

US 2010 Mid-Term Election Report

Adrian Beaumont (2 Jan 2011)

House of Representatives Popular Vote and Seats Won ([details pg 3](#))

All 435 House seats are up for election every 2 years. This table gives the popular vote and seats won by party at both the '08 and '10 elections, and the swings from '08 to '10.

Party	2008 results			2010 results			Swing		
	% vote	seats	% seats	% vote	seats	% seats	% vote	seats	% seats
GOP	42.5%	178	40.9%	51.6%	242	55.6%	+9.1%	+64	+14.7%
Dem	53.2%	257	59.1%	44.8%	193	44.4%	-8.4%	-64	-14.7%
Others	4.3%	0	0.0%	3.6%	0	0.0%	-0.7%	0	0.0%
Total		435			435				

The Dems won the '08 House popular vote by 10.7%, but lost in '10 by 6.8%, a 17.5% turnaround. National turnout was about 42% of the eligible population, down from 62% in the Presidential year of '08, but up slightly from 41% in the last mid-term election in '06. The GOP now holds more seats than it has since the 1947-48 Congress.

National House Exit Polls ([details pg 5](#))

Independents swung heavily towards the GOP, recording a 27% change on the '08 results. The two biggest reasons for the massive Dem losses were:

1. The economy: 63% rated this as the most important issue, and the GOP won these votes 54-43.
2. Conservative turnout: Conservatives increased their share of the electorate to 42% from 34% in '08, mainly at the expense of moderates, and voted GOP by 84-13; this 71% margin was 19% greater than in '08.

Senate ([details pg 7](#))

The Senate has 100 members, with 1/3 up for election every two years. Winning regular elections gives a 6 year term. Senators represent whole states.

Not up for election: Dems 40, GOP 23

Elected 2010: Dems 13 (-6), GOP 24 (+6) (includes 3 non-regular elections)

Total: Dems 53 (-6), GOP 47 (+6)

Dems include 2 Inds who caucus with them, while GOP includes Lisa Murkowski, who won re-election in Alaska as a write-in candidate.

Note that GOP = Grand Old Party = Republican, and that in Australian terms swings are half the US swing, so the 17.5% turnaround quoted above would be 8.8% in Aus terms.

Explanations of Terms

A **primary** is a party nomination contest. In the US, primaries are decided by voters, and are conducted as a proper election, often by state election authorities. Unlike other countries, the results of US primaries can not be overridden by the party establishment, and state election laws often bar losing primary candidates from running on the general election ballot. US primaries are most famous in the Presidential nomination process, but most US elected offices require primaries to select the party nominee. At presidential primaries, independent voters will often vote in a primary, but non-presidential primaries will normally only appeal to the hard-core party base voters. This explains how the GOP lost seats that they would probably have won with an establishment candidate.

An **open seat** is a seat with no incumbent standing for re-election. Open seat races normally give the party not holding a seat a good chance of taking it.

A **write-in candidate** is a candidate whose name doesn't appear on the election ballot paper. To vote for a write-in candidate, the voter needs to write the candidate's name in a special box on the ballot paper. This obviously makes it very difficult to do well as a write-in candidate, and the total number of votes for write-ins is usually well under 1% of the vote.

A **filibuster** is a parliamentary tactic to delay a vote. In most parliamentary chambers, including the US House, the majority rules, and vote-delaying tactics are usually futile. However, in the US Senate, a 3/5 majority of the 100 Senators, or 60 votes, is required just to get something to an actual vote; this means that a Senate minority can often frustrate the majority by putting votes off indefinitely.

House and Senate Changes during the last Term

There were 3 changes in the House during the last term, which had a net result of the GOP gaining 1 seat. The Dems gained a New York district at a by-election, but an Alabama Dem defected to the GOP, and the Dems lost a Hawaii district by-election when two Dems split the Dem vote. The Dems pre-election majority was thus 256-179, though two seats were vacant, one held by each party.

In the Senate, the Dems started the term with a 58-41 majority, with the Minnesota Senate still unresolved. In April '09, Pennsylvanian GOP Senator Arlen Specter defected to the Dems, but didn't survive the May '10 Dem primary. In June '09, the Minn Senate race was finally won by Dem Al Franken by 0.01%, and the Dems had a notionally filibuster-proof 60-40 majority. However, in Jan '10, a special election was held in the very strong Dem state of Massachusetts, following the death of long-term Mass Dem Senator Ted Kennedy. In a massive boilover that presaged what would happen at this election, the Dems managed to lose this seat, 52-47. The successful GOP candidate, Scott Brown, is not up for election until 2012. As a result of this change, the Dem majority was back to 59-41 before the election.

