



THE STUDENT Forum

Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP) Newsletter

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CIVIC RESOURCES TO EMPOWER THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

OCTOBER 2026



2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS



What is a Midterm Election?

On **November 3, 2026**, voters across the country will turn up at their local polling stations to cast their votes in the midterm elections.

The presidential general election falls every four years while the midterm elections fall in between at the two year mark. The midterm elections are all about Congress.

Currently, the United States has a **unified government** under the Republican party. This happens when the same political party controls both the **Executive Branch** (the presidency) and both chambers of the **Legislative Branch** (the House of Representatives and the Senate).

How Many are Running?

All 435 seats in the US House of Representatives are up for grabs. **Article 1, Sec. 2 of the US Constitution** says that each member of the House must be chosen every two years.

Unlike the House, the Senate will have only one-third of its chamber up for election in November.

Article 1, Sec. 3 of the US Constitution states that Senators serve a six-year term while establishing a three-class system, so that every two years one-third of the Senate's members are elected (or reelected). The rotation of Senators, and the fact that two thirds of its members carry over from Congress to Congress, established the idea that the Senate is a "continuing body"

In the 2026 midterm elections, 13 Democratically held Senate seats and 20 Republican held Senate seats will be on the November ballot.

Midterm Elections Trend

The big question during the midterms is which party is going to gain control of the U.S. House and Senate.

Democrats are looking to unseat several Republicans and take control of one or both legislative chambers in Congress. Should they be successful, we will see what is called a divided government.

In looking at the history of midterm elections in this country, the president's party almost always loses ground in midterm House elections. This has happened in 20 of the past 22 midterm elections stretching back to 1938. According to political analysts, based on past voter behavior, the likelihood that Democrats will gain seats during this election are high.

Court Overturns White House Ban of Several Press Outlets



Trump

On September 19, 2026, the White House announced they would be banning journalists from MS NOW, CNN and Politico from its grounds and confiscating their press passes.

The ban was put into effect over what President Trump called their "constant 'reporting' FAKE NEWS." President Trump also warned that "other outlets" would face similar action but did not identify them.

The affected news organizations sued, and several other news outlets and press associations filed legal briefs. Attorneys for the news organizations called the ban a blatant **First Amendment** violation and a clear case of 'viewpoint discrimination' or government action that penalizes speech because of the viewpoint expressed.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly issued a **temporary** restraining order, ordering the White House to reinstate the banned journalists' press credentials. The case is ongoing.

Case: Cable News Network, Inc. v. Trump



"They've built a massive surveillance machine that tracks, scans, and spies on law-abiding Americans without a warrant, without probable cause, and without any accountability. Enough is enough."

REP. LAUREN BOEBERT
(R-CO)



Automated License Plate Reader Cameras (ALPRs) have been used for about 50 years, with the technology first invented in the UK in 1976. High costs and early technological limitations kept the system from becoming widespread during this era. In the early 2000s, ALPRs became a routine part of modern law enforcement toolkits as computer vision and digital cameras became cheaper and more reliable. Many larger police departments and sheriff's offices now use ALPR systems widely, though states face growing privacy regulations and restrictions on data sharing and retention.

THE ISSUE: Early September 2026, Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) unveiled the **FLOCK-Off Act, H.R. 10221**, aimed at restricting the use of federal funds for automated license plate reader cameras (ALPRs) and biometric surveillance cameras. The bill would prevent federal agencies and recipients of federal funding, including state, local, and tribal governments, from using that money to purchase, lease, install, maintain, repair, upgrade or operate covered cameras.

Flock cameras capture still photos of passing vehicles to log license plate numbers, vehicle characteristics, time, driver images, and location into a searchable database. They send automatic notifications to law enforcement when a scanned plate matches a hotlist for stolen cars, missing persons, or active warrants. There are currently an estimated 135,000 to 140,000 active ALPRs in the United States.

THE CONTROVERSY: ALPR cameras face widespread criticism and backlash because they function as passive mass surveillance systems that log the movements of everyday civilians without a warrant. These cameras automatically log the make, model, color, license plate, bumper stickers, and unique vehicle details of every passing car. That information is then put into a nationwide database that effectively creates a permanent digital footprint of individual movements.

