

usa midterm election preview



CONVERGENCE

Transgender People Should Not Be Objects of Hate

FERRARI ZHANG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In recent years, a debate has arisen over transgender individual-related issues, with particular focus on wash-room use, the availability of medical transitions, and sports competitions. This debate is a fierce one throughout the Anglosphere with far more nuance than many would acknowledge. I will admit that I do not have the expertise to wade into the arguments. However, evidence-based arguments within the debate are overshadowed, regrettably, by hate, disdain, and fearmongering against transgender people across many levels of society.

The reason this article is in this particular issue of *Convergence* is quite simple: transphobia in American politics is almost a competitive sport. Republican candidates and politicians frequently use transgender people as political props. The clearest example of this happened in 2022: the Republican legislature of Utah banned transgender athletes from competing in scholastic sports despite only one transgender athlete being affected by the ban. According to the Trans Legislation Tracker, 997 anti-transgender bills were passed between 2023 and 2026, with 162 washroom regulation bills alone, for a demographic consisting of around one percent of the US population. It gets worse during election season: whenever election seasons come around, hundreds of millions of dollars (mostly from Elon Musk) are spent on ads with fearmongering slogans such as

“the Democrats are for they/them” instead of pressing economic issues. Anti-transgender slurs are openly thrown around in a way that would be career-ending if it was about a race or even the other members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. For example, Donald Trump called the Democratic nominee for South Carolina’s Senate seat, Annie Andrews (a cisgender woman), one such slur in a campaign speech, which was also used by other Republican politicians such as US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth and congresswoman Nancy Mace.

Unfortunately, many within the Democratic Party are abandoning its defence of the transgender community. California governor Gavin Newsom, a potential presidential contender, appeared in a podcast with the late Charlie Kirk decrying the “unfairness” of trans athletes competing in school sports, ignoring nuance and evidence to the contrary, while Democrats in key swing states such as Ohio are releasing ads against “transgender ideology”.

What is most telling is Andrews’ response to Trump: she stated that transgender women are biologically male (which is partially true at best) and was quick to dissociate from any notion of support for the transgender community. What is so infuriating about this political trend is less so about the substance of the debate itself. Rather, it is with regards to the dehumanization of transgender people, the reluctance of supposedly open-minded people to speak out for the community, and the fact-free nature of discussion surrounding many of the hot-button issues. For many politicians, the existence of transgender people seems to be an “ideology” in need of wiping out. Not once did these people think to consult experts, or heaven forbid, an actual transgender person — that would disrupt the narrative that they are mythical monsters lurking in washrooms plotting to medically transition every child they see.

Do not be fooled, however, to think that

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Transgender People Should Not Be Objects of Hate

this is just a south-of-the-border issue: governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan have already passed legislation targeting transgender participation in *amateur* sports, with the leader of the incoming government in BC also supporting bills that supposedly curtail “transgender ideology”. Through no fault of their own, transgender people have become the demonized minority of society *du jour*, receiving blame for all sorts of social maladies while politicians cynically deflect from their own failures.

This demonization has had heavy measurable repercussions, not just in the US. Many transgender people live in fear as their cisgender neighbours and schoolmates have been given the “permission to hate” from social media and transphobic politicians. Hate crimes in California against transgender people tripled between 2013 and 2024, coinciding with the rise in anti-transgender hate rhetoric. This has also happened in Canada, with a similar tripling of hate crimes and over 70% of transgender individuals reporting as being affected. Reflecting this atmosphere, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has issued red flags on the basis that current dehumanization of transgender individuals resemble the early stages of a genocide. Those issues are combined with already-catastrophic levels of homelessness (around 40% of transgender people experience homelessness) and poverty to make for some truly dangerous times for the transgender community.

This is not some issue that we are a spectator of. Transphobia is a latent force in Canada and potentially in the UCC community as well.

If you have any thoughts about either this article or the US midterm elections in general, let us know via a letter to the editor by scanning the QR code below.



I distinctly remember the 2024 US election season, when more than one person confided to me in their hate of transgender people as I was moderating political discussions that had nothing to do with such issues. I also remember the murmurs and cold reception to a video of Chas Conacher, an alumni of our school who transitioned after their graduation, as well as the act of vandalism that targeted their legacy at the college. Even beyond my anecdotal experiences, the UCC community is distinctly vulnerable to this type of propaganda, not only because young men are the primary targets of far-right manosphere-adjacent content in social media, but also because we have very little exposure to transgender classmates, which makes dehumanizing tropes more potent.

