



The New 117th Congress

The 117th Congress will have a narrower margin in the House, though it will remain under Democratic control. The House currently stands at 222 Democrats and 211 Republicans. Due to a runoff in January, Democrats now have the majority in the Senate. Democrat Raphael Warnock defeated Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler and Jon Ossoff defeated Sen. David Perdue in a Georgia runoff. Democrats needed to win both of the Georgia seats to achieve a 50-50 tie, which, then, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris could then break.

New Congress Highlights

Age. The average age of the incoming Congress is 59, versus 60 in the last Congress, as they leave office. The youngest member, North Carolina Republican Madison Cawthorn, is just 25.

Gender. Women are better represented than before, making up almost 27 percent of the new Congress, though that is still far from equal representation in a country where they make up about half the population. There are 141 women in the new Congress versus 126 in the previous. All of those gains were made in the House. Republican women made huge strides in the House, more than doubling their ranks from 13 to 27, according to GovPredict data. However, most women in Congress are Democrats. They account for 106, versus 35 for Republicans.

Race. The majority of Congress—about 75 percent—is white. Black lawmakers make up 12 percent of the House, up from 11 percent in the last Congress. Hispanic members make up about 9 percent of the House, roughly the same as the last Congress. In the Senate, Black representation remains unchanged in the 117th Congress at about 3 percent (Vice President Kamala Harris has vacated her California Seat, and Raphael Warnock defeated Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler in Georgia.) Hispanic members make up 4 percent, up from 3 percent in the last Congress.

Of course, percentages don't always tell the whole story. There were victories for diversity in this year's election. Washington Democrat Marilyn Strickland and California Republicans Michelle Steel and Young Kim became the first Korean-American women ever elected to Congress. Yvette Herrell of New Mexico is the first Republican Native American woman. Democrat Kaiali'i Kahele is only the second native Hawaiian to represent the state in Congress since it joined the union in 1959.

Sexual Orientation. The 117th Congress will have more LGBTQ members than ever before, according to NBC News. New York Democrats Ritchie Torres and Mondaire Jones will become the first openly gay Black members of Congress. Their election in the House brings the number of LGBTQ lawmakers to 11 in the 117th Congress, including nine in the House and two in the Senate—the most in U.S. history.

Full List of New Members of the 117th Congress

House of Representative Member's Name	Party	District	Senator's Name	Party	State
Jerry Carl	R	AL-1	Tommy Tuberville	R	AL
Berry Moore	R	AL-2	Mark Kelly	D	AZ
David Valadao	R	CA-21	John Hickenlooper	D	CO
Young Kim	R	CA-39	Jon Ossoff	D	GA
Darrell Issa	R	CA-50	Raphael Warnock	D	GA
Sara Jacobs	D	CA-53	Roger Marshall	R	KS
Jay Obernolte	R	CA-8	Ben Ray Lujan	D	NM
Lauren Boebert	R	CO-3	Bill Hagerty	R	TN
Scott Franklin	R	FL-15	Cynthia Lummis	R	WY
Byron Donalds	R	FL-19			
Carlos Gimenez	R	FL-26			
Kat Cammack	R	FL-3			
Marjorie Greene	R	GA-14			
Nikema Williams	D	GA-5			
Carolyn Bourdeaux	D	GA-7			
Andrew Clyde	R	GA-9			
Kaiali'i Kahele	D	HI-2			
Ashley Hinson	R	IA-1			
Mariannette Miller-Meeks	R	IA-2			
Randy Feenstra	R	IA-4			
Mary Miller	R	IL-15			
Marie Newman	D	IL-3			
Frank Mrvan	D	IN-1			
Victoria Spartz	R	IN-5			
Tracey Mann	R	KS-1			
Jake LaTurner	R	KS-2			
Seat will be filled after a special election	R	LA-5			
Lisa McClain	R	MI-10			
Peter Meijer	R	MI-3			
Michelle Fischback	R	MN-7			
Cori Bush	D	MO-1			
Jake Auchincloss	D	MS-4			
Matt Rosendale	R	MT-1			
Madison Cawthorn	R	NC-11			
Deborah Ross	D	NC-2			
Kathing Manning	D	NC-6			
Yvette Herrell	R	NM-2			
Teresa Leger Fernandez	D	NM-3			

