cycle Aggregate National Vote	
	<i>Democratic</i>	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Democratic</i>	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Democratic</i>	<i>Republican</i>
2020	50+VP	50	56.5%	43.5%	2016-2020	50.3%	43.3%
2018	47	53	52.0%	48.0%	2014-2018	50.3%	42.6%
2016	48	52	55.3%	44.7%	2012-2016	50.7%	44.1%
2014	46	54	53.3%	46.7%	2010-2014	50.1%	46.8%
2012	55	45	58.2%	41.8%	2008-2012	51.6%	45.3%
2010	53	47	56.3%	43.7%	2006-2010	50.8%	46.1%
2008	59	41	62.1%	37.9%	2004-2008	52.5%	44.6%
2006	51	49	56.8%	43.2%	2002-2006	51.3%	45.8%
2004	45	55	50.5%	49.5%	2000-2004	48.9%	47.7%
2002	49	51	55.2%	44.8%	1998-2002	48.4%	48.3%
2000	50	50+VP	58.0%	42.0%	1996-2000	48.8%	48.1%
1998	45	55	50.5%	49.5%	1994-1998	47.9%	49.7%
1996	45	55	49.7%	50.3%	1992-1996	48.5%	48.3%
1994	48	52	52.3%	47.7%	1990-1994	48.8%	48.2%
1992	57	43	66.0%	34.0%	--	--	--
1990	56	44	59.4%	40.6%	--	--	--



AMERICA'S

ANTI-DEMOCRATIC

CONSTITUTION,

EXPLAINED

Vox

America's democracy is failing. Here's why.

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of red and blue. A large, dark red shape is prominent on the right side, partially overlapping a blue shape. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a white background.

America's democracy is failing. Here's why.

- 1) The Senate is deeply unrepresentative of the country

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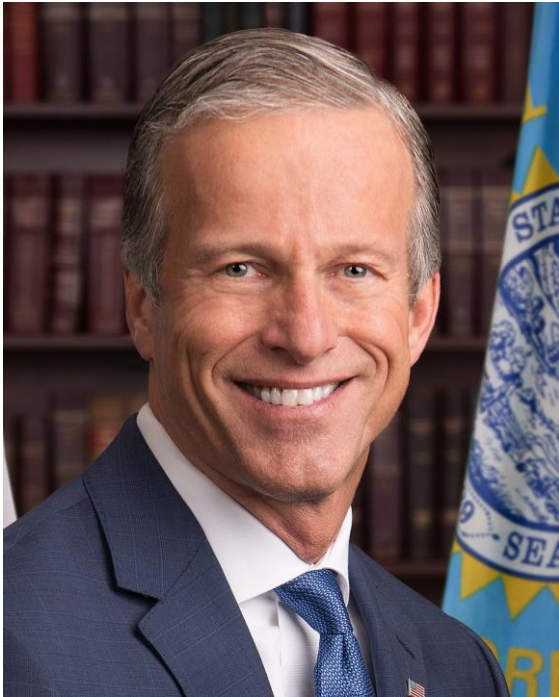
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- 3) Partisan gerrymandering is still allowed

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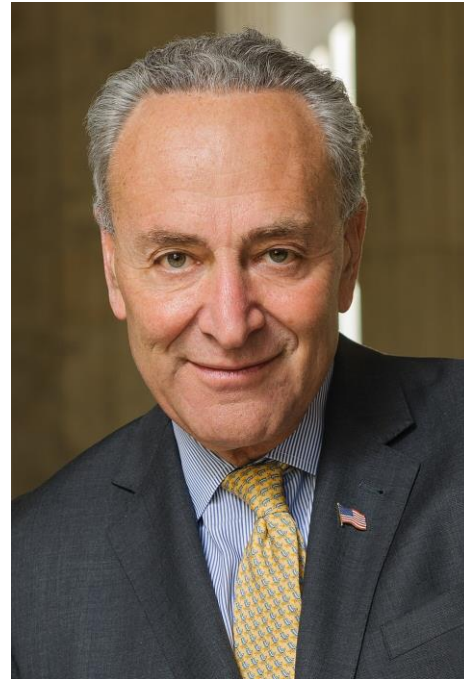
- 1) The Senate is deeply unrepresentative of the country
- 2) The next winner of the Electoral College could lose the popular vote by as much as 6 percentage points
- 3) Partisan gerrymandering is still allowed
- 4) The Constitution is virtually impossible to amend

