THE STUDENT Forum

Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP) Newsletter

CIVIC RESOURCES TO EMPOWER THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

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2026 MIDTERM ELECTION RESULTS

"Blue Wave" Sweeps Over the US

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

Late Tuesday night it became clear that a "blue wave" was making its way across the country. Americans woke up on Wednesday morning to reports that Democrats had achieved the majority in both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

At Press Time Friday Nov. 6th, Democrats were able to unseat more than 40 Republicans in the House and surpass the 218 seats needed for the majority, giving them 259 seats compared to the 176 Republican held seats. 23 seats were still uncalled.

In the Senate, Republicans lost 7 seats, giving Democrats the push they needed to pass the 50 seat threshold and win the majority. They now hold 54 seats compared to Republicans' 44 seats. As results continue to come in, these numbers will increase but who holds the majority power in the 120th Congress will not.

Young Adults Played a Huge Part

According to national exit polls and Associated Press polls, young voters swung sharply left.



Democratic candidates' performance among voters under 30 this year far exceeded the support this group gave Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 general election. Those who fall into the age range of 18 to 29 overwhelmingly voted for Democrats, 73% to 25% for Republicans.

Democrats Outline Their Priorities

Democrats are already outlining their main priorities for the 120th Congress, which starts on January 3, 2027. They intend to focus on:

Lowering the Cost of Living: Democratic Party leaders are already brainstorming how to address the cost of health care, goods, child care, elder care, and housing.

Fighting Corruption: The soon-to-be-Democrat controlled House wants "to stamp out the culture of corruption" in government, focusing on President Trump, his family, and his administration.

Ensuring Voting Rights: Multiple Democratic leaders said they want to pass legislation to secure the right to vote across the country.

Blocking President Trump's Immigration Policy: Few issues have divided Democrats and the Trump administration more deeply than immigration policy over the past two years.

End the War: They plan to pressure the Trump administration to end the military action by pushing forward more war powers resolutions.

2030 U.S. Census Overhaul

On September 10, 2026, the Trump administration proposed a major overhaul for the 2030 U.S. Census. The proposed rule would prohibit questions about race and ethnicity on the decennial census questionnaire for the first time since 1790.

The U.S. Census Bureau has proposed changing the definition of "usual residence" to omit undocumented immigrants and lawfully present noncitizens who do not hold a green card (lawful permanent resident status) from the count used to divide House of Representatives seats.

The administration argued that individuals without permanent residency lack sufficient ties or allegiance to be classified as "true inhabitants" under the census standard.

Opponents argue that the census exists to provide an accurate count of everyone living in the United States. Excluding millions of individuals from that count means that the country will spend the next decade operating based on inaccurate data. The proposal also violates federal statutes and the Constitution.

The rule is still under consideration.



Issue 1 Minimum Wage

Should the federal government raise the minimum wage to $25 an hour?

"Today, companies are reporting record-high earnings while working people struggle to survive. Minimum wage is not a living wage. That's not right. If we want to address the affordability crisis, we must also address the wage crisis."

REP. DELIA RAMIREZ (D-IL)



The federal minimum wage was established on June 25, 1938, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) into law. The first minimum wage was set at 25 cents per hour, which yielded $11.00 gross per week (or about $44 to $48 a month) for a 44-hour workweek. While 25 cents an hour sounds extremely low today, the Great Depression era featured a vastly different price structure. Average monthly rent in the late 1930s often ran around $20 to $30 a month. Basic retail items were fractions of a dollar (e.g., coffee around 39¢ a pound, gasoline around 18.6¢ a gallon).

THE ISSUE: In April 2026, Rep. Delia Ramirez (D-IL) introduced the **Living Wage For All Act (H.R.8555)** to gradually raise the federal minimum wage from $7.25 an hour to $25 an hour. Under a two-track phase-in, large corporate employers would be required to implement a $25 wage floor by 2032, while other smaller businesses would have until 2039 to do so. The initial floor starts at $12.00 per hour in the first year. It phases out and ends all subminimum wage exemptions, including those for tipped workers, workers with disabilities, and youth workers.