Nicole Malliotakis	R	NY-11			
Ritchie Torres	D	NY-15			
Jamaal Bowman	D	NY-16			
Mondaire Jones	D	NY-17			
Race remains undecided and outcome will be determined in court		NY-22			
Andrew Garbarino	R	NY-2			
Stephanie Bice	R	OK-5			
Cliff Bentz	R	OR-2			
Nancy Mace	R	SC-1			
Diana Harshbarger	R	TN-1			
August Pfluger	R	TX-11			
Ronny Jackson	R	TX-13			
Pete Sessions	R	TX-17			
Troy Nehls	R	TX-22			
Tony Gonzales	R	TX-23			
Beth Van Duyne	R	TX-24			
Pat Fallon	R	TX-4			
Blake Moore	R	UT-1			
Robert Good	R	VA-5			
Marilyn Stickland	D	WA-10			
Scott Fitzgerald	R	WI-5			

New Control of the Senate

Due to the final results of the Georgia election in early January, Democrats now have control of the U.S. Senate by the slimmest-possible margin, where any party-line vote will result in a 50-50 tie. The even Senate split, opens the door to a variety of Democratic backed healthcare policies, but gives the Biden administration little margin for error. This split Senate is subject to a power-sharing agreement between the Democratic and Republican leaders. So how does a 50-50 Senate work?

Who leads the Senate? The Senate is led by the party of the vice president, who acts as president of the Senate and breaks ties when they occur. That's the Democratic Party now that Kamala Harris is vice president. Her tie-breaking vote is what made the top Senate Democrat, Chuck Schumer, majority leader. (The Senate technically has 48 Democrats and two independents, Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Angus King of Maine, who reliably vote with them.)

Who chairs the Senate Committees? The majority party assigns a chairman for each of the Senate's 20 permanent committees, holds a majority of seats on each committee and controls most committee staff and resources. But when the Senate was evenly divided at the start of 2001, its Republican and Democratic leaders -- Trent Lott of Mississippi and Tom Daschle of South Dakota -- negotiated a [power-sharing agreement](#) that provided for equal membership on committees, equal budgets for committee Republicans and Democrats, and the

ability of both leaders to advance legislation out of committees that are deadlocked. A similar power-sharing arrangement between Schumer and the Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, is in the works for this term of Congress.

What does this mean for President Biden's Policy Agenda? Though a supermajority of 60 senators is generally needed to pass major legislation in the Senate, the chamber moves routine measures without a formal vote, and a simple majority is enough to advance certain annual budget and tax-related measures via a process known as reconciliation. With regards to Biden's policy agenda, reconciliation could be used to raise some tax rates, lower the eligibility for Medicare and expand the Affordable Care Act. If Democrats stay united, this process could also be used to enact additional stimulus relief, and portions of Biden's climate and immigration priorities. Finally, having a simple majority will also enable Democrats to pass measures canceling regulations issued recently by the Trump administration, and move through the president's executive and judicial nominations.

What is the biggest barrier to complete control by the Democrats? Republicans have the power to filibuster demand unlimited debate on legislation that doesn't have the backing of a 60-vote supermajority. That means the narrow Democratic majority would need to win over at least 10 Republicans, a huge challenge, to advance non-budgetary initiatives on topics such as the federal minimum wage, family leave, labor rights, and background checks for gun purchases.

Who are the swing votes that hold all the power in the new Senate? Conservative Democrats such as Joe Manchin of West Virginia, and Republicans who early on signaled a willingness to work with the new administration are Utah's Mitt Romney, Maine's Susan Collins, and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski.