

Do the midterm elections matter? – Informational Text

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1994 Midterm Elections

SUMMARY:

The 1994 midterm elections saw the Republican Party gain a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since 1954. The 54-seat swing in the House ushered in an era of divided government that persisted for the remainder of the 1990s.

DESCRIPTION:

Bill Clinton's election to the presidency in 1992 masked an ongoing rightward shift in American politics. [Clinton garnered just 43% of the popular vote](#) and during his first two years in office struggled with conservative factions in both the Republican and Democratic parties. This atmosphere contributed to the [narrow passage of the fiscal year 1994 budget](#), which despite being stripped of major stimulus and public investment programs garnered no Republican support and was opposed by a number of Democrats, as well as the administration's failed efforts to reform the American health care system. Adding to these difficulties was the [slow recovery from the 1990-91 recession](#). Although U.S. GDP had begun to rise by the time Clinton was sworn in, unemployment remained high, and inequality continued to grow. Popular discontent with the state of the nation's economy fed into Republican attacks on the social and cultural aspects of American liberalism, the "culture war." When combined with large campaign contributions from businesses, this proved to be a potent electoral mix, and on November 8, 1994 the American electorate handed the Republican Party its greatest victory since 1980. Republicans picked up 54 seats in the House of Representatives and 8 seats in the Senate, while also taking control of a number of governorships and state legislatures. Meanwhile, a handful of prominent Democrats, including House Speaker Tom Foley of Washington and Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois, suffered unexpected defeats.

The leader of the Republican Revolution of 1994 was Newt Gingrich, a representative from Georgia, who as Speaker of the House sought to mobilize the Republican majority against the Clinton White House. The conflict between the Republicans and Clinton resulted in the [shutdown of the federal government in the winter of 1995-96](#) and the House's impeachment of the President in 1998.

Source: <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/debt/1994midtermelection.html>