

2026 Midterm Elections Preview

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The National Outlook

FIVE DAYS UNTIL ELECTION DAY

With five days until November 3, the central question in Washington, D.C., is whether Republicans will retain control of Congress for the final two years of President Trump's term. All 435 House seats are on the ballot, along with 35 Senate seats, including special elections in Florida and Ohio. The presidency is not on the ballot, but the results will shape the Administration's ability to advance legislation and confirm nominees.

For Indian Country, the consequences reach beyond party labels. Congressional majorities determine committee leadership, legislative schedules, and oversight priorities. Those decisions affect federal funding, the consideration of Tribal legislation, and how Congress responds to agency actions affecting Indian Country.



Native Candidates for Congress

Native candidates are seeking to expand representation in Congress while three Native House incumbents seek reelection. Two Senate contests could result in the election of the first Native American woman to that chamber. Their outcomes will also influence the broader fight for congressional control.

U.S. Senate



Mary Peltola

Yup'ik | Democrat | AK

Former Representative Mary Peltola is challenging incumbent Republican Senator Dan Sullivan. Cook rates the race a Toss Up.



Peggy Flanagan

White Earth | Democrat | MN

Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan faces Republican Michele Tafoya for retiring Senator Tina Smith's seat. New York Times/Siena results released October 28 put Flanagan ahead 54% to 40%.

U.S. House



Sharice Davids

Ho-Chunk | Democrat | KS-03

Rep. Sharice Davids faces Republican Eric Jenkins. Davids serves as Democratic Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus. Cook rates the race Solid Democratic.



Tom Cole

Chickasaw | Republican | OK-04

Rep. Tom Cole faces Democrat Mitchell Jacob. Cole chairs the House Appropriations Committee and serves as Republican co-chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus. Cook rates the race Solid Republican.



Josh Brecheen

Choctaw | Republican | OK-02

Rep. Josh Brecheen faces Democrat Brandon Wade. His reelection would maintain another Native voice in the Republican Conference. Cook rates the race Solid Republican.