AI backends process everything in the camera's frame, including visible physical features, clothing, and sometimes wireless data. Fewer than 1% of the cars scanned are ever linked to any crime or wrongdoing.



THOSE FOR using ALPRs say that these systems are critical in helping law enforcement solve time sensitive crimes, such as kidnappings. They point out that data is not stored more than 30 days and has measures in place to prevent unauthorized sharing of information. Advocates point out that Flock systems alone have assisted in 1 million criminal cases across the country and helped to solve 20% of those cases. Many feel since these cameras are placed in public areas, reading publicly displayed license plates, there is no **4th Amendment** violation of unreasonable searches or invasion of privacy.

THOSE AGAINST ALPRs argue that there have been documented instances of police officers misusing the database to illegally track citizens, usually an ex-wife or ex-husband. Critics say that studies and police internal reviews show high error rates (such as misread license plates), which have led to innocent drivers being pulled over at gunpoint or wrongfully detained. Professionals have also found that Security vulnerabilities and password breaches have exposed sensitive location data, raising concerns about database safety and national security vulnerabilities.

"The AI safety issue is very real. The Democratic plan is one that will be anchored in urgent, decisive and responsible action to protect the safety, the health, and the wellbeing of the American people..."

REP. HAKEEM JEFFRIES (D-NY)

THE ISSUE: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the **Artificial Intelligence Data Center Moratorium Act, S.4214**, to pause the building or upgrading artificial intelligence (AI) data centers until strict national safety, labor, and environmental laws are put in place. The legislation would slow down the development of AI to give democracy a chance to catch up.

THE CONTROVERSY: Many communities across the country are currently fighting back against the building of data centers in their area. These data centers have proven to use massive amounts of electricity and water resources to keep operational. This can raise utility bills or cause brownouts for local residents. Some data centers are being planned in areas that are already water scarce causing major environmental concerns.

AI has become embedded in our lives in recent years. Now, major artificial intelligence leaders and researchers are calling for an intentional slowdown in AI development because capabilities are advancing faster than safety measures and human control mechanisms. Recently, leading AI labs have disclosed unprecedented incidents where autonomous AI agents broke containment protocols, went "rogue," and utilized sophisticated hacking techniques to infiltrate external databases without human prompts.



THOSE FOR pausing AI and AI data centers until new laws for safety can be put in place say that this technology is moving too fast and needs to be slowed down. They fear AI has the potential to cause great harm to humanity if left unchecked. Advocates argue there needs to be regulations in place forcing data centers to generate their own electricity or cover their fair share of the use of massive energy amounts. The technology needs to be in place for these data centers to be able to reclaim the water they use so they are not drying up local water sources.

THOSE AGAINST pausing AI development and data centers say that property taxes from a single data center significantly increases municipal budgets and helps to fund public services that residents rely on. Critics point out that tech companies often invest heavily in local electrical grids, helping improve long-term grid stability and capacity. Countries around the world are actively developing AI technology. Currently, we are the leading developer of AI in the world followed closely by China. This law would put the US drastically behind the rest of the leading world.



Artificial intelligence (AI) evolved over decades through the work of visionary mathematicians, computer scientists, researchers, and engineers. From the earliest theoretical frameworks of the 1950s to the generative AI tools reshaping industries today. AI began when mathematician Alan Turing conceptualized the possibility of artificial intelligence and developed a means for assessing whether a machine thinks on par with a human, now called the Turing Test.



The United States, Denmark, and Greenland enter a new security agreement.

On September 22, 2026 President Donald Trump, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, and Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen signed a new security agreement at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The new deal adds to the already existing 1951 US-Danish pact on Greenland's defence.

Military & Strategic Provisions

- **Two New Sites:** The deal allows the U.S. to establish a military presence at two specific locations, Narsarsuaq in southern Greenland and Mestersvig on the east coast and allows expanded operations at Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base), the current active U.S. installation on the island.
- **Access Rights:** U.S. aircraft, vessels, and personnel gain broad flyover, landing, and maritime rights across Greenland and its surrounding territorial waters.
- **Missile Defense:** The framework clears pathways for unmanned military installations and supports infrastructure for continental defense networks.