The Senate

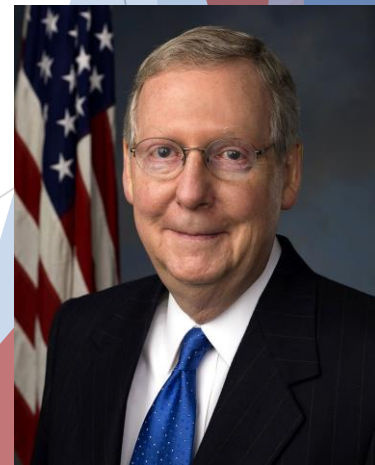
The Majority Leader
John Thune



The Minority Leader
Chuck Schumer



Mitch McConnell

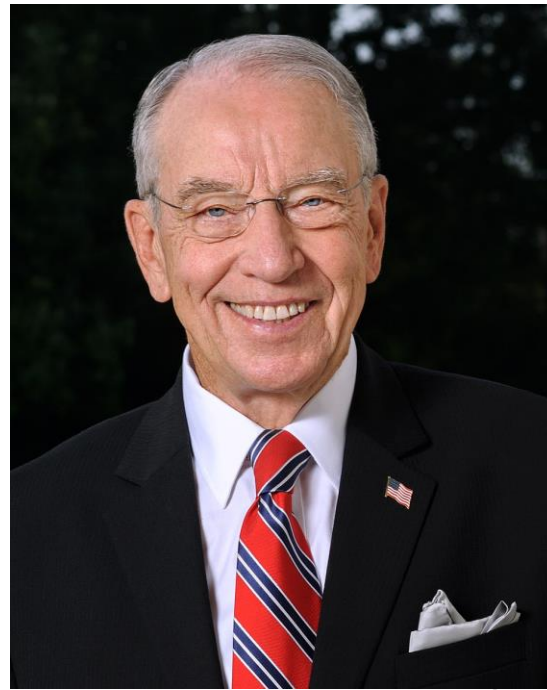


The Senate

The President of the Senate
Vice-President J.D. Vance



The President pro tempore
Chuck Grassley



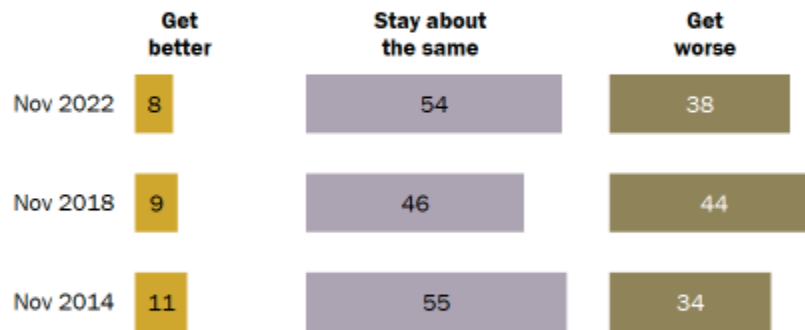
Congress

- = both chambers
- taxation (federal taxes), trade (domestic and foreign), money (borrowing, coining, counterfeiting), justice (creation of courts, appointments of judges), army (declaration of war, raising and supporting armies), budget (departments, armies, etc.)
- To pass legislation **Congressmen** must vote the text at a majority in each chamber and then send it to the president.

Gridlock in Congress

Few Americans expect an improvement in partisan relations in the coming year

% who say relations between Republicans and Democrats in Washington will ___ in the coming year



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 16-27, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The Executive

The background features abstract geometric shapes in shades of blue and red, overlapping and creating a modern, dynamic feel. The shapes are primarily located on the right side of the page, with some extending towards the center.