THE CONTROVERSY: Despite widespread gains in worker productivity, alongside stark rises in the cost of living, Congress has not increased the federal minimum wage in the last 17 years. The most recent increase was enacted as part of the **Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007**, which **President George W. Bush** signed into law and took effect during **President Barack Obama**'s first term in 2009. Today, 20 states use the federal minimum wage because they have no state minimum wage law or have a state rate that falls at or below the federal baseline.

Since the federal minimum wage was last raised, housing and rent costs have increased substantially, with rents rising over 75% in many urban and suburban areas over recent cycles. Grocery and energy prices have spiked significantly due to regional conflicts, tariffs, and supply chain shifts, with specific items like beef and dining out climbing 40% to nearly 100% over the last decade-plus. Out-of-pocket services like vehicle insurance, childcare, and healthcare have experienced steeper surges than general retail goods.



THOSE FOR raising the federal minimum wage argue that there is nowhere in America where a worker with just one dependent can afford their basic needs by working full time at an hourly wage under $25. Advocates say that low wages put families in a financial chokehold, local businesses lose out from a diminished customer base, and our broader national economy misses out on substantial gains in employee engagement and reductions in staff turnover. Raising wages is essential to solving the affordability crisis hurting working families in every community across our nation. Currently, 45 percent of American workers make less than $25 an hour.

THOSE AGAINST raising the minimum wage argue that raising the minimum wage to $25/hour—and eliminating tipped subminimum wages—would lead to significant negative economic consequences. Critics say it would lead to widespread job losses, higher consumer prices for goods and services, and business closures or severe financial strain, particularly for small and medium-sized employers. Passing this legislation would lead to the elimination of lower-skilled and lower-paying roles that usually go to high school students and recent college graduates, leaving them without options.

Issue 2 Puerto Rican Statehood

Should Puerto Rico be admitted to the U.S. as the 51st state?

> *"Those are our people. Those are our citizens. Those are Americans in Puerto Rico. But why were they treated differently?... Well, they have no voting representatives in this Chamber or in the United States Senate, so we have got millions of people unrepresented..."*
>
> **REP. JAMIE RASKIN (D-MD)**



Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory since 1898, when it came under American control following the Spanish-American War. Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917 and have served in the country's armed forces and contributed to its development ever since. Roughly 3.2 million people live in Puerto Rico but do not have voting representation in Congress, and do not receive the same level of federal benefits. Its political status remains a longstanding source of division on the island.

THE ISSUE: In October 2026, **Puerto Rico Governor Jenniffer González-Colón** signed **Joint Resolution 66-2026 (House Joint Resolution 391)**, formally petitioning the U.S. Congress and President Donald Trump to admit Puerto Rico as the 51st U.S. state. Admission as a state requires formal legislation passed by the U.S. Congress.

THE CONTROVERSY: The resolution points to previous nonbinding public votes, including the November 2024 vote where statehood received 58.61% of the legal votes among the status options, as well as the U.S.'s 250th anniversary. The resolution is asking for the island territory to be admitted to the United States on equal terms with existing states.

Governor González-Colón, leads the pro-statehood **New Progressive Party (NPP)**, while her opposition **Popular Democratic Party** supports maintaining Puerto Rico's commonwealth relationship with the United States. The **Puerto Rican Independence Party**, meanwhile, advocates independence.

Puerto Rico has held several nonbinding referendums on its political status in the past, but Congress has not approved legislation establishing a binding process to determine the territory's future. Previous proposals have considered statehood, independence and sovereignty through free association as possible options. This marks the first time the Puerto Rican legislature has formally submitted a direct legislative petition for statehood under



THOSE FOR Puerto Rico being admitted to the U.S. as the 51st state argue that it is time to end the practice of second-class citizenship. Statehood would boost investor confidence, improve local infrastructure, healthcare, schools, and create a more level playing field for trade and economic development. Things that are very much needed on an island that has suffered from power failure and lack of clean water due to catastrophic storms and aging infrastructure. Supporters emphasize that statehood would grant Puerto Ricans equal political rights and federal benefits they have voted four times for.