Currently, the school is not doing enough to address this unspoken problem: there is not enough education specifically on transgender individuals, as opposed to more generic assertions of Pride, to counter the specific trend of anti-transgender propaganda.

Nor is there enough space in the curriculum to explain processes such as gender transition. The solution is not simple, but there are a few potential approaches: first, there can be more space dedicated to this type of education, such as adding content to health and sex-ed classes for the biological aspects and Year 10 English for the sociological aspects. Second, more transgender individuals should be invited to speak at the College about their experiences and their work.

Despite this, most of the onus is on us, the students: we should listen to other perspectives and not instantly reject ones that are strange or counter to our initial beliefs. Most importantly, as allies, it is our duty to speak out and defend the right for all 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to live their own lives. When others try to stoke fear, resist with courage and love. To cite the late Jack Layton: love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

DEMOCRATS HOLD COMMANDING LEAD IN UCC COMMUNITY

FERRARI ZHANG

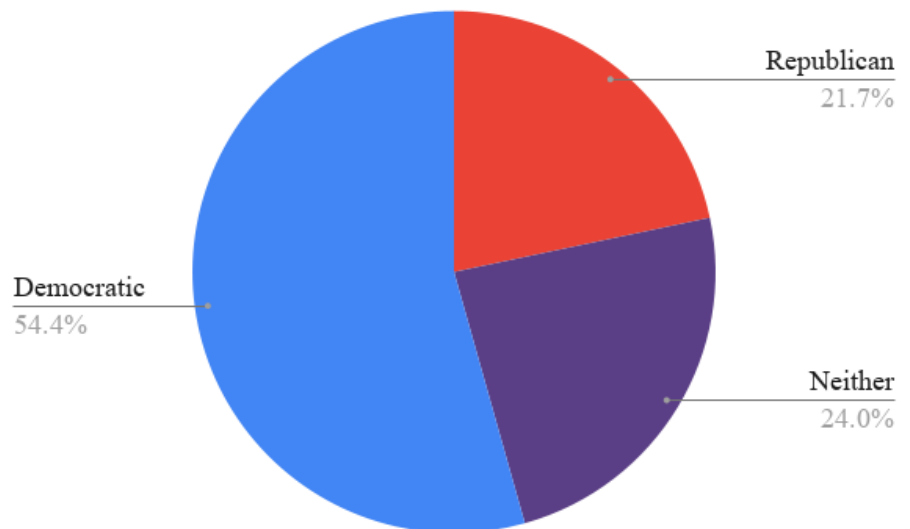
SURVEY CREATED BY FERRARI ZHANG

Between October 5 and 8, *Convergence* polled 127 members of the UCC community, including students of all ages and faculty, on their opinions regarding the upcoming United States midterms and the issues surrounding it. Although UCC is not in the US, around 10% of the community possess American citizenship and American trade policies affect Canada deeply as a whole. Based on weighted poll results, **54.4%** of the community support the Democratic Party, **21.7%** would support the Republican Party, while **24.0%** would support neither party. This represents a 26-point shift to the left from *Convergence's* poll results in 2024, when Democrat Kamala Harris obtained 48.4% of support while Republican Donald Trump obtained 41.8%. Weighting in the poll adjusted the MYP/DP/Faculty ratio according to *College Times* 2026, and the resulting poll has a margin of error of 8.1%.

This shift corresponds to broader polling trends across the UCC community, Canada, and the US. Donald Trump's approval rates have fallen to around 30-35% in the US and only 17% in UCC, while the Democratic Party has been consistently leading national-level polls in the US. However, this will not neatly translate to election results, as the state-based electoral system of the US distorts popular vote results significantly. This is reflected in the school's perceived win likelihood for each party: only 41.8% think that the Democrats will flip both the House of Representatives and the Senate, while 41.3% believe that Republicans will keep the Senate and 16.9% believe that Republicans will keep both chambers.