All seats won or lost in the following pages are based on the pre-election House and Senate.

House of Representatives

<p>Republicans 242 (+63), Democrats 193 (-63)</p>
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The GOP gained a total of 66 seats, slightly offset by 3 Dem gains, for a net GOP gain of 63 seats.

The US congressional districts are specified by the two letter state code, followed by the district number. States that have only one district will have AL instead of a number as the suffix; the AL indicates that the district is an at-large district that encompasses the whole state.

Dem Gains: DE-AL, HI-01, LA-02

GOP Gains: AL-02, AZ-01, AZ-05, AR-01, AR-02, CO-03, CO-04, FL-02, FL-08, FL-22, FL-24, GA-08, ID-01, IL-08, IL-11, IL-14, IL-17, IN-08, IN-09, KS-03, LA-03, MD-01, MI-01, MI-07, MN-08, MS-01, MS-04, MO-04, NV-03, NH-01, NH-02, NJ-03, NM-02, NY-13, NY-19, NY-20, NY-24, NY-25, NY-29, NC-02, ND-AL, OH-01, OH-06, OH-15, OH-16, OH-18, PA-03, PA-07, PA-08, PA-10, PA-11, SC-05, SD-AL, TN-04, TN-06, TN-08, TX-17, TX-23, TX-27, VA-02, VA-05, VA-09, WA-03, WV-01, WI-07, WI-08.

Much of the brunt of the Dem losses was borne by Dems in moderate or conservative areas. The Dems will hold only 12 seats where Obama received less than 50% of the vote in '08, down from 50 before the election. Many of the Dems in those seats were so-called "blue dog" Democrats, who voted more conservatively than mainstream Dems in Congress. Some liberals take comfort from the fact that much of the losses were borne by the blue dogs. However, it seems far preferable to have people in these districts who will vote with mainstream Dems some of the time than have Republicans, who will almost never vote with mainstream Dems when the GOP and the Dems take opposite sides on an issue.

The GOP won the 43 open seats 36-7, gaining 13 seats, but they also knocked out 52 Dem incumbents. Dems elected in '08 or later did a bit better than others, with the GOP winning these 39 seats 23-16, but the Dems retained some seats gained in '08.. The Dems won the 129 seats with a Tea Party candidate 87-42, but this was a loss of 33 seats. It appears that in the Senate, candidate character issues had more impact than in the House.

House Analysis by Region:

Northeast: In states other than New York and Pennsylvania, the Dems did pretty well, losing only 4 seats of a region they dominate, with the Delaware gain offsetting their losses somewhat. However, the Dems lost 6 seats in NY, the largest seat loss of any state. This took their NY seats from 27 out of 29 to 21 out of 29, and they also lost 5 seats in Penn, a key Presidential state. Despite these losses, the Dems will hold about 2/3 of the northeastern seats, down from over 80% pre-election.

Midwest: Here the Dems received a complete shellacking, losing 5 seats in the key Presidential swing state of Ohio. Combining Ohio and Penn, the Dems now hold only 12 out of 37 seats in these two states, down from 22 out of 37. There were also 4 losses in Obama's home state of Illinois, two in Indiana and 5 in the Great Lakes states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. As a result, the Dems now hold only 38 of the midwest's 100 seats, down from 56 pre-election.

South: Another disaster area for the Dems, with 4 losses in Florida reducing the Dems to only 6 of Florida's 25 seats. The Dems lost 2 of their 3 seats in each of Arkansas and Mississippi, and now hold only 1 out of 4 of each state's seats. The Dems also lost 3 seats in each of Texas, Tennessee and Virginia. The GOP now holds 72% of southern seats, up from 56% pre-election.

Mountain & Prairie West: For a long time, North & South Dakota have voted for GOP Presidential candidates, but for Dems at the congressional level. However, at this election, the Dems lost both the SD and ND at-large seats; they also lost seats in New Mexico, Nevada, Idaho, Kansas, Colorado and Arizona. Although the Dems only lost 10 seats in this region, this was almost half their existing seats, and the GOP now has an almost 3:1 advantage over the Dems here; previously, seats in this region were split evenly.

