Opinion

GOP stumbles toward midterms as Senate control slips away

By JAY BOOTH
Staff Writer

There is less than a week before the midterm elections, which will be pivotal to the second half of President Donald Trump's second term. Control of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate are up for grabs, as well as 35 governorships and hundreds of ballot measures and local-level contests.

To start, this cycle is almost certainly going to be historic. The Generic Congressional Ballot looks like it will be the largest margin for either party since 2008 which projected a 10% lead for the Democrats that year alongside a landslide presidential win and a whopping eight seats flipped in the Senate; this will be a once-in-a-generation wave election. While usually midterm elections favor the party out of power, this cycle has been especially awful for Republicans from Trump's personal disapproval, a struggling economy, an ongoing conflict in the Middle East and blatant corruption. As such, a lot of the map opens up in the Senate elections.

The main projected flips in the Senate are in states that Trump won in 2024 with North Carolina, Alaska, Ohio, Texas and Iowa, and also Maine. Varying from "only" 3 ¼ points for Trump in North Carolina to a whopping 16 percentage point win in Kansas, these states have a combination of demographics, strong candidates, elasticity and specific special circumstances, making these races competitive.

The easiest pickup for Democrats, by far, is North Carolina. Former Governor Roy Cooper is facing off against former RNC chair Michael Whatley, who is anything but a great candidate against a popular and well-known former governor. It's no real surprise Cooper is crushing Whatley in polling in the state by about seven points. Likely D projection rating for North Carolina.

In Maine, incumbent Republican Susan Collins is the only Republican Senator left in a state former Vice President Kamala Harris won in 2024. She's managed to survive so far by maintaining an "independent" image, seen as being able to break from Republicans if it benefits Maine. In polling, former Democratic State Senator Troy Jackson's lead is minimal and wouldn't hold against even a relatively slim polling error in Collins' favor. Given the national environment and the hyper-polarized era in which we now live, this is somewhat surprising. However, currently, this race is rated lean D.

The next state up is Trump+13.1 Alaska, where incumbent Republican Dan Sullivan is facing off against former House Representative Mary Peltola, the Queen of Alaskan Politics. Her campaign of "Fish, Family, Freedom" is perfectly cut out for a left-trending state like Alaska, which is propelled that way from white suburbs and exurbs that have been trending towards Democrats in the Trump era that make up a majority of the state population. This, plus reversion amongst Native Americans in the north of the state supported in the oil fields by Peltola being pro oil and gas will help swing the state towards her column. Sullivan has been struggling, especially when prices in a state like Alaska have gotten much worse than usual in the non-contiguous state. As a result, Alaska is Lean D in my ratings.

In Ohio, which Trump won by 11.2% in 2024, former Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown, who was defeated in 2024, is back for another try to get into the upper chamber of Congress. Unelected Republican incumbent Jon Husted has been getting slammed on messaging about data centers, and the state's demographics provide Democrats favorable turnout dynamics during midterm years. Given this, Brown can squeak two more years out of Ohio after being voted out in 2024. The race is rated lean D.

Now we get to insane territory that anybody a year ago would've likely called you crazy for suggesting. Trump+13.7 Texas slammed heavily right in 2024, as Hispanic voters supported Trump in stronger numbers than in 2020 or 2016. Now these voters are slamming left, combining with better support from the white-majority suburbs of Dallas-Fort Worth and Austin. This, plus lower Republican enthusiasm for scandal-ridden Republican nominee Ken Paxton, is a perfect storm for the first statewide win for a Democrat in Texas since 1994 for Democratic nominee James Talarico. Texas is rated tilt D.

The final current flip is Iowa, which Trump won by 13.2% in 2024, the largest margin in Iowa for either party presidentially since Richard Nixon's 49-state landslide in 1972. However, this rural, white-working-class state is extremely elastic with a lot of ancestral Democrats, which could play into the hands of Democratic Senate nominee Josh Turek. Turek is a strong overperformer, outperforming Harris by 13% in his State House district in the 2024 state legislative elections. His opponent, Iowa's 2nd Congressional District Representative Ashley Hinson, isn't a weak candidate, but she's made some blunders on the campaign trail. It may be a bit tough for her to get things together. Given everything, it would feel disingenuous to rate this contest anything other than a true toss-up.