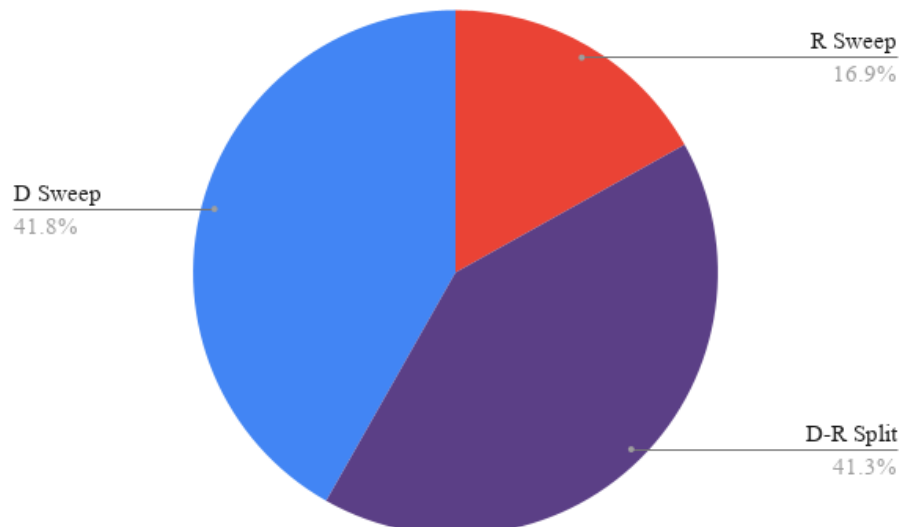
Which party do you primarily support for the upcoming US midterm elections?

Weighted on 127 UCC community responses, margin of error $\pm 8.1\%$ with 95% confidence.



In your opinion, what is the most likely outcome of the US midterm elections?

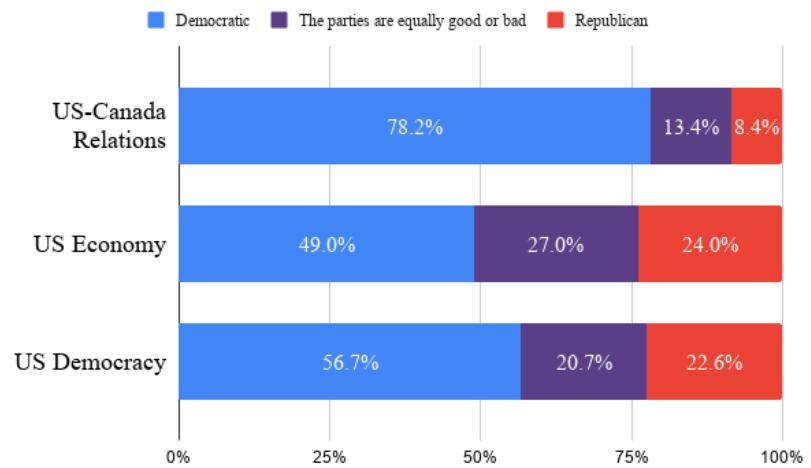
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DEMOCRATS HOLD COMMANDING LEAD IN UCC COMMUNITY

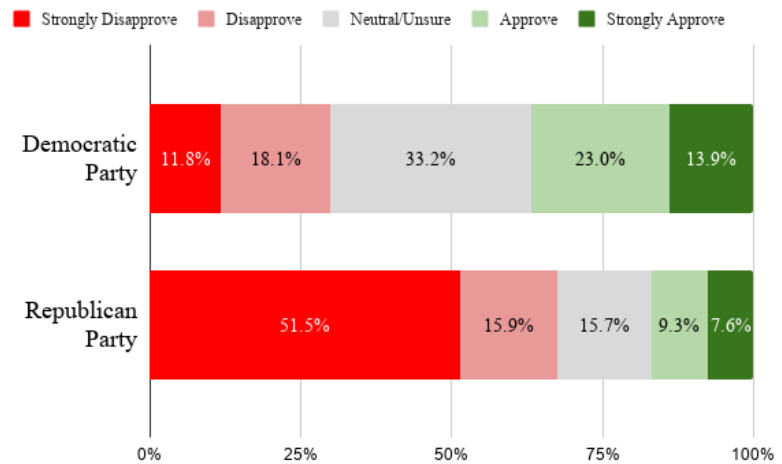
Democrats Are More Trusted On Every Major Issue

Convergence polled the UCC community on three major issues: US-Canada relations, the American economy, and the protection of American democracy. The Democratic party is the more trusted party in every single issue, leading US-Canada relations by 70 points, the American economy by 25 points, and the protection of American democracy by 34 points. The particular strength of the lead the Democratic Party has on US-Canada relations may be due to the US-Canada trade war, started by Donald Trump and opposed by the majority of the Democratic Party. Democratic leads in the economy, traditionally a strong point for the Republicans, may be explained by high costs of living across North America, whereas its lead in protecting democracy may be explained by high-profile immigration enforcement operations by ICE and attempts by Republicans to influence traditionally non-partisan political institutions such as the FBI and the Department of Justice.



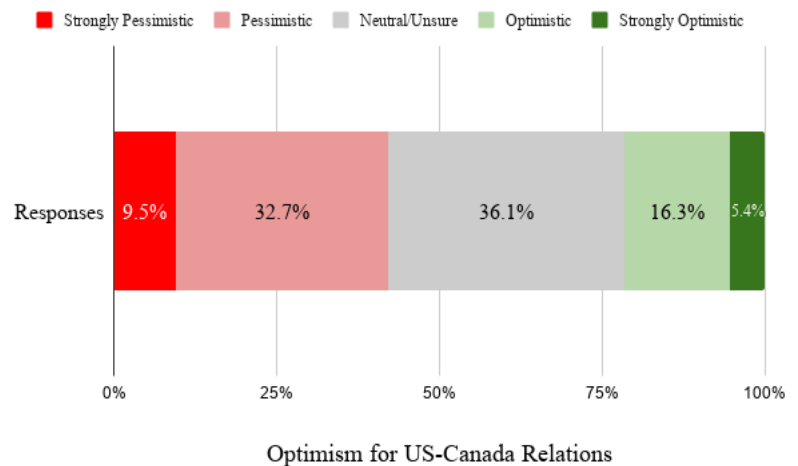
Abysmal Approval Rates for Republicans Correspond to That of Trump

UCC is by and large quite ambiguous about the Democratic Party, with a +7% net approval rating combined with 33% of respondents expressing neutrality or uncertainty with regards to their approval of the party. However, this is not the case with the Republican Party: its net disapproval rating is -50%, with 52% of respondents strongly disapproving. This corresponds closely with Donald Trump's net approval rating in *Convergence's* October municipal election poll, at -56%. This speaks to a comprehensive rejection of Republican policies implemented since 2024 and the Republican brand.



Uncertainty For What the Future Holds

Although a plurality of the school is pessimistic about the future of US-Canada relations (at around 42%), 36% of respondents expressed neutrality or uncertainty about the future of US-Canada relations and 22% of respondents expressed optimism. This, along with a low occurrence of strongly pessimistic opinions, suggests that although sentiments have dampened in response to the ongoing trade war, there is still a degree of ambiguity about what the future holds, leaving space for a future rebound if the Democratic Party manages to improve bilateral relations.



DEMOCRATS HOLD COMMANDING LEAD IN UCC COMMUNITY

Convergence has as per tradition asked students and faculty for their comments on the election. *Convergence* is committed to representing all voices, aiming to reflect different sentiments of the UCC community without bias. Thus, all responses will be displayed below without alteration, and do not necessarily reflect *Convergence's* political stance. We sincerely appreciate everyone who participated in the poll and shared insightful comments.

"A new US leader needs to think differently before the relationship of Canada and the US can be mended."

"Trump and MAGA are a parasite on the world. The quicker he is gone and with him all his sycophants, the more likely we can improve global relations."

"The authoritarian devolution of US society is a catastrophe for all of us, especially Americans, and a repair of any international political/economic relationship with the US will take decades, not a single election cycle."

"The Democratic Party is far from perfect, but they are an excellent alternative to the current Republican MAGA leadership"

"the us is cooked"

"Trump is ruining everything"

"Iran has deliberately prolonged talks with the US to try to weaken Donald Trump politically ahead of November's US mid-term elections, senior officials say"

"Vote for the lesser evil"

"God save the King! The Americans, having betrayed their gracious King, do not deserve democracy!"

"Yo I hope Abdul wins Michigan"

"I hate both the parties but the democratic party is lesser of the two evils."

"Trump is mainly my issue with the republican party, not the people in and of themselves."

"The political landscape in the United States is like picking between two crimes. Both political parties have ill intent for the citizens of their country. But as a Canadian, I would much rather have a democratic majority than a republican as democrats align more with my views."

"I liked the Republican Party before Trumps foreign agenda. I'm now on the fence"

"F*** Trump"

"if you guys actually read this in the next convergence article put a easter egg"

"Solja boy for prez"

"Honestly, Trump is the best. So many of these larpers talking bad about tesla and trump. Y'all better not cancel me for this opinion."

"the relation between us and the US will never fully heal"

"Have a good day."

"Horrible government fire everyone id do better"

"(If he wins the ohio senate race) Sherrod Brown should run for president in 2028"

"Republicans are a good party with a bad leader, once Trump goes people will realize that they are just like-minded people. and the democrats are just not that smart."

"67 89 will you be mine"

"I'm gonna build a wall and it's gonna be the greatest that anyone has ever built."

"I still lean very conservative, and a part of having that identity is the avoidance of unnecessary foreign interference which is why I've stopped supporting Trump since Iran."

"i want republicans because of israel"

"Just for the question regarding how each party handles US - Canada relations better, I feel the word better is quite variable as while the Democratic Party maybe be "better" for Canada the same may be said about the Republican Party being "better" for America."



THE WINGS OF LIBERTY - A REFLECTION

WILLIAM ZHOU
SENIOR EDITOR

Every October, the geese rise from the marshes of Ontario and turn south toward warmer waters. This autumn, as they make their crossing, Americans will make a crossing of their own. On November 3rd, in the Mid-Term Elections, voters in the United States will choose all 435 members of the House of Representatives, 35 senators and dozens of governors. Although none of us in this school will cast a ballot, the outcome of these elections will shape our lives more directly than most elections in recent memory.

Canadians have long understood what it means to live beside the US: together, both countries share the longest international land border in the world, at over 8,800 kilometers. In 1969, famously, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau compared this state to being able to feel “every twitch and grunt” of our southern neighbour. By 2025, roughly \$3.5 billion in goods and services crossed our shared border each day. However, in that same year, to the horror of many Canadians, the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, imposed tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum, automobiles and lumber. Then announced in July that the US would not renew the Canada-US-Mexico-Agreement, and imposed tariffs up to fifty percent on a range of Canadian goods.

However dismaying these breakdowns may seem, they are unsurprising in light of how the American President has treated Canada so far in his second term. Since early 2025, he has repeatedly suggested that Canada would become America’s “51st state,” a proposal which many Canadian leaders have dismissed as ludicrous.

In August, he signed an executive order renaming Lake Ontario to “Lake America.” Indeed, these attacks are not unique to our country. In January 2025, President Trump signed an order renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the “Gulf of America”, and to our north, Trump has even threatened to take control of Greenland. Whatever one’s view of these policies are, their lesson is clear: Canadian livelihoods now rise and fall, in part, with the mood of American voters. Although we are not voters in this election, we are most certainly its constituents.



What, then, is required of students who cannot yet vote? First, it requires that we become more politically informed. It means reading the news regularly, including sources whose perspectives we might disagree with, so that our understanding of the world can rest on evidence rather than the loudest voices. It means learning how our own institutions function, from the Parliament and courts to our city councils, so that we understand the systems that govern our lives before we are asked to govern them ourselves.

And most importantly, it means the discipline to oppose ideas without despising those who hold them. Our democracy depends on people who can disagree respectfully. We need to recognize that most political questions involve complex trade-offs rather than simple choices between right and wrong. Within a decade, our generation will

be voting, entering public service, and leading the institutions of both nations. We will also inherit the fire of our age: the algorithms and artificial intelligence that increasingly influence how we learn, argue and decide, and whose power to inform or to mislead we have only begun to comprehend. Ultimately, whether this power strengthens or destroys our world will depend, in no small part, on our decisions.

Democracy very much flies like a bird, which needs both wings; it stays flying only when we, as citizens, can cooperate and criticize each other without treating one another as enemies. The bald eagle on America’s Great Seal soars alone; Washington has lately flown much the same way by raising tariffs on its closest allies and pressing against the borders of its neighbours. The Canadian Geese, by contrast, rarely flies alone but instead in formation: perhaps connoting our reliance less on our independent strength, but more on our partnerships, with allies abroad and among citizens at home.

On November 3, Americans will cast their ballots, but the ‘Wings of Liberty’ belong to no single nation; how they beat in one country is felt across the whole globe. By the time the geese return in spring, the consequences will have crossed the border long before them. Although we can not vote in this election, we can prepare for the ones that will one day be ours. In that sense, this midterm is a test of our own, one we face as the inevitable tide of time carries us into an increasingly polarized society. We would be wise to begin studying now.

MOST IMPORTANT US MIDTERM RACES

FERRARI ZHANG

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Amidst seismic changes in the US political landscape, another midterm election is being contested. The Republicans currently have a trifecta (controlling the presidency, House of Representatives, and Senate), whereas the Democrats seek to recover the House and the Senate.

Currently, the polling environment is very Democratic-friendly due to the cost of living crisis, although exact reasons may differ by state. The midterm elections, being a collection of different races scattered across the fifty states, are much harder to follow than the presidential election. This article will focus on the most important Senate and gubernatorial elections, with states numbered from A to Z. The relatively high number of competitive House races means that this article cannot cover those races, although despite heavy gerrymandering by both sides, Democrats are highly favoured to retake the House.

Alaska: Senate

Former Democratic House Representative Mary Peltola faces off against two Republicans both named Dan Sullivan. Dan J. Sullivan is accused by national Republicans of being a decoy candidate, whose purpose is to split votes from Dan S. Sullivan, the incumbent senator.

Although Alaska uses ranked-choice voting and not first-past-the-post like the rest of the US (and Canada), many voters do not recognize this distinction and only rank one candidate. This accusation has been substantiated by a recent *New York Times* report, which suggested deliberate recruitment of Dan J. by Democratic operatives.

Peltola is moderate and has a strong voter base in Indigenous Alaskans, due to her support for oil extraction, gun rights, and the restoration of Alaskan fisheries. This race is a toss-up, with Peltola slightly favoured. It must be duly noted that former Anchorage mayor Dan A. Sullivan has endorsed Dan S. Sullivan.

Colorado: Governor

Democratic state Attorney General Phil Weiser faces Republican Victor Marx in the gubernatorial election. Marx, whose father's name is Karl, is a Christian fundamentalist who claimed to have killed someone at age seven. Additional claims include slamming his wife against a door and performing exorcisms. Weiser is heavily favoured to win the election.

Georgia: Senate & Governor

Senator Jon Ossoff is seeking re-election. A young future presidential prospect, he will likely win re-election, but the margins will matter for his odds of becoming the official Democratic nominee in 2028, should he choose to run. The gubernatorial election between Keisha Lance Bottoms and Rick Jackson is more of a tossup, and may affect the future gerrymandering capacities of Georgia Republicans.

Iowa: Senate & Governor

Republican House Representative Ashley Hinson is running against Democratic former Paralympian Josh Turek to succeed incumbent senator Joni Ernst. Ordinarily, Iowa is a Republican-leaning state, but its agriculture-based economy was heavily hit by the Iran War, cuts instituted by the Big Beautiful Bill (BBB), and the US-Canada trade war. As a result, Hinson is in dead heat with Turek.

Democratic state auditor Rob Sand is one of most popular politicians in the state, and is likely to become the first Democratic governor in sixteen years.

Kansas: Senate

Incumbent Republican senator Roger Marshall is facing Democratic pastor Reverend Adam Hamilton. Kansas is ordinarily a Republican-leaning state. However, its economy is facing much of the same issues facing Iowa, and earlier missteps by governor Sam Brownback led to the election of Democrat Laura Kelly as governor.

Candidate quality is again a problem for Republicans: Rev. Hamilton's role as pastor of the largest Methodist congregation in the US insulates him from many criticisms ordinarily directed towards Democrats, while Marshall is under fire for suing and detaining his former patients for medical debts as little as 50\$ USD. As a result, this election can also be considered a tossup. Should Hamilton win, Kansas will have its first Democratic senator since the Great Depression.



Susan Collins – Senator from Maine (R)

MOST IMPORTANT US MIDTERM RACES

Maine: Senate

Maine is considered a Democratic state, and the impact of the US-Canada trade war certainly makes it more so. However, despite being implicated in corruption allegations, incumbent Republican Susan Collins is popular for her relatively moderate positions and her ability to advocate for Maine in the Senate. In any case, her scandals are insignificant compared to that of the original Democratic candidate, Graham Platner, who, among many lesser allegations, was accused of rape by a former partner. He was then replaced by Troy Jackson, who initially supported Platner. Jackson lacks the charisma and popularity of either Platner or Collins, making this election a toss-up. The Maine Democratic Party ignored sexual and non-sexual misconduct by Platner until it was too late, which may cost them the election.