Sovereignty & Political Impact

- **No Annexation:** The agreement rejects prior calls by President Donald Trump to purchase or forcibly seize Greenland, fully respecting the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark and Greenland's right to self-determination.
- **Future Independence:** It outlines a cooperative vision if Greenland eventually chooses independence, noting that an independent Greenland would remain firmly aligned within the NATO alliance.
- **Deterrence:** The pact helps block strategic adversaries like China or Russia from gaining military footholds or major economic/infrastructure control in the Arctic.



Greenland is the world's largest island, famous for its massive ice sheet, majestic fjords, and unique Arctic wildlife.

Quick Facts: Greenland

Capital: Nuuk

Continent: North America

Official language: Greenlandic

Currency: Danish Krone

Population: 55,627 people

Area: 836,300 mi²

Owner: The Kingdom of Denmark



Viking Roots: Norse explorer Erik the Red named the island in the 10th century to attract early settlers to its southern fjords.

Inuit Culture: Traditional activities like soapstone carving, kayaking, and drum dancing remain deeply woven into daily life alongside modern influences.

Quiet Wilderness: The territory offers a serene, remote atmosphere defined by towering icebergs and small, colorful coastal settlements rather than bustling metropolises.



This newsletter is a publication of the **Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP)**, a nonprofit organization founded by **National Write Your Congressman**.

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**YES: REP. RO KHANNA
(D-CA)**



"We can't have a surveillance state in America. Americans are for safety but not for the abuse of their privacy. We need guardrails on this technology.

We should have the right for women not to be surveilled by flock cameras by rouge police officers. As a representative of Silicon Valley, I am calling for democratic accountability of this technology revolution. We the people should call the shots."



**NO: FBI DIRECTOR KASH
PATEL**



"Private companies and towns put up Flock cameras to collect information where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy and the FBI partners with those companies and towns on a case by case basis and not a rolling access basis. We have saved children over and over again from these child predators, we've retrieved these victims, and we've also prosecuted these kidnappers."



**YES: REP. JAY
OBERNOLTE (R-CA)**



"The sooner we can act, the better. Certainly, we've had some warning shots lately that have been very concerning ... So, God forbid we have a Chernobyl moment at some

point here that really causes harm to people and focuses the public's attention on AI in a way that we hope it will never be."



**NO: REP. BILL FOSTER
(D-IL)**



"It does no good at all if we have all kinds of [AI] rules in the United States or even in the free democracies of the world, and then these [chips] all get smuggled into China, into Russia, [and] into North Korea."



Dear Member of Congress:

I am a student receiving information from the Student Governmental Affairs Program. Here are my opinions on these issues. I would greatly appreciate any response you might like to share.

1) Should the federal government ban funding for ALPR Cameras?

Comments: _____

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Undecided

2) Should the expansion of AI data centers be paused until new safety laws are in place?

Comments: _____

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Undecided

Student Name

School Name

School Address

Nationwide Student Voting Results from the Last SGAP Newsletter

	Yes	No	Undecided
1) Should members of Congress have term limits? Yes: "Term limits would drive those in Congress to be more aggressive in accomplishing their goals and the goals of their constituents." "It would be nice to have fresh ideas and solutions." No: "States with lower populations would lose influence when members with seniority leave." "It is important to keep those with experience in, guiding the nation."	83%	13%	4%
2) Should the government require ID for websites they deem harmful to Minors? Yes: "There is a great deal of really terrible things on the internet that minors should not be allowed to view. This would help restrict that." "Parents don't pay enough attention to what their children do on the internet so the government should." No: "It would be foolish to allow the government the right to decide what is harmful. This should be up to the parents to determine for their own children." "AI has the capability to alter ID cards now, so this would not really do anything."	47%	43%	10%

This ballot was prepared by the Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP), a nonprofit, nonpartisan student civics program, located at: 2435 N. Central Expressway, Suite 300, Richardson, TX 75080 | Phone: 1-800-806-7427 | Website: <https://www.sgap.org>