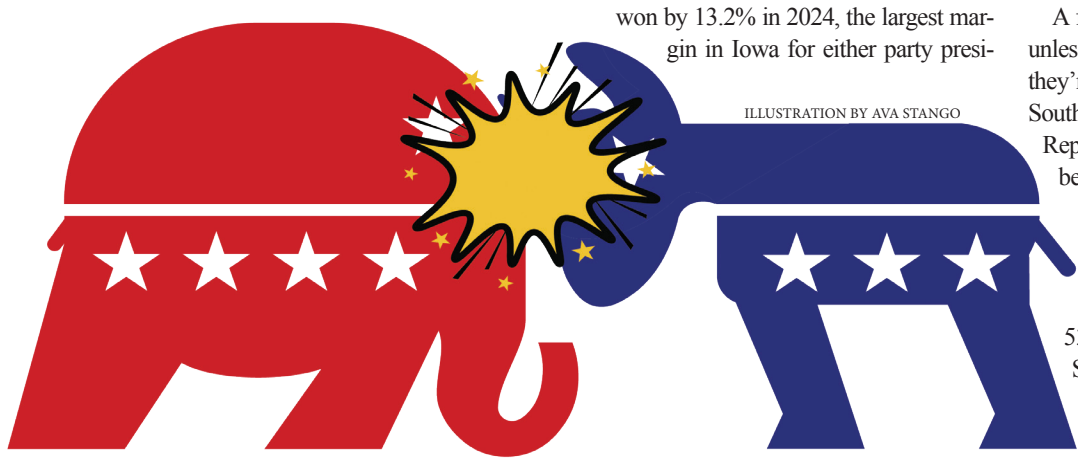


ILLUSTRATION BY AVA STANGO

Then is the reach: Kansas. Trump won the state by 16.1% in 2024, but Democratic nominee and pastor Adam Hamilton has been whittling away at Senator Roger Marshall in a very left-trending state, second only to Colorado in the Trump era. Moreover, it's clear that Marshall has never faced a competitive election before in how he handles himself on the campaign trail. With Kansas being hit hard economically, it's expected to be very close, and some polls have Hamilton leading, but the Trump+16 state seems a bit hesitant to elect its first Democratic Senator since 1936. Kansas is projected to be tilt R.

A few other elections are somewhat close, but unless the polls are underestimating Democrats, they're unlikely to truly be competitive, with South Carolina, Mississippi and Nebraska leaning Republican and are unlikely to flip, realistically being reaches for Democrats.

But even if they fall short in the three referenced states, the possible flips Democrats are currently predicted to have would be enough to flip Senate control on its head, 53-47, and flip an entire six seats, the most Senate seats flipped in one cycle by either party since 2014. This is set to be historic, so don't miss it.

AI does not belong in film, especially in the classroom

By HARRISON BROWN
Contributing Writer

I always had a feeling Artificial Intelligence would take over the film industry one day, but I never thought it would start taking over Quinnipiac's Film, Television and Media Arts program.

This past year, the course AR-272: AI and the Moving Image was offered at Quinnipiac, where students were tasked with making character sheets, scripts, storyboards, other preliminary production documents and finally a movie.

In theory, this class sounds like a dream for any film student, until I found out all assignments for the class would be made using AI.

Many of my friends who have gone through the film program, or are currently enrolled, have expressed their fears of AI slowly taking away creative jobs within the film industry in the near future. It is inevitable that AI will be integrated in some way into the film and television industry soon, but it should not be used in place of humans to create pieces of art that so many would give anything to be a part of.

The existence and offering of this class at Quinnipiac feels disrespectful to the film students, film faculty and the program itself, as so many passionate creatives are going through the program to learn how to create something meaningful; not how to sit in front of a computer and type a few words into an AI engine to make a film for them.

Many of the film professors are working hard to give us all of their knowledge so we are prepared to be as successful as we can be post-graduation, not to create mindless videos using AI.

One of the main reasons that I and so many others enjoy film so much is because it is a way to express ourselves beyond the confines of reality. One of the best parts of filmmaking is being able to create a world to escape to while being grounded in reality.

Take the new film "Resident Evil," for example. We aren't traveling to Raccoon City every day to deliver organs and fight monsters, but at the end of the day, the film is about people needing to roll with the punches that life throws at them, while trying to make the best decisions to live their best lives.

That is something people need to do every day, whether it be that you didn't dress well for the weather outside or you are having trouble in a relationship; you try to make the best decisions possible with the obstacles life throws at you to enjoy every day.

Not every film needs to create these huge fantasies, but the films that do and do it well show that even the largest of worlds can still feel relatable. Some even create these alternate realities to comment on our own reality.

The horror movie "Buddy," for example, was made to comment on the "dark side" of kids' television. Obviously, there isn't an orange unicorn murdering children in our world, but it uses film to comment on how children are mistreated on television sets and how this goes unnoticed most of the time.

Film also creates relatable characters for the viewers, no matter how imaginative the movie's world is. Imagine how many little girls saw themselves as a Disney Princess or how many little boys saw themselves as a car from the "Cars" movies.

Both are set in worlds beyond our reality. No one could be a humanoid car, and no one can be a princess in a fairytale world, but we can still see ourselves and relate to these different characters.

Creating compelling stories and relatable characters is impossible with the use of AI. Yes, AI can make an image of a princess in a fairytale world, but would anyone be able to relate to the character? Would the story be fantastical but grounded in reality?



ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY ZELLER

When I am scrolling on TikTok late at night, most of the time I will come across an AI-generated video, with it usually being a mom who is an anthropomorphic fruit who has twin daughters, and one gets gold poured on her to go to the elite school and the other gets concrete poured on her to go to the 67 school.

Yes, these videos can be entertaining at times, but they take all human elements out of the video, making it feel soulless and meaningless. Comparing it to the movie "Buddy," the latter feels so much more human, specifically because it was made by humans.

AI should be used as a tool in the film industry, not used to bypass the human hand in making a film. With the rise of AI and the creation of this class, it feels as if Quinnipiac is disregarding its own film program and all the students and faculty who have passed through or are currently enrolled.

I want to urge everyone to rewatch their favorite movie and ask yourselves afterwards, "Why did I like this film again?" and then see if that answer would change if the film were to be made with AI instead of people.