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EXTRA

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VOTERS DELIVER REBUKE TO TRUMP

Democrats regain control of Senate as his handpicked candidates are rejected



Ronaldo Schemidt/AFP Getty Images

Supporters of Democratic U.S. Senate candidate James Talarico react to early election results during an election night watch party in Austin, Texas.



Mic Smith/Associated Press

Supporters of South Carolina Democratic Senate candidate Annie Andrews cheer her win over Republican Darline Graham, the late Lindsey Graham's sister.



Erik Lesser/Getty Images

U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff, a Democrat from Georgia, is greeted by supporters as he celebrates winning reelection over Republican challenger Mike Collins.



Mikala Compton/Austin American-Statesman

Supporters cheer after Gina Hinojosa is announced as the next governor of Texas on Tuesday at her watch party in Austin.

By Michelle L. Price and Seung Min Kim
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Voters delivered a significant rebuke to President Donald Trump on Tuesday by handing Democrats control of the Senate, rejecting his handpicked candidates while airing widespread concerns about high costs in the wake of his war against Iran and his punishing tariff policy.

Democratic candidates flipped Republican-held seats in North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, Texas, South Carolina and Kansas, where the president had personally chosen the GOP nominees or tried to rally voters on their behalf with campaign stops.

The results were also a major reprimand from voters of Trump, who repeatedly urged voters to "pretend I'm on the ballot" as he went into primarily conservative states to shore up Republican candidates and warned of a Washington where Democrats were in power. As he tried to personalize the midterm campaign, Trump also defended his policies on tariffs and the war with Iran that drove up prices.

A Democratic-led Senate means that the party will have more power to launch investigations into the Trump administration and can stymie his nominations to Cabinet posts and lifetime federal judgeships. The midterm results shift the center of gravity closer to Capitol Hill, where Democrats will be angling to check Trump's power after two years of acquiescence from congressional Republicans.

Trump tried to shift the blame away from himself during a Fox News interview that aired early Wednesday, saying Democrats "did a good job" in their campaigns and blamed GOP candidates for losses.

The results leave Trump — who watched returns at the White House with his advisers and members of his Cabinet — with dramatically diminished political capital at home and abroad.

He had all but guaranteed the results will be seen as a referendum on himself by repeatedly urging voters to "pretend I'm on the ballot." But about 24 hours after Trump had uttered that, the president on Tuesday night began pointing the blame elsewhere as results came in, posting on social media: "I wasn't on the Ballot and if I was, we would have won IN A LANDSLIDE!"

Trump's choices had their own baggage

Despite urging voters to use their imagination when reading names on the ballot, Trump's hand-picked Republican candidates in Texas and South Carolina faced deep skepticism.

Republican Darline Graham, the sister of the late Sen. Lindsey Graham, lost to Democrat Annie Andrews in South Carolina after a campaign in which she faced questions about her inexperience.

Republican Ken Paxton, who lost to Democrat James Talarico in Texas, was impeached by his own party over corruption accusations and stained by a very public divorce. But Trump backed him instead of powerful incumbent Sen. John Cornyn, whom he viewed as not sufficiently supportive.



Julia Demaree Nikhinson/Associated Press

People watch election returns before Michigan Democratic Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed arrives at a Michigan Democratic Party election night event in Detroit.

Trump's loyalty pressures also led incumbent Republican Sen. Thom Tillis in North Carolina to decide to retire after clashing with the president. To try to keep that seat in GOP hands, Trump backed his close ally Michael Whatley, who lost to Democrat Roy Cooper.

Trump was also dealt twin defeats in two Midwestern states that had borne the brunt of high diesel prices and his tariff war. Democrat Adam Hamilton defeated Republican Roger Marshall in Kansas, while Republican Ashley Hinson lost to Democrat Josh Turek.

In Ohio, Democrat Sherrod Brown regained his Senate seat that he lost two years ago, defeating appointed Republican Sen. Jon Husted in a state in which Trump and Vice President JD Vance repeatedly campaigned.

With Husted, Trump had an odd fixation on his physique, frequently admiring the former football player's body during campaign rallies in Ohio and elsewhere around the country.

Democrats on Tuesday also retained a key Senate seat in Georgia where another one of Trump's endorsed candidates faced controversy.

In that race, Democrat Jon Ossoff defeated Republican Mike Collins, a Trump acolyte who struggled to defend against his ties to white nationalists and an unresolved House ethics investigation.

Voters blame Trump's economic policies

In 2024, Trump won all seven states — Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Georgia, Iowa and Kansas.

In another sign of Republican weakness, Democrat Gina Hinojosa defeated incumbent Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, whom Trump had endorsed and repeatedly praised. On Tuesday night, Trump posted on social media that Abbott was to blame for his loss, calling him a "RINO" — a Republican in name only.

Placing himself front and center on voters' minds was a major gamble by the president and his political team, who believed it would drive "Make America Great Again" supporters to the polls. Democrats were eager to watch the unpopular president insert himself so fully in the campaign, believing it served as an effective reminder of who should be blamed for the state of the economy.

"Trump's desire to have everyone think that he's on the ballot? Like, it's happening," said Sen. Andy Kim, D-N.J., who campaigned in key battlegrounds this fall, including Iowa, Georgia and Texas. "Everyone is thinking about him and the harm that he has done to them directly."

The AP Voter Poll, an expansive survey of the midterm electorate, showed relatively few voters have positive things to say about Trump's performance on the economy. About two-thirds of voters nationally say Trump's policies have worsened economic conditions in the U.S., while only about 3 in 10 said they've improved economic conditions. Similarly, about two-thirds of voters say Trump's tariff policies have "hurt" the national economy, or the economy in their local area.