The executive power

- The executive power is vested in the **President**, who is the **head of state** and in the **Vice President** should the president be incapable to perform his duties. They can only run for two terms (cf. 22nd Amendment), and they begin their term on January 20th of the year following the election.
- Commander in chief of the armed forces.
- Grants reprieves and pardons for offences against the USA.
- Gives Congress some information on the state of the nation every year (State of the Union Address).
- Conducts the diplomacy of the country.
- Can make treaties (with the consent of two thirds of the Senate).
- Can issue executive orders and he enforces or vetoes the laws voted by Congress.
- Appoints the heads of federal agencies and the Cabinet members (15 departments led by Secretaries: for example the **Secretary of State** in charge of foreign policy), as well as Supreme Court justices.

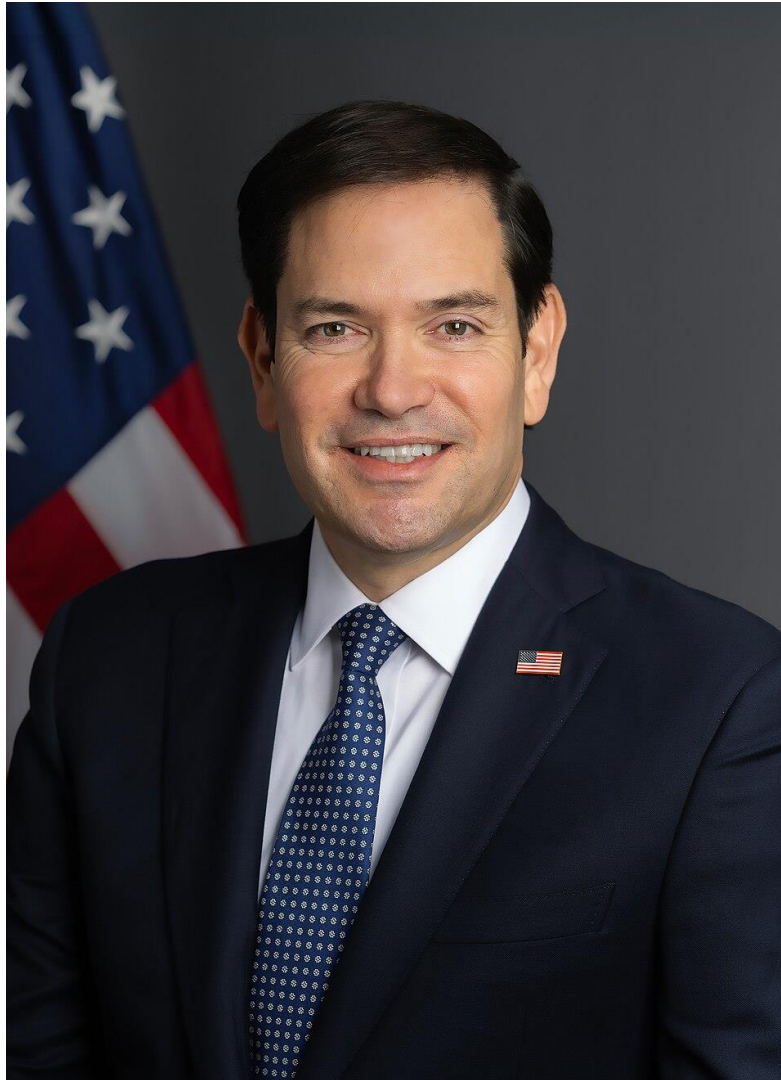
President Donald Trump



J.D. Vance: Vice President



The Secretary of State : Marco Rubio





Secretary of the Treasury

Announced November 22, 2024

Assumed office January 28, 2025



Key Square Group CEO

Scott Bessent

from South Carolina



Secretary of Defense

Announced November 12, 2024

Assumed office January 25, 2025



TV host and Army veteran

Pete Hegseth

from Tennessee



Attorney General

Announced November 21, 2024

Assumed office February 5, 2025



Former state attorney general

Pam Bondi

of Florida



Secretary of the Interior

Announced November 14, 2024

Assumed office February 1, 2025



Former governor

Doug Burgum

of North Dakota



Secretary of Health and Human Services

Announced November 14, 2024

Assumed office February 13, 2025



Lawyer and activist

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

from California



Secretary of Education

Announced November 19, 2024

Assumed office March 3, 2025



Former SBA administrator

Linda McMahon

from Connecticut



Secretary of Homeland Security

Announced November 12, 2024

Assumed office January 25, 2025



Governor

Kristi Noem

of South Dakota



The Judicial Branch

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of red and blue, primarily concentrated on the right side of the page. The shapes are semi-transparent, creating a layered effect. The overall design is clean and modern.