THOSE AGAINST argue that the addition of new congressional members from Puerto Rico would alter the partisan balance of power in the House and Senate, leading to intense national debate. Critics say that Puerto Rico's fragile economy—characterized by high poverty rates and reliance on federal assistance—would mean the island draws far more in federal outlays, Medicaid funding, and disaster aid (such as FEMA) than it contributes in federal income taxes. This would cost current U.S. taxpayers an estimated additional $5-$10 billion a year. They argue that alternative statuses should be considered to better suit Puerto Rico's unique circumstances.

Democrats Flip Republican Governorships

The 2026 midterm elections were historic in more ways than one. Going into this election, Democrats held twenty-four governorships and Republicans held twenty-six. On Tuesday, November 3rd, thirty-six states held gubernatorial elections.

The "blue wave" the country saw on the federal level carried over onto the state level as well. Democrats were able to flip six governors' offices, the biggest upset being Texas with the Democratic state representative **Gina Hinojosa** unseating the Republican incumbent. She is the first Democrat elected to the Texas governorship in 30 years. Democrat **Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins**, a former state representative from Sitka, won the governorship in Alaska, a state that routinely elects Republicans to statewide office.

Keisha Lance Bottoms's victory in Georgia also represented a stunning flip of a Republican stronghold, where the GOP has held the governor's office and both chambers of the state legislature for more than 20 years. In Ohio, Democrat **Amy Acton** became the first Democrat elected governor in the state since 2006.

The Iowa Democrat **Rob Sand** pulled off an upset win, marking a major step towards the party rebuilding its standing in a state that has voted for Donald Trump three times and where the GOP has dominated state politics in recent years. In Nevada, Democrat **Aaron Ford** defeated the Republican incumbent, becoming the first Black man to be elected governor of a state that is west of the Mississippi River.

Democrats Flip State Legislative Chambers

Democratic wins didn't stop at the governors' offices. They were able to make significant gains in legislative chambers across the country. As of Nov. 5th, 10 chambers have flipped from Republicans to Democrats, with two more leaning toward the Democrats.

Democrats were able to flip state Houses in **Georgia** (first time since before 2004), **Minnesota, Michigan, North Carolina,** and **Texas** (first time since 2002) from red to blue. They were also able to flip the House and Senate in **Arizona** (first time since 2000), **New Hampshire**, and **Wisconsin** (first time since 2010). In **Pennsylvania**, the Senate flipped to Democrats for the first time since before the 1994 elections.



Historical Firsts

Democrat **Keisha Lance Bottoms** of Georgia will be the first Black female governor of any state.

In neighboring Florida, **Byron Donalds** became the nation's first Black Republican to be elected governor.

Democrat **Deb Haaland** won the New Mexico gubernatorial election, making history as the first Native American woman elected governor.

In California, Democrat **Xavier Becerra** has made history as the state's first elected Latino governor.

Democrat **Gina Hinojosa** pulled off a stunning upset in Texas and is set to be the state's first Latina governor.

In Wisconsin, Democrat **David Crowley** won the governor's race, becoming the first Black person to hold the office.

Democrat **Amy Acton** will become Ohio's first female governor.

House Democratic Leader **Hakeem Jeffries** is in line to make history as the nation's first Black speaker of the House.

Democrat **Abdul El-Sayed** won Michigan's Senate race, marking the first Muslim to be elected to the US Senate.

Democrat **Chris Pappas**, a New Hampshire representative, was elected to the US Senate, making him the first openly gay man to serve in the chamber.

Democrat **Peggy Flanagan**, Minnesota's lieutenant governor, is the first Native American woman to be elected to the US Senate.

