



## Democrats Defy History and Expectations in 2022 Midterms

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TO: Interested Parties

FR: Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee

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**Topline:** House Democrats overperformed expectations. Facing major headwinds, Democrats carried a strong message and made strategic investments, limiting Republican victories. Now that they've had an embarrassing midterm performance, House Republicans will be forced to govern a MAGA Majority on the narrowest of margins.

### THE RESULTS: Democrats overperformed expectations, Republicans failed miserably.

- **Everyone was suggesting there would be a “Red Wave.”** Kevin McCarthy said we'd lose 60 seats, NRCC Chair Tom Emmer said 70 seats, historical models suggested 45 seats, the Cook Political Report had us losing 15-30 seats, FiveThirtyEight suggested it was all but certain Democrats would lose key seats we ended up winning, and days before election day, nearly every media outlet suggested Democrats had all but lost the election by 25 seats.
- **By every measure this election was HISTORIC.** Faced with [overwhelming resources](#) from Republican Super PACs, House Democrats still oversaw the best first term midterm for a Democratic president since John F. Kennedy in 1962.
- Every seat matters, and there are still a few that have yet to be called. We have multiple districts that will be won by just a handful of votes. Along with our legal team, we are working to ensure every vote is counted.

### HOW WE GOT HERE: Facing major headwinds, Democrats carried a strong message and made strategic investments, limiting Republican victories.

- Amid inflation, distrust, and history telling everyone that midterms were a referendum on the sitting president and the governing party – **Democrats made this election a choice.**
- Throughout the cycle, the DCCC made a concerted effort to disqualify Republicans for their extremism – from [J.R. Majweski](#) to [Yesli Vega](#) to [Sandy Smith](#), to [Alek Skarlatos](#) and more.
- Despite not having an actual plan on either, polling showed that Republicans were favored on the economy and public safety. Democrats managed to fight these issues to a draw – hitting Republicans on their top testing negatives like abortion and Social Security while carrying a positive economic message showing voters that Democrats are the only ones fighting to tackle the challenges everything families are facing.



- The DCCC invested in developing strong counter arguments to the most potent GOP messages, including developing a playbook for addressing “defund the police” attacks that Democratic candidates successfully employed across the House battlefield.

### **Investing in Disciplined and Strategic Messaging**

- **Democrats exercised intense message discipline over a range of issues that matter to voters.**
  - Democrats and the DCCC made the contrast clear on everything from abortion, to the economy, gun violence, democracy, and more. We knew we could walk and chew gum at the same time: we drew an effective contrast between results-oriented Democrats who are working to lower costs and keep communities safe, and extreme Republicans who pose a real threat to your reproductive freedoms and your Social Security.
    - The DCCC ran 205 TV and radio ads this cycle. Of those, 105, or 51% mentioned abortion, 87, or 42% mentioned the economy, and 30, or 14% mentioned January 6th or extremism.
    - Democratic candidates ran 563 ads. Of those, 108 (19%) mention crime/law enforcement, 149 (26%) mention abortion, 320 (57%) mention economic issues, and 86 (15%) mention January 6th or extremism.
  - The DCCC made unprecedented investments in digital advertising. The IE spent a total of \$17.4 million on digital advertising, almost 20% of the overall budget. Nearly every IE TV buy also had digital underneath.

### **Investing in Voters of Color**

- **With the [Building Our Base project](#), a historic \$30 million effort, we made strategic investments in organizing, paid media, digital media, and communities of color.**
  - DCCC began organizing nine months earlier than ever before, in the spring of 2021, to make sure Democrats had a meaningful presence in competitive districts.
  - DCCC intentionally invested in oversampling voters of color in national polls and conducted several deep dive research projects over the course of the cycle, some in language and with a focus on drop off Latino and Black men.
  - On paid media: The DCCC IE spent over \$21 million on targeted constituency media in 2022 and the DCCC spent almost \$6 million in coordinated spending between AAPI, Black, and Latino engagement teams.
  - Based on our initial analysis, we held our support with Latino and Black voters thanks to this focus.

## Candidate Quality

- **We had better candidates than Republicans did.** Republican nominees were simply too extreme for swing voters.
- For years, Republicans from Kevin McCarthy on down embraced extremism, lies, and conspiracy theories.
- After [failing to stop](#) some of these extreme nominees (or in the case of Peter Meijer, refusing to stop them), Republicans embraced them. The NRCC and Kevin McCarthy propped up and named insurrectionists, alleged domestic abusers, and conspiracy theorists to their 'Young Guns' program. And McCarthy and Tom Emmer campaigned alongside them from Joe Kent (WA-03) to J.R. Majewski (OH-09) to John Gibbs (MI-03).
- While many rush to blame Donald Trump for these losses, House Republicans were the ones that failed to condemn extremism when they had the chance.

## WHAT LIES AHEAD: Now that they've had an embarrassing midterm performance, House Republicans will be forced to govern on the narrowest of margins – with an out of control caucus.

- In a continuation of the past few years, Republicans are showing that they are more concerned with power for themselves than anything else as they jockey for leadership positions and suffer from infighting.
- **There is clearly a divide among members of the Republican caucus.** Members are attacking Tom Emmer for his subpar performance as NRCC chair, Andy Biggs challenged McCarthy for speakership, Marjorie Taylor Greene is throwing all of her support behind McCarthy as he promises to reinstate her on powerful committees, and other members are reportedly willing to work with Democrats to nominate a moderate speaker.
- Republicans will have one of the narrowest majorities ever. Thanks to Democrats defying history and limiting GOP victories, it is less likely that Republicans will be able to implement some of their more extreme goals.
- Republicans should not get too comfortable with the gavels – in two years' time voters will recognize just how ineffective a chaotic House Republican caucus is and throw them out.

## REFLECTING ON SOME VICTORIES: Democrats netted major wins:

- We held onto Biden seats with battle-tested incumbents like WA-08, PA-07, MI-07, MI-08, VA-07, GA-02, IN-01, KS-03 and MN-02.
- We held onto Trump seats with strong incumbents in PA-08, OH-09, and ME-02.



- We held onto Democratic open seats like RI-02, NC-01, CO-07, OH-13, IL-17, PA-17 and OR-04.
- We flipped six Republican-held seats thus far: WA-03, IL-13, MI-03, NC-13, OH-01, and NM-02.
- We won at least three new seats created through reapportionment: NC-14, CO-08, and OR-06.
- In New England, Republicans [hyped](#) a [comeback](#) – they did not win a [single House race in New England](#).
- We had clean sweeps in six states– Michigan, Ohio, Nevada, Illinois, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania – Democrats won all competitive seats in these states.
- We fended off Republican challenges in South Texas with wins in TX-28 and TX-34, won CO-08, all New Mexico districts, NV-01, NV-03, and NV-04, and are neck-and-neck in too-close-to-call races where Latino voters play an important role like CA-13 and CA-22, disproving the notion that Latinos are breaking for Republicans in significant ways this cycle. Read more about the DCCC's Latino investments and efforts [here](#).
- According to an internal survey of FEC reports, CLF and the NRCC burned more than \$175 million on competitive races they have lost – a sign of Democratic candidate strength, Republican candidate weakness, and a failed Republican strategy that wasted resources in races that were not winnable against such strong Democratic incumbents. This number will increase as more results come in.