Federal Courts



U.S. District Courts



U.S. Courts of Appeals



U.S. Supreme Court



State Courts



State Trial Courts



State Appellate Courts



State Supreme Courts



The judicial branch

- The Supreme Court, the highest court in the USA, consists of **nine justices**, including one Chief Justice, who are **appointed for life**.
- It **determines whether a law is constitutional** checking the actions of the executive and legislative branches (judicial review).
- Inferior courts include district courts dealing with federal cases and specific courts of appeals.



The Supreme Court as composed June 30, 2022 to present.

Front row, left to right: Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., Associate Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., and Associate Justice Elena Kagan.

Back row, left to right: Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett, Associate Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, Associate Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, and Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

A FEW LANDMARK DECISIONS

- 1896: Plessy v. Ferguson confirmed the present conditions of segregation with the application of the "separate but equal" principle.
- 1954: Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka reversed the 1896 decision and launched the process of desegregation in public school transportation.
- 1973: Roe v. Wade recognised the right of women to have an abortion.
- 2004: Hamdi v. Rumsfeld admitted that the government could detain "illegal enemy combatants" suspected of terrorism, but ruled that such prisoners also had a right to challenge their detention before an impartial judge.

The Federal System

- The US Constitution defines a government based on **federalism**, that is a power shared by the national central state, to which a few explicit rights are reserved, and the 50 states of the Union, which keep a fair amount of sovereignty.
- Some powers are shared by the national and local governments such as the raising of taxes.
- When there is a conflict between the rights of the states and governmental junctions **the Supreme Court decides which power prevails.**

The States

The background features abstract geometric shapes, primarily triangles, in various shades of blue and red. These shapes overlap and intersect, creating a dynamic and layered visual effect. The colors range from deep, dark blues to lighter, more muted tones, and from rich reds to darker, almost blackish-reds. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on geometric forms and color contrast.