Michigan: Senate

Having voted for Donald Trump in 2024, he is now much less popular due to the cost-of-living crisis. Democratic former health director of Detroit Dr. Abdul El-Sayed is facing former Republican House Representative Mike Rogers. El-Sayed's primary with Representative Haley Stevens was close and divisive due to their completely opposite stances on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Although Stevens endorsed El-Sayed, this toxic atmosphere has not dissipated. The campaign is deeply personal, so much so that Rogers and El-Sayed attacked each others' records on 9/11 (usually a third rail in American politics), while allegations of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism run amok. This race is a toss-up, with El-Sayed slightly favoured.

Ohio: Senate & Governor

Ohio, having been reliably Republican for the past decade, is moving back into competitive territory due to high prices and its close proximity to Ontario. Former Democratic senator Sherrod Brown is running against incumbent senator Jon Husted. Although Husted is the incumbent, he is only so as a replacement for Vice President JD Vance, and has low name recognition compared to Brown, who had been senator for eighteen years until his defeat in 2024. Therefore, Brown is at a small advantage. Interestingly, data centres have become an epicentre of campaigning, with a fiercely anti-data centre Brown tying Husted to the high rate of construction of such centres in Ohio. This may be a harbinger of things to come. The gubernatorial race has also become quite nasty due to an attack ad considered a low-blow even by American standards: read the article on midterm ads to find out why.

Texas: Senate & Governor

Incumbent Republican Senator John Cornyn was defeated in the primary by state Attorney General Ken Paxton. Paxton is facing Democratic state Representative James Talarico. Paxton's scandals are numerous: from being impeached by the Republican-controlled legislature for corruption, to numerous extra-marital affairs, to questionably lenient treatment of those convicted of pedophilia, he is perhaps the most unpopular politician in Texas. Additionally, the unpopularity of Trump's administration in majority-Hispanic areas may cause a collapse in Republican support in Texas, independent of Paxton's unpopularity. Talarico does not carry the burden of those scandals and is adept at social media strategy.

As a result, Talarico holds a narrow lead over Paxton. Incumbent governor Greg Abbott is more popular than Paxton, but his lead over Democrat Gina Hinojosa is narrowing as well, in some part also due to his support for data centres. If the Republican Party were to lose any election in Texas, their largest base of support for sixty years, the national party would have to seriously rethink its policies and strategies.



James Talarico

Beyond The Headlines

The horse race is on every two years in the US, but important developments happen in the background. It is impossible to understand US politics without understanding the fragility of its political institutions, the byzantine political treatises and systems holding the machine up, and the rapid pace at which the country has changed in the past five years. Hopefully, the outcome of the elections affect both the US and Canada positively, but there are a lot of factors beyond the control of the people.

MIDTERM ADS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

TIMOTHY GU

STAFF REPORTER

The 2026 midterm elections cycle has produced a slew of controversial, cringey, and frankly unhinged ads as candidates get more and more desperate for social media clout and viral outrage. As outsiders watching the elections, we can get a fascinating perspective into how political communication has rapidly evolved in the digital age through campaign media. Here is a breakdown of the good, the bad, the ugly, and the wild west of 2026 US midterm ads.

The Good: Abdul El-Sayed - "Jan & Judy"

Michigan Democratic Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed uses ads to turn xenophobic rhetoric directed towards his name into a heartwarming, authentic narrative. In this ad, an elderly white couple initially act as the xenophobic voices critiquing his name and faith, only to reveal their true identity as his real-life grandparents. They then launch into an advocacy for his character and policies. The ad's grainy aesthetic creates a heartwarming sense of closeness and sincerity. It plays into the same narrative as Obama's iconic "skinny kid with a funny name" framing in his 2004 DNC speech, amplifying his Michigan roots and painting himself as a uniquely authentic and relatable candidate.

The Bad: Steve Hilton "Just Try It, California"

California Republican gubernatorial candidate Steve Hilton's "Just try it, California" video has blown up as one of the cycle's most viral videos.