Pacific West, Hawaii and Alaska: The Dems held strong in this region, against the tide in the rest of the country. The Dems lost only one seat in Washington state, which was offset by regaining a Hawaii seat lost at a by-election. They held all 34 of their Californian seats, to have 34 of Cal's 53 seats. The Dems hold 64% of seats in this region.

This table shows the number of seats held by each party by region after the election, the net GOP gains for that region, and the total number of seats for that region. The Dem and GOP seats and GOP gains are then expressed as a percentage of the total seats in that region.

Region	Dem seats	GOP seats	Net GOP gains	Total seats
Northeast	62	30	14	92
% seats	67%	33%	15%	
Midwest	38	62	18	100
% seats	38%	62%	18%	
South	37	94	21	131
% seats	28%	72%	16%	
Mtn & Prairie West	11	31	10	42
% seats	26%	74%	24%	
Pacific West	45	25	0	70
% seats	64%	36%	0%	
US Total	193	242	63	435
% seats	44%	56%	15%	

NATIONAL HOUSE EXIT POLL (17,000 respondents)

The first column in the table below shows the demographic, the 2nd column which party won that demographic in 2010, and the 3rd column the margin of victory. The direction of change column is which party the demographic swung towards from the '08 election, and the magnitude of the change measures how big that change was.

Example: At this election, women voted for the GOP by 49-48, a 1 point margin for the GOP. In '08, women voted for the Dems 56-42, a 14 point Dem margin. Thus the magnitude of the change among women is 15 points in favour of the GOP.

	Win party	Margin	Dir of change	Mag of change
Sex				
Men	R	14	R	20
Women	R	1	R	15
Race				
White	R	23	R	15
Black	D	80	R	8
Hispanic	D	22	R	17
Age				
18-29	D	13	R	16
30-44	R	4	R	13
45-64	R	8	R	13
65+	R	21	R	22
Party ID				
Dem	D	84	R	1
GOP	R	89	R	9
Ind	R	19	R	27
Ideology				
Liberal	D	82	D	6
Moderate	D	13	R	11
Conservative	R	71	R	19
Religion				
Protestant	R	21	R	13
Catholic	R	10	R	23
None	D	38	R	9
White Evangelical/Born-Again?				
Yes	R	58	R	16
No	D	13	R	14
Size of Place				
Urban	D	15	R	14
Suburban	R	13	R	16
Rural	R	25	R	25
Region				
Northeast	D	10	R	13

Midwest	R	9	R	17
South	R	24	R	22
West	D	1	R	18

There were several categories where the change was at least 20%: men (20%), the 65+ age group (22%), Independents (27%), Catholics (23%), rural voters (25%) and the South (22%). There was one category that actually swung to the Dems, with liberals voting Dem by 6% more than they did in '08. Relatively small single-figure swings also occurred with Democrats, blacks and no-religion voters.

As well as these changes in voting patterns by demographic, there were changes in turnout patterns. Conservatives made up 42% of this year's electorate, up from 34% in '08; this came mainly at the expense of moderates, who fell to 38% of this year's electorate from 44% in '08. In '08, Dems led the GOP 40-33 in party ID, this time party ID was tied at 35% each. Whites made up 77% of this year's electorate, up from 74% in '08. The 18-29 age group made up only 12% of the electorate, down from 18% in '08, while those 65+ made up 21%, up from 15% in '08. All these changes in turnout patterns were greatly to the advantage of the GOP in this year's election.

