Republican Party wins control of the US House of Representatives

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The Republican Party has won control of the US House of Representatives, according to projections by the Associated Press and the television networks early Wednesday evening. Republican candidates had won 218 seats, the exact number required for a majority. The Democrats won 211 seats, with six seats still too close to call, according to various tallies of the district-by-district results.

The six seats still undecided include three held by Republicans and three held by Democrats before the election. In each district, the party which had held the seat was in the lead in the vote counting. This led to widespread media forecasts that the ultimate division in the House would be 221-214, compared to the 222-213 majority held by the Democrats before the election.

The result is a divided legislature with historically narrow majorities: The Senate controlled by the Democratic Party 50-49, with one seat awaiting a runoff in Georgia on December 6; and the House controlled by the Republican Party, likely by a seven-seat majority. There has not been a smaller majority in the House since 1848, before the Republican Party came into existence.

Under the rules of the House, however, a narrow majority can pass any bill on which it is united. There is no filibuster rule, although for the bill to become law, it must pass the Senate and be signed by the president.

The House majority, no matter how small its margin, has full authority on such matters as investigations. One of the first actions of the new Republican-controlled House will be to shut down the House Select Committee investigating the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol and rescind all its subpoenas for documents and testimony.

This is likely to be followed by investigations aimed at the Biden administration, such as a probe of the collapse of the US puppet regime in Afghanistan, and at Biden personally, with the business dealings of his son Hunter a major target.

Despite the likelihood of such embarrassments, however, Biden immediately congratulated Republican leader Kevin McCarthy. An official message, which was sent from the White House within minutes of the media "call" that the Republicans would take a majority in the House, declared that the Democratic president is "ready to work with House Republicans to deliver results for working families."

"Last week's elections demonstrated the strength and resilience of American democracy. There was a strong rejection of election deniers, political violence and intimidation," Biden continued. "There was an emphatic statement that, in America, the will of the people prevails … the future is too promising to be trapped in political warfare."

Actually, while the American people reject Trump's lies about a "stolen election," the majority of House Republicans do not: They voted not to certify Biden's own victory in the Electoral College, even after the fascist mob attack on Congress.

Biden concluded with a further appeal for bipartisan collaboration. "The American people want us to get things done for them. They want us to focus on the issues that matter to them and on making their lives better. And I will work with anyone—Republican or Democrat—willing to work with me to deliver results for them."

This is more than just political boilerplate. Biden is counting on the Republicans to support his right-wing foreign policy, particularly in relation to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the aggressive posture of American imperialism toward China, North Korea and Iran.

On domestic policy, a Republican majority in the House will become an all-purpose excuse for the Biden administration abandoning even the threadbare pretense of social reform that occupied much of its first two years

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in office. During that time, Biden had to rely on two right-wing Senate Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, to block measures on spending, expanding voting rights and reforming the filibuster rule.

There is little doubt that Biden and the Democratic congressional leadership also welcome the impending scrapping of the House Select Committee investigation into January 6, well before it has addressed such critical questions as the role of the military and the intelligence agencies in Trump's attempted coup. These institutions must be preserved and strengthened as part of the war drive against Russia and China.

The Republican gain falls far short of pre-election projections by officials of both parties, as well as the corporate media. Republican leader Kevin McCarthy will have an even narrower majority than the 222-213 margin enjoyed by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

McCarthy was reelected as the House Republican leader Tuesday by a margin of 188-31, easily turning back a challenge from ultra-right Arizona Representative Andy Biggs. But given the Republican majority of a handful of seats, it is not certain that McCarthy will be elected as the next House speaker, since this will require 218 votes. A few defections or abstentions by ultra-right Republican members could block his election and force the Republican caucus to choose a different candidate for speaker.

One key outcome of the elections for the House has been determined: The Republican Party will maintain its majority of state delegations, which could become critical in the event of a deadlocked presidential election in 2024.

If no candidate wins a majority in the Electoral College, the presidential election goes to the House of Representatives, with each state delegation having one vote. This constitutional provision has not been invoked since 1824, but it was cited repeatedly by Trump's co-conspirators leading up to the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

Several of Trump's legal advisers claimed that Vice President Mike Pence could block the certification of the electoral votes won by Biden in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Georgia and other states, and thus reduce Biden's total from the 306 he actually won to below the 270 required for a majority in the Electoral College. This would throw the election into the House of Representatives, where the Republican Party had a majority in 28 delegations and the Democrats 21, with one state delegation tied.

The balance in five state delegations shifted as a result of the 2022 vote, but the Republican Party still retains a majority, controlling 26 delegations, the Democrats 22, with two delegations tied.

Several election analysts have noted that the swing from Democratic control to Republican control can be explained entirely from the four-vote swing in the congressional delegation from New York state. Republicans won two Democratic-held seats on Long Island and two in the Hudson Valley. All four districts were carried by supposedly "moderate" Republicans, who did not enlist in the Trump-led "stop the steal" campaign calling for the overturning of the 2020 presidential vote.

The decisive factors in the Democratic Party debacle—in one of the most heavily Democratic states in the country—include the #MeToo campaign that forced the resignation of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the complete prostration of the Democrats before the law-and-order campaign waged by Republican gubernatorial candidate Lee Zeldin and echoed by Republican congressional candidates.

Cuomo, who had won three elections for governor by large margins, was ousted after a vitriolic media campaign over alleged sexual misconduct that produced no significant evidence of criminal actions. He was replaced by his largely unknown lieutenant governor Kathy Hochul, chosen to "balance" the ticket geographically because she had served one term in Congress from a Buffalo-area district, where she compiled a conservative voting record.

Hochul sought to match Zeldin in praise for the police and condemnation of efforts to abolish cash bail and investigate police killings. While winning a narrow election victory in the governor's race, the Democratic Party lost support heavily in suburban and exurban districts, at the cost of the four congressional seats.

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