But virality does not correlate with effectiveness. In the ad, a heavily stereotyped lesbian couple, caricatured with dyed hair and nose rings, discusses a secret issue. One says that she's "never done it before" and worries "what would happen if her dad finds out", while the other tries to convince her to "just try it". The camera pans down, and reveals the source of her hesitation: filling out a ballot for Hilton. The sexual innuendo and the stereotypical depiction of the characters gave many voters "the ick", but the shock factor contributed to the success of making the video viral. This ad reflects a larger trend of political communication shifting its focus away from substance and towards virality, believing in the principle that "all publicity is good publicity".

The Ugly: Vivek Ramaswamy's Attack Ad against Amy Acton

Ohio Republican governor candidate Vivek Ramaswamy ran an attack ad featuring Democratic candidate Amy Acton's mother, Donna Arthur, who had been estranged from Acton for decades. In the ad, she stated that "[Amy] is a liar; she lies about her past" and that "she can't help you if she needs help herself", urging voters not to vote for Acton.

Even worse, reports confirmed that Donna Arthur had directly enabled Acton's molestation by her step-father Cledith Arthur. As a result, Ramaswamy has faced significant backlash from both parties. This ad has also caused great division within the Republican party: despite many Republicans across the country from Mike DeWine to Nikki Haley openly denouncing the ad,

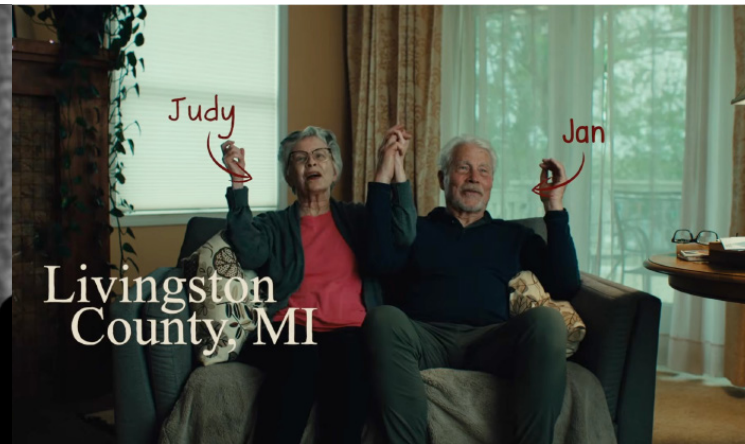
President Trump has wholeheartedly endorsed the ad, writing on social media that "Vivek should keep it up, and let everyone listen to the mother of a defective, dishonest, and incapable Candidate...".

The Wild West: AI ads

The 2026 Midterms marks the first US election cycle with widespread use of AI imagery in campaign ads. A report from Wesleyan University finds over 220 midterm ads that used AI-generated visuals, deepfake imagery, or synthetic voice clone audio. 70% of these ads contained no disclaimer informing viewers that AI was used in the creation of these ads. Interestingly, over 80% of the identified AI-powered ads were produced by either conservative campaigns or conservative-aligned political action committees, using them to make their opponent appear next to extremely polarizing Democratic figures such as AOC or Hillary Clinton. With AI, campaigns are able to fabricate lies without any consequences and generate "visual proof" out of thin air, presenting a dangerous possibility for the future of political communication.

The US midterm political ads offer us a direct view into how the mechanics of political communication are shifting: Ads are no longer focused on concrete political persuasion, but are rather engineered to evoke outrage, controversy, and online attention, reflecting a political environment that is increasingly driven by internet culture, hyper-polarization, and AI.

MIDTERM ADS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



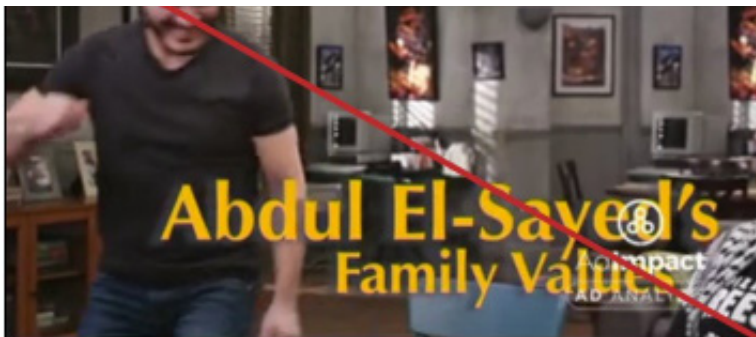
"Jan & Judy"



"Just Try It"



Vivek Ramaswamy's Attack Ad



AI Generated Ads