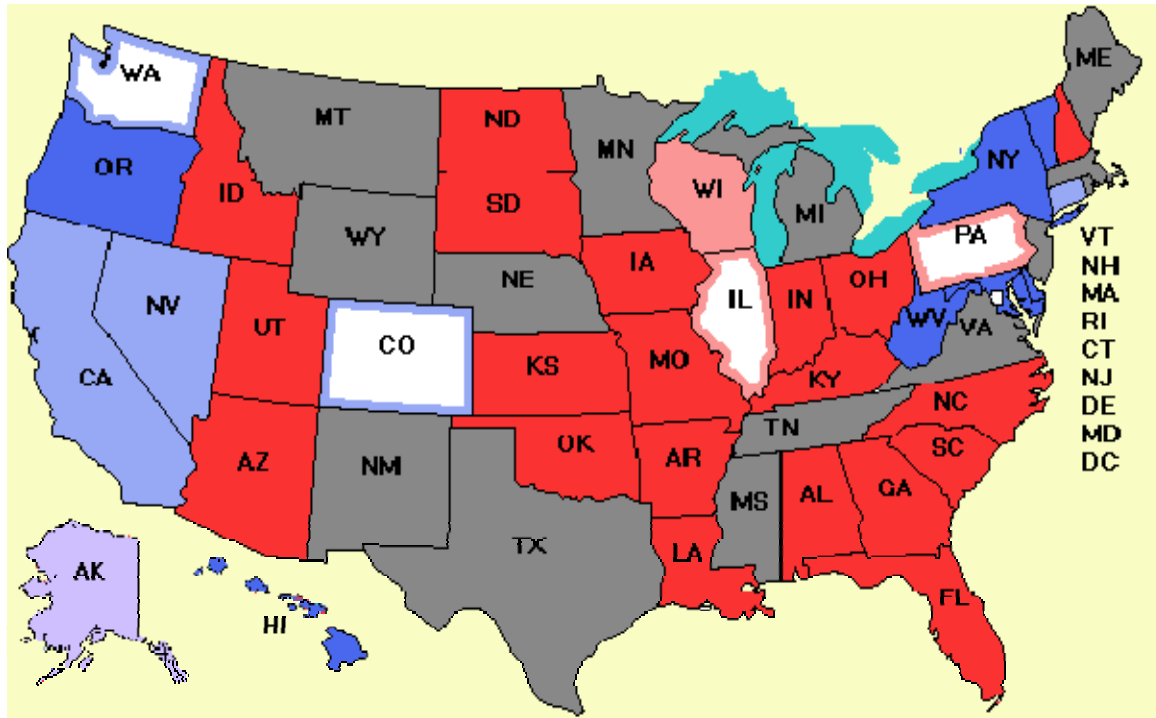
Here are some other findings of the exit poll. Note that the exit poll reflects the opinions of those who turned out in this election, not the broader electorate that would turn out in a Presidential election.

- Voters disapproved of Obama's performance 55-44, including 41% who strongly disapproved.
- The Dem party had an unfavourable 52-44 rating, but the GOP also had an unfavourable 53-41 rating.
- Only 23% approve of how Congress is handling its job.
- The Federal government has 73% feeling either angry or dissatisfied with it, and only 25% satisfied. 56% think government is doing too much, and 38% think it's doing too little.
- 41% support the Tea Party, 30% oppose it and the rest are neutral.
- 63% said the economy was the most important issue, and voted for the GOP 54-43. The 18% who said health care was most important voted Dem 51-47.
- 86% say they are worried about the economy, including 49% very worried. Only 9% say the economy is going well, and 41% say their family's financial situation is worse. 34% think the stimulus has hurt the economy, 32% say it's helped and the rest say it's made no difference. 24% blame Obama for the economic problems, 29% Bush and 35% Wall Street.
- 48% say the new health care law should be repealed and 47% say it should either be expanded or left as it is.
- 40% say the Bush tax cuts should be continued for all Americans, 36% just for those earning less than \$250,000 and 15% say the tax cuts should be discontinued.

Given that there was actually a small swing to the Dems among liberals, and that the biggest swings were among Independents, the argument that the Dems would have done better with more progressive policies does not hold water. The majority of the swing was due to high conservative turnout and conservative GOP vote strength, but moderates still swung to the GOP by 11%.

Senate Results and Analysis

Democrats 53 (-6) Republicans 46 (+5), 1 Write-In GOP (Alaska)



Dem gains: (None)

GOP gains: AR IL IN ND PA WI

Dark colour: margin 10%+, light colour: margin 5-10%, white with border: margin 0-5%
 Grey colour means there was no Senate race in that state in 2010.

Map published courtesy of the Votemaster of Electoral-vote.com

The GOP won every Senate race in the South and Midwest, with the exception of West Virginia, where a popular governor was the Dem candidate. States that would normally be competitive in open races, such as Ohio, Missouri and New Hampshire, were GOP blowouts. The 6 GOP gains had only 2 Dem incumbents defeated: in Wisconsin and Arkansas; the other 4 gains were in states with no Dem incumbent running. Out of 34 elections for full 6-year terms, the GOP won 24 to the Dems 10, with the Dems winning the 3 non-regular elections in WV, New York and Delaware.

The GOP gains would almost certainly have been greater had less extreme candidates been selected in crucial states. Extreme tea-party candidates won GOP primaries in Dem Senate majority leader Harry Reid's home state of Nevada, and also in Delaware and Colorado, and the Dems would probably not have held any of these seats against an establishment candidate