PISM | POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

No. 57/2026, 5 NOVEMBER 2026 © PISM

SPOTLIGHT

A decisive victory for the Democratic Party in the congressional elections

Michał Doliński

In the 3 November midterm congressional elections, the Democratic Party outperformed expectations and took control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. This is the combined result of a sharp decline in voter support for the MAGA agenda, disappointment over rising prices, and concerns about immigration policy, corruption in the administration, and US involvement in the war with Iran. Over the next two years, the American political scene will be the arena for a fierce battle between Congress and the White House.

What are the election results and their immediate consequences?

The Democratic Party has secured at least 54 Senate seats and 231 seats in the House of Representatives (two Senate races and 60 House races remain undecided as of the morning of November 4) and thus has gained control of both chambers, along with significant powers to oversee the administration, budgetary authority, and influence the confirmation process for presidential nominees. The Democrats also won local elections and gubernatorial races (e.g., Keisha Lance Bottoms in Georgia, Gina Hinojosa in Texas). Democratic Party Senate candidates also achieved success in traditionally Republican states, with Adam Hamilton winning in Kansas (for the first time in 94 years) and James Talarico in Texas (for the first time in 38 years). Equally significant is the victory of Abdul El-Sayed of Michigan, the first Muslim in US history to win a Senate seat. It reflects the growing potential of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and undermines the argument that only centrists can win in swing states. El-Sayed's popular platform focused on promising expanding access to healthcare, lowering the cost of living, and curbing corporate influence.

The likely future Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hakeem Jeffries, has already announced that an effort to impeach Secretary of War Pete Hegseth may be launched as early as November. Similar actions are planned against Secretary of Health Robert F. Kennedy and Secretary of Education Linda McMahon. Donald Trump will still have the power of veto, which the Democrats will be unable to override due to the lack of a two-thirds majority in both chambers. The lack of such a majority in the Senate also significantly limits the chances of removing the president from office, though an impeachment attempt will certainly be made.

Trump will focus on fending off attacks from the Democrats (congressional investigations, impeachment attempts). The president has already declared his intention to govern based on his executive prerogatives and veto power, though in his most recent statements he has also signalled a willingness to cooperate with the new Congress.

What determined the election outcome?

Among the reasons cited for the Republican Party's defeat are rising prices—primarily fuel costs—for which the electorate blames the president. Politicians from this party are also accused of distancing themselves from the problems of ordinary voters. Portraying the Democrats as out of touch with reality and advocating simple solutions proved to be an ineffective tactic.

However, even Republican politicians who were not closely associated with Trump—such as Senator Susan Collins of Maine—lost to Democrats. Not only does this undermine the post-2024 narrative that MAGA is deeply rooted in American society, but it also signals a potential decline in support for

conservatives, who had been struggling with a leadership crisis before Trump's presidency.

What impact will the election have on US foreign policy?

A Democratic majority in Congress will mean increased pressure to ensure adequate funding for aid to Ukraine, maintain sanctions against Russia, end the war with Iran, and sustain NATO involvement. However, due to the constitutional prerogatives the president holds, this does not imply fundamental changes in US foreign policy. Congress will therefore be able to influence US foreign policy only through compromises with the White House, by exercising the House of Representatives' authority over the budget, or by invoking special legislative mechanisms, such as the War Powers Resolution. Poland's standing in Congress will remain strong thanks to an effective strategy of maintaining good relations with both sides of the American political spectrum. However, this does not guarantee the continued presence of US troops in Poland or in Europe more broadly. Democrats will also seek greater cost control and an end to the war with Iran. Policy toward China will continue to be characterised by strategic rivalry, given the broad consensus regarding the strategic nature of the Chinese threat to the US's global position.

Editors: Jacek Foks, Rafał Tarnogórski, Marcin Terlikowski, Justyna Szczudlik
Jędrzej Czerep, Anna Maria Dyner, Amanda Dziubińska, Mateusz Piotrowski, Daniel Szeligowski, Jolanta Szymańska, Damian Wnukowski, Szymon Zaręba, Tomasz Żornaczuk