State Legislatures

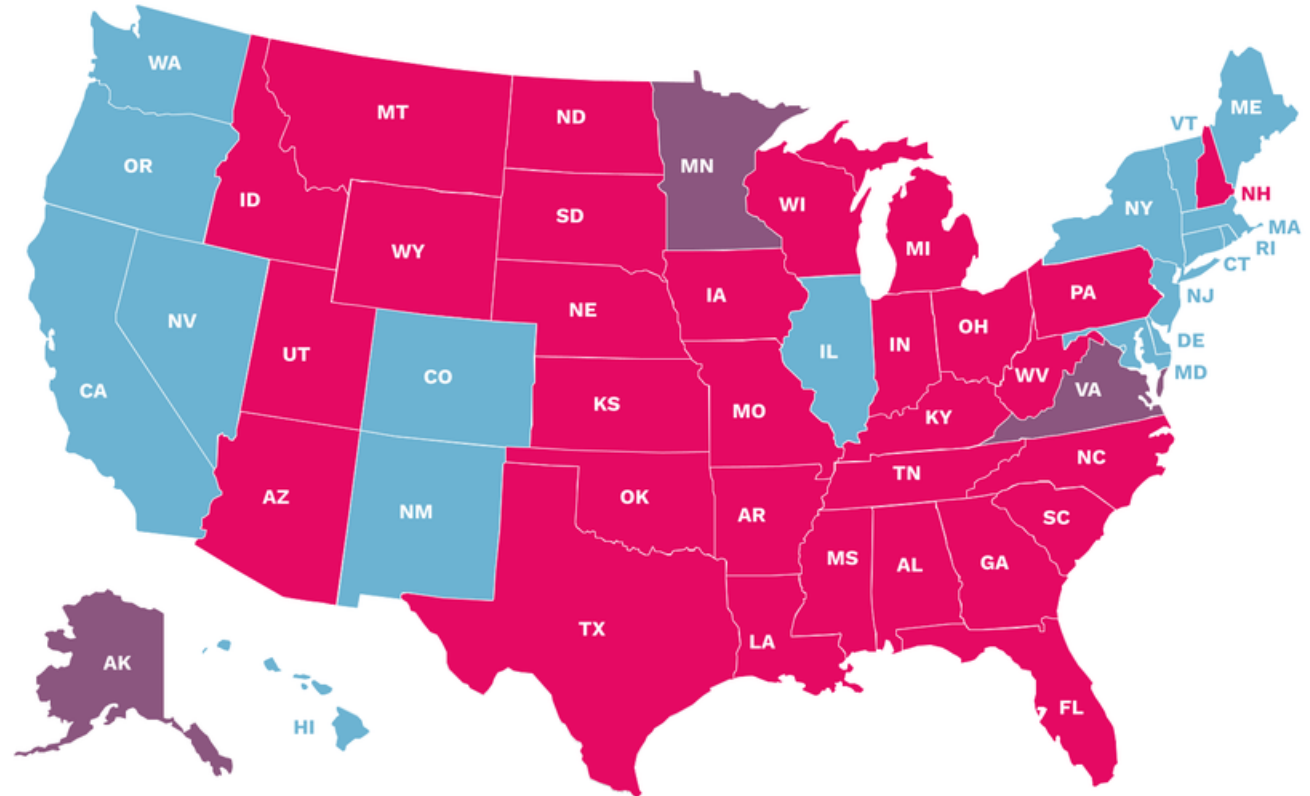




Legislatures | 2022



- Democratic Control (17)
- Republican Control (30)
- Divided Control (3)



Source: MultiState.

Data as of 11/4/2021. The Alaska House is controlled by a Democrat-Republican coalition (both in 2021 and in 2022). In 2021, Republicans controlled 30 state legislatures, Democrats controlled 18, and 2 states had a split legislature. In 2022, Virginia's legislative control shifts from Democratic control to split control with the House flipping to Republican control.

Each State has its own constitution, laws (ruling health, education, property, and criminal code) and government with the three branches of power:

- Legislative power: two chambers (except in Nebraska) with an upper house -called senate- and a lower chamber called "House of Representatives", "House of delegates", or "Assembly".
- Executive power: an elected **governor** leads the state's offices and departments.
- Judicial power: justice is ruled by **state courts** which may appeal to local supreme courts. Local judgements prevail over federal ones except in cases of unconstitutionality.

Law enforcement authorities are organised at the national and state levels

Law enforcement authorities

- **National:** The federal police has full authority nationwide. It is managed by the Department of Justice and includes federal agencies such as the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** and the **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)**.
- **State:** The state police have state-wide authority and are regulated by the states' departments of public safety.
- **County:** There are 3141 counties in the US. In some the county police are the local law enforcement authority. When there is no county police law, enforcement is the role of the **sheriff** (most of them are elected officials).
- **Municipal Police** departments exist at city level and may range from small unit to large agencies such as the **New York City Police Department (NYPD)** which registers more than 34 000 employees.

The Presidential election system

- On Election Day (the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, every four years) American citizens vote through an indirect ballot to elect their President and Vice President.
- The first step in the election process is **the primaries** organized in each party to nominate a candidate: after a series of local primaries or **caucuses** (informal meetings) the chosen delegates of the different states gather and vote during the **party convention** held in August or September.

The campaign then starts
for the official candidates.

On Election Day

- American citizens over 18 (the popular vote) vote in each state for an **electoral college** or **Electors** whose number is determined by the population of the State. There are 538 of them in all.
- There are for instance 4 Electors for New Hampshire and 55 for California. To win, the candidate must get 270 electors.
- In December the electoral college cast their vote. If there is no absolute majority the House of Representatives vote to elect the president.

the "winner-take-all-system"

- In all states apart from Maine and Nebraska, the "winner-take-all-system" prevails: **the candidate gathering most of the popular vote in a state gets the whole Electoral College.**
- This is meant to give a clearer majority as was the case in 2012 (Obama got 51% of the popular vote and 302 electors while Mitt Romney got 47% of the popular vote and 206 electors).

the "winner takes all"

- This system may lead to controversies.
- For instance : in 2000 when Al Gore got the majority of the popular vote but was defeated by George W. Bush by a slight majority of votes in Florida, which gave him the state's 29 electors.

Midterm elections

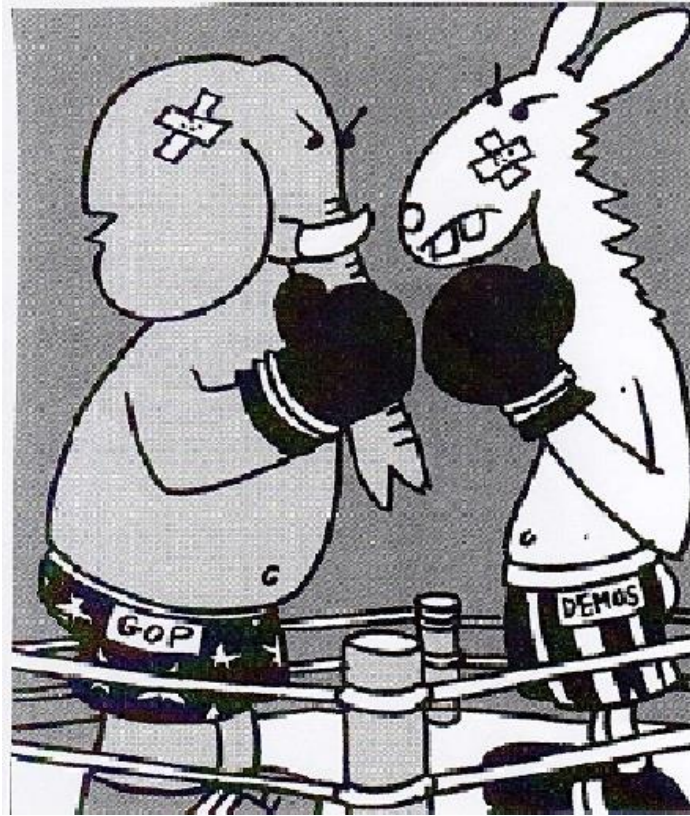
- They will be held on November 8, 2022
- All 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 34 of the 100 seats in the Senate will be contested.
- Along with : 36 state and 3 territorial governorships, 46 state legislatures, 4 territorial legislatures, numerous state and local races.
- In the law of the United States, an insular area refers to U.S.-associated jurisdictions not part of the 50 states or the District of Columbia. This includes fourteen U.S. territories administered under U.S. sovereignty, as well as three sovereign states each with a Compact of Free Association with the United States

DEMOCRATS

- Founded by Jefferson in 1798.
- Symbol: a donkey (humble, clever, courageous and loveable)
- Heirs to the traditions of the reform and progressive movements of the 19th century.
- For a greater equality of opportunities
→boost government intervention
- Famous presidents : Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Barack Obama (first black president)

REPUBLICANS

- Founded in 1854.
- Often designated as the *Grand Old Party (GOP)*.
- Symbol: an elephant (strong and dignified)
- Its members belong mainly to the upper and upper middle classes.
- Defend the traditional values of the white, capitalist and individualist community.
- Preserve free competition by toning down federal intervention in social and economic programmes.
- Famous presidents : Lincoln, Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr. and Jr.



THIRD PARTIES

- The Reform Party: ultra-rightist, founded by billionaire Ross Perot in 1995, received 8% of the popular vote in the 1996 presidential election.
- The Constitution Party: defence of traditional values, religious, protectionist, jingoistic (*extreme chauvinism or nationalism marked especially by a belligerent foreign policy*), anti-aborting, supports law and order, against gun laws.
- The Green Party: left of the Democrats, founded in 1996, received nearly 3 million votes in 2000.
- The Tea Party Movement: founded in 2007, conservative positions, demands the reduction of the US national debt and federal budget by reducing government spending and taxes. A mix of libertarian, populist and conservative activists. Refers to the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Has supported various protests. Prominent activist: 2008 Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin.
- The Libertarian Party: founded in 1971. Represents and promotes the ideas and philosophies of libertarianism (freedom as a political end), free market and laissez-faire capitalism (no government interference in the economy). More socially liberal than the Democrats but more fiscally conservative than the Republicans. The third largest party by membership and in terms of the popular vote in the country's elections and number of candidates run per election.

The flag?

THE STARS AND STRIPES



Motto?

'In God we trust' (official motto)

E pluribus unum (traditional motto):
out of many, one

The Great Seal?



Anthem?

The star-spangled banner

Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country should leave us no more!
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!