**After the midterms**

Khalid Bhatti

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The results of the US midterm elections 2022 are a mixed bag for both Republicans and Democrats. Republicans are heading towards a thin majority in the House of Representatives and are likely to win 219 seats – one more than the required majority of 218 seats. Democrats might end up with 216 seats, but are likely to gain a majority in the Senate.

The results of 415 seats out of the total 435 seats of the House of Representatives have been declared so far. Republicans have won 211 seats, and Democrats 204 seats. There are currently 20 House races not yet called; Democrats lead in the vote count in 12 of them while Republicans in eight.

Republicans need to win seven more seats to reach the 218 mark needed to control the House as they have already won 211 seats. Democrats need to win 14 more seats to reach the required figure as they are trailing behind after winning 204 seats.

The battle to control the Senate is going to the wire. Both parties are on 49 seats each at the moment. The Senate race in Nevada is too close to call. Republican candidate Adam Laxalt is leading by just 800 votes (at the time of writing) as 56,000 votes are still to be counted. It might take few more days before the final result is announced. Democrats have flipped a Senate seat from Republicans in Pennsylvania. John Fetterman defeated Trump-endorsed Mehmet Oz in a tight race.

Democrats still have a chance to keep their majority in the Senate. The Georgia seat is likely to be decided in the run-off election in December as no candidate has succeeded to get 50 per cent votes.

Despite the fact that Republicans are likely to get control of Congress, this is not a ‘red wave’ or a landslide victory that many Republicans were hoping for. Democrats have done better than what analysts predicted. Many political commentators and experts expected Republicans to make a clean sweep and win a strong majority in the House of Representatives, and possibly take control of the Senate.

Republicans might be able to gain 20 to 22 seats in the House of Representatives. These are not significant gains if we look at the history of midterm elections. For instance, Democrats lost 54 seats in the 1994 midterm elections during the presidency of Bill Clinton. Republicans gained 63 seats from Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections when Barack Obama was president. In the 2018 midterm elections, when Trump was president, Republicans lost 40 seats to Democrats.

Since the US civil war (1861-1865), only three out of 39 presidents were able to hold on to the ground in midterm elections. The remaining 36 presidents saw their party lost ground in the midterm elections. So, it is almost a norm for a president to lose midterm elections after winning the presidency. These elections are a clear reflection of the perception of Americans about the performance of the president half through his/her term. Despite the low approval rating of US President Biden, Democrats have succeeded to hold some ground.

The result is a political setback for former president Donald Trump as most of the extreme rightwing candidates who were endorsed by him have lost the elections. The former president was expecting that his supporters would vote for his candidates in the elections and strengthen his position within the party, but all his hopes were dashed on Election Day. Many prominent Trump supporters have lost badly in the Senate, House and governors elections – including Doug Mastriano for governor and Mehmet Oz for the Senate in Pennsylvania, and Daniel Cox who ran for governor in Maryland.

Trump wanted a landslide victory for the Republicans to launch his campaign for the 2024 presidential elections. The recent results might undermine his authority in the party, making him face some potential opponents in primaries, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis who just won re-election. Trump has already started attacking DeSantis in his public statements.

An interesting observation from the elections is that Republicans did better among white male voters. Fifty-eight per cent white male voters supported Republican candidates. Democrats have bagged 40 per cent votes, and they have once again failed to connect with working-class male voters without college degrees. Republicans continue to enjoy solid support among non-graduate white working class male voters.

The Democrats are also not campaigning around the major issues faced by the working class, including minimum wage, healthcare and decent jobs. And those Democratic candidates who ran their campaigns on working-class issues have performed well, including John Fetterman from Pennsylvania. He ran his campaign on the issue of minimum wages, healthcare, student loans and abortion rights, and flipped a Republican Senate seat.

Republicans focused on high inflation and the economic slowdown to attract voters. It is true that Republicans have gained from the state of the economy and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. But they clearly lost votes on the issues like abortion rights, student loans and climate change. According to the exit polls, the economy was the top issue with voters; around 32 per cent of them were concerned about the economy and inflation.

The Republicans took advantage of the rising inflation and falling incomes. But they misread voters’ mood regarding abortion rights and climate change. Around 27 per cent voters, especially women voters, were concerned about issues like abortion rights. Young voters were more concerned about student loans and climate change. Sixty-three per cent of young voters of ages 18-29 voted for the Democrats in the recently concluded elections, and played a crucial role in holding on to some important seats.

They also had a big role in holding back the red wave that Republicans were expecting. The results of the 2022 US midterm elections clearly reflect political and social polarization and the deep divide that exist in American society.

The writer is a freelance journalist.