Election Night Defied A Single Takeaway
By Clare Malone senior political writer for FiveThirtyEight Politics

People like to understand things. It's an earnest and charming quality of the human race. We like to flip to the back of the book to look at the answers. We like it when there's a tidy way to summarize things. One or two takeaways, please. It's why Aesop's fables continue to do so well.

Lately, Americans have looked for concise ways to name what all is us, "Divided" and "partisan" seem to be the words we land upon most often. Given that these are our adjectives of choice, it seems odd that anyone would expect to a single night to provide some kind of clear answer about the mood and direction of the country. And yet that seems to be what many wanted out of the midterms this year. They didn't get it.

If anything, the 2018 midterm elections were without a cohesive narrative. There was no overwhelming blue wave that served as a sharp rebuke to President Trump. The Democrats are projected to take control of the House of Representatives by a healthy seat margin, but Trump still found reason to celebrate; the Senate remains under Republican control. Governors mansions in a number of states will change into Democratic hands, but in a number of high-profile contests, the party fell short. A record number of women are headed to Congress, but several high-profile women were voted out of office. There was no single, stunning takeaway to grant us clarity about where the nation is headed. Instead, the election was an accurate reflection of where the country stands: existentially muddled, politically divided and historically engaged with its politics.

Democrats retained their Senate seats in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and West Virginia — all states that Trump won in 2016 — and won back governor's mansions in Illinois, Kansas and Michigan. In Wisconsin, a state that Hillary Clinton lost two years ago, Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin held on to her seat and Republican Governor Scott Walker lost to Democrat Tony Evers. Democrats won the national popular vote by an estimated 7 percentage points, no small margin.

But popular as they were nationally, Democrats still couldn’t pull off wins in some high-profile races in states like Ohio and Florida, swing states that are the crown jewels in any party’s presidential map. Ohio split its ticket, as it were, electing Republican Mike DeWine for governor even as it re-elected Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown. It was a reminder of the challenges Democrats face in winning back white voters, particularly those without a college education. Candidate choice still seemed to matter. Preliminary exit polls indicate that Brown won over the key demographic of non-college-educated white women, but that Richard Cordray, the Democratic nominee for governor, lost them.

In Florida, Republicans had a good night, holding a lead over incumbent Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson, and perhaps more surprisingly, defeating Democratic gubernatorial candidate Andrew Gillum, the mayor of Tallahassee. The race had always been tight, but narrative momentum seemed to be at Gillum’s back after his buzzed-about debate performance against Republican opponent Ron DeSantis. Gillum’s loss is freighted with more meaning than most, perhaps. As a black candidate in a purple state in the South, he proposed he could win with increased minority turnout and an appeal to Florida’s swing voters of all races. In the end, the math didn’t pan out.

In Georgia, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams — who could be the country’s first black female governor — proposed a similar path to victory, one by which registering and turning out minority voters in a red state could bring Democrats victory. As of this writing, Abrams trails by about 2 points, but she said she would not yet concede the close race. But again, it’s not as simple as looking at who won and who lost. While Gillum and Abrams’s races didn’t fulfill liberal hopes in the Southeast, felons regained the right to vote in Florida, a massive victory for progressive activists. And in Texas, Republican Ted Cruz won his election against Democratic Rep. Beto O’Rourke, but only by less than 3 points, an astoundingly close result for the red state. (Cruz won his 2012 election by 8 points.)

Perhaps the single thing that we can say about Midterm Election Day 2018 is that America was paying attention. According to New York Times estimates, 114 million votes were cast in House races, up from the 83 million in the last midterm elections in 2014. This is unsurprising in some sense, given the way that politics has become ingrained in popular culture over the past three years. Americans live and breathe their politics now, though the breath can sometimes be labored and the life it brings is usually filled with more caustic takes than inspiring words.

86% of ACA PAC supported candidates running for U.S. House won their election.
83% of ACA PAC supported candidates running for U.S. Senate won their election.

There are 3 undecided Senate races, currently the Republicans hold 51 seats and the Democrats hold 46 seats.

In the House, the Democrats took control. There are still 13 undecided races. The Democrats currently hold 225 seats with 5 undecided candidates leading and the Republicans hold 198 seats with 7 undecided candidates leading.
# ACAPAC

## Supported Candidates

### U.S. House Candidates

- **AL**
  - Mike Rogers (R) W

- **CA**
  - Kevin McCarthy (R) W
  - Linda Sanchez (D) W

- **FL**
  - Vern Buchanan (R) W
  - Carlos Curbelo (R) L
  - Michael Waltz (R) W

- **IL**
  - Darin LaHood (R) W
  - Peter Roskam (R) L

- **IA**
  - Dave Loebsack (D) W
  - David Young (R) L

- **KY**
  - Brett Guthrie (R) W

- **LA**
  - Steve Scalise (R) W

- **MA**
  - Richard Neal (D) W

- **MI**
  - Mike Bishop (R) L

- **MN**
  - Erik Paulsen (R) L

- **MO**
  - Jason Smith (R) W

- **NE**
  - Adrian Smith (R) W

- **NJ**
  - Frank Pallone (D) W

- **NY**
  - Joe Crowley (D) L Primary
  - Brian Higgins (D) W
  - Tom Reed (R) W

- **OR**
  - Earl Blumenauer (D) W
  - Kurt Schrader (D) W
  - Greg Walden (R) W

- **TX**
  - Kevin Brady (R) W
  - Michael Burgess (R) W
  - Lloyd Doggett (D) W
  - Van Taylor (R) W

### U.S. Senate Candidates

- **MT**
  - Jon Tester (D) W

- **NV**
  - Dean Heller (R) L

- **NM**
  - Martin Heinrich (D) W

- **OH**
  - Sherrod Brown (D) W

- **PA**
  - Bob Casey (D) W

- **WV**
  - Joe Manchin (D) W

- **WI**
  - Tammy Baldwin (D) W

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