SGAP
Student Governmental Affairs Program

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

2435 N. Central Expressway | Suite 300
Richardson, TX 75080
https://www.sgap.org

Issue 1 Minimum Wage

Should the federal government raise the minimum wage to $25 an hour?



YES: SEN. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL (D-CT)

"Today, in the wealthiest country in world history, employees who earn minimum wage working full-time cannot make ends meet. That's because the federal minimum wage is unchanged since 2009 at $7.25. Meanwhile, a gallon of gas is $4 in most places in America, and close to $6 in some. This is unconscionable and unacceptable. An increase is long overdue so workers in the U.S. can afford basic necessities, like gas and groceries...Congress should pass this bill and give American workers a well-deserved raise."



NO: HOUSE SPEAKER MIKE JOHNSON (R-LA)

"[An] increase in the federal minimum wage would actually cause great harm to our economy and to the very people we all want to help. If their idea became law, countless small businesses would be forced to eliminate employees and their available hours. Estimates are that as many as 3.7 million hardworking Americans could lose their jobs...Congress should be considering pro-growth policies that create opportunities for all Americans, not legislation that cripples small businesses and increases unemployment."

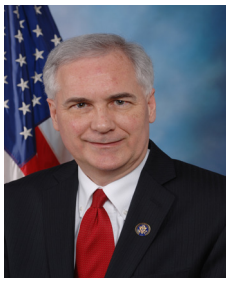
Issue 2 Puerto Rican Statehood

Should Puerto Rico be admitted to the U.S. as the 51st state?



YES: SEN. MARTIN HEINRICH (D-NM)

"A majority of Puerto Ricans voted in favor of statehood and for full voting representation in the United States. Congress now has a moral responsibility to respond...My home state of New Mexico had a similar struggle to achieve statehood. It took 50 New Mexico state bills and 64 years before we were finally admitted to the United States. It is long past due for the millions of American citizens living in Puerto Rico to get the representation that they deserve."



NO: REP. TOM MCCLINTOCK (R-CA)

"The GAO estimates that [statehood] would cost Puerto Rico 70% of its manufacturing base and there's not even a CBO estimate of the cost to American taxpayers of admitting a chronically mismanaged and utterly bankrupt state government...It would mean a new state that has the lowest per capita income in the country and the largest per capita debt...How does it benefit America to admit a state that will be the most indebted, uneducated, poorest, and least employed state in the nation?"

Vote

Students: Please give this ballot to your teacher to send to your lawmakers in Congress.

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 raise the minimum wage to $25 an hour?

_____Yes _____No _____ Undecided

Comments: _____

_____

_____

2) Should Puerto Rico be admitted to the U.S. as the 51st state?

_____Yes _____No _____ Undecided

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____
Student Name

School Name

_____
School Address

Nationwide Student Voting Results from the Last SGAP Newsletter

	Yes	No	Undecided
1) Should the federal government ban funding for ALPR cameras? Yes: "Flock cameras are an invasion of privacy and they can potentially lead to improper arrest or tickets because of malfunctions." "It marks a precedent for government surveillance of law-abiding citizens that can lead to a desecration of rights down the road." No: "Cameras have proven to stop crime and save people. It can be abused but is worth saved lives." "Instead of getting rid of the funding, we should institute far greater security measures/systems to make it incredibly difficult to access information without getting confirmation from several people."	61%	34%	5%
2) Should the expansion of AI data centers be paused until new safety laws are in place? Yes: "The rapid development beyond human control is frightening, and not worth harming the environment." "Data centers often cripple people's areas and siphon funding that should be used for the good of the public rather than filling tech companies' profits." No: "If we regulate the development of AI we will win the battle of a greener earth, but we will lose the war against China." "I believe AI data centers should continue expanding because they can create jobs, increase tax revenues for communities, and help the United States stay ahead of other countries in AI technology."	73%	21%	6%

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