Native Challengers



Jonathan Nez

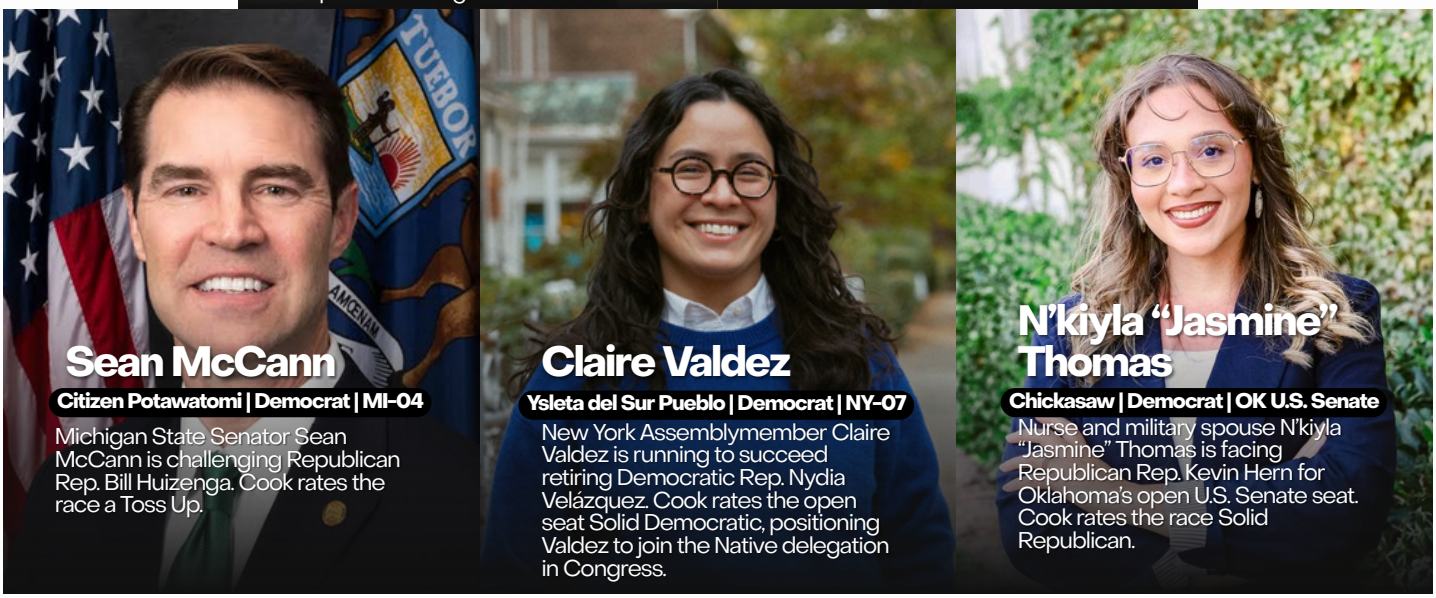
Navajo | Democrat | AZ-02

Former Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez is challenging Republican Representative Eli Crane. Cook now rates the race Lean Republican, a more competitive assessment than its previous Likely Republican rating.

Bill Hill

Dena'ina Athabascan | Independent | AK-AL

Bill Hill is challenging Republican Representative Nick Begich in Alaska's statewide House contest. Cook now rates the race Lean Republican.



Sean McCann

Citizen Potawatomi | Democrat | MI-04

Michigan State Senator Sean McCann is challenging Republican Rep. Bill Huizenga. Cook rates the race a Toss Up.

Claire Valdez

Ysleta del Sur Pueblo | Democrat | NY-07

New York Assemblymember Claire Valdez is running to succeed retiring Democratic Rep. Nydia Velázquez. Cook rates the open seat Solid Democratic, positioning Valdez to join the Native delegation in Congress.

N'kiyla "Jasmine" Thomas

Chickasaw | Democrat | OK U.S. Senate

Nurse and military spouse N'kiyla "Jasmine" Thomas is facing Republican Rep. Kevin Hern for Oklahoma's open U.S. Senate seat. Cook rates the race Solid Republican.

Deb Haaland & Native Leadership Beyond Congress



Former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a citizen of Laguna Pueblo, is the Democratic nominee for New Mexico governor. She faces Republican Gregg Hull. Haaland was one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress and, if elected, she would become the first Native American woman to serve as a state governor. Cook rates New Mexico's gubernatorial race Solid Democratic.

The Native candidate field extends well beyond Congress. On October 27, ICT and Advance Native Political Leadership reported tracking 363 Indigenous candidates across levels of government during the 2026 cycle. Their reporting identified 92 state legislative candidates and 11 statewide candidates on November ballots.

Senate Outlook

Control Remains Closely Contested

53 Republican Seats | **47** Democratic Caucus* | **+4** Net Gain Democrats Need

Republicans retain control in a 50-50 split through Vice President JD Vance's tie-breaking vote.

STATE	CANDIDATES (D / R)	D%	R%	COOK RATING
TOSS UP RACES - SIX REPUBLICAN-HELD; MICHIGAN DEMOCRATIC-HELD				
Alaska	Peltola (D) / Sullivan (R)+	49.4	48.2	Toss Up
MICHIGAN	El-Sayed (D) / Rogers (R)	48.1	45.6	Toss Up
MAINE	Jackson (D) / Collins (R)+	48.7	47.5	Toss Up
IOWA	Turek (D) / Hinson (R)	45.5	46.1	Toss Up
KANSAS	Hamilton (D) / Marshall (R)+	45.7	46.0	Toss Up
OHIO - *Special Election*	Brown (D) / Husted (R)+	48.1	44.8	Toss Up
TEXAS	Talarico (D) / Paxton (R)	48.5	46.7	Toss Up
OTHER RACES TO WATCH				
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Pappas (D) / Sununu (R)	49.7	43.0	Lean D
NORTH CAROLINA	Cooper (D) / Whatley (R)	50.8	40.5	Likely D
MINNESOTA	Flanagan (D) / Tafoya (R)	47.8	42.7	Lean D
GEORGIA	Ossoff (D)+ / Collins (R)	51.2	43.0	Likely D

*Democratic Caucus: 45 Democrats and two independents.
+Incumbent
Sources: Cook Political Report ratings, Oct. 20; RealClearPolling Averages retrieved Oct. 28.

