

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL AND MIDTERM ELECTIONS

NO LABELS

Presidential approval is often the leading indicator for the results of midterm congressional elections. The incumbent president's party almost always loses some seats during the midterms, even if the president is relatively popular. The party of a president with an approval rating below 50% often faces a blowout defeat.

Three of the four most recent presidents experienced big losses in the House in the midterm elections in their first term, and Bill Clinton and Barack Obama — who pursued sweeping partisan policies in their first year — also experienced big Senate losses.

One year before the 2022 elections, President Biden's approval rating has fallen from an average of about 56% on Inauguration Day to 43% now — the second-lowest of any recent first-term president. In this chart, we look at where every first-term president since Jimmy Carter stood in the Gallup approval rating poll one year before the next midterm, and how the incumbent's party ended up doing on Election Day.

ELECTION YEAR	PRESIDENT	APPROVAL ONE YEAR BEFORE ELECTION	SENATE	HOUSE
2018	Trump	37%	+2	-41
2010	Obama	52%	-6	-63
2002	G.W. Bush*	87%	+2	+8
1994	Clinton	48%	-8	-54
1990	G. H. W. Bush**	70%	-1	-8
1982	Reagan	53%	-1	-26
1978	Carter	55%	-3	-15

*Post 9/11

**Lead-up to Gulf War