Alaska Litigation

Alaska is seeking dismissal of DOJ's lawsuit over the two Sullivan candidates, with briefing scheduled through October 30. Governor Mike Dunleavy has separately ordered an investigation into alleged efforts to recruit candidates to confuse voters; Peltola's campaign denies involvement.

Indian Affairs Leadership

Senate control could determine whether Lisa Murkowski or Brian Schatz chairs Indian Affairs, shaping Tribal legislation and oversight. Broader Senate leadership changes would also affect appropriations and nominations.

House Outlook

DEMOCRATS LEAD THE NATIONAL CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

Democrats lead RealClearPolling's national congressional ballot average by 8 points, and Cook's October 23 ratings favor them in 220 House seats, above the 218 needed for a majority. Those ratings also favor Republicans in 198 seats, with 17 Toss Ups. For Tribes, House control will shape committee leadership, federal funding, and legislative and oversight priorities affecting sovereignty and trust responsibilities, making bipartisan engagement essential regardless of the outcome.

STATE	SEATS TO WATCH	COOK RATING
Alaska	Rep. Nick Begich (R) faces Independent Bill Hill in the statewide contest.	Lean Republican
Arizona	Rep. Eli Crane (R) faces former Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez (D) in AZ-02. The Republican-held AZ-01 and AZ-06 seats also offer Democratic pickup opportunities.	AZ-01: Lean Democratic AZ-02: Lean Republican AZ-06: Lean Democratic
Michigan	Rep. Bill Huizenga (R) faces Sean McCann (D) in MI-04. Rep. Tom Barrett's MI-07 seat and the open MI-10 seat are also competitive.	All three: Toss Up
Montana	The open Republican-held MT-01 seat is competitive. Rep. Troy Downing's MT-02 seat remains strongly Republican.	MT-01: Toss Up MT-02: Solid Republican
Oregon	Rep. Cliff Bentz's OR-02 seat and the Democratic-held seats, including those of Reps. Val Hoyle, Janelle Bynum, and Andrea Salinas, currently favor their respective parties.	OR-02: Solid Republican Remaining Seats: Solid Democratic
Washington	Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D) faces John Braun (R) in WA-03. Reps. Emily Randall's WA-06, Kim Schrier's WA-08, and Marilyn Strickland's WA-10 seats favor Democrats. The open Republican-held WA-04 seat remains Solid Republican.	WA-03: Lean Democratic WA-04: Solid Republican WA-06: Solid Democratic WA-08: Solid Democratic WA-10: Solid Democratic

Committee Leadership & Tribal Priorities

House control determines committee gavels, hearings, and markups. A majority change could alter the pace and focus of work on Tribal land, water, self-determination, and public safety.

Appropriations leadership will be equally consequential. Representative Tom Cole currently chairs the House Appropriations Committee. The majority party will guide spending bills and subcommittee priorities, including funding for IHS, BIA, and other programs serving Tribal communities. Final committee assignments and leadership positions will be decided after the election.

What the Results Could Mean for Indian Country

THREE OUTCOMES, CONTINUED TRIBAL ADVOCACY.

The election will shape the next two years of congressional action. New majorities can create opportunities, but funding and legislation will still require sustained, bipartisan support.

01

Republicans retain both chambers

Republicans would continue to set the congressional agenda and advance the Administration's priorities.

02

Democrats win one chamber

Divided control would require cross-party negotiations. A Democratic House could shift spending and oversight priorities. A Democratic Senate could shift nominations.

03

Democrats win both chambers

Democrats would control committee agendas and oversight. President Trump would retain veto authority, making bipartisan negotiations important to enactment.

PRIORITIES ACROSS EVERY OUTCOME

Funding & Services	Land & Natural Resources	Tribal Economies
IHS & BIA Funding	Water settlements	Protection of Indian gaming
Tribal housing	Infrastructure	Native business opportunities
Public safety	Salmon and fisheries	

CONCLUSION

The 2026 midterm elections will shape congressional leadership and the path forward for Tribal priorities, but meaningful progress will require sustained advocacy regardless of the outcome. As results become clear, Clause Law will assess the implications for your priorities, track committee leadership changes, and identify opportunities in both the outgoing Congress and the next.

Please feel free to reach out to our team with any questions: Josh Clause (josh@clauselaw.com) or Rani Williams (rani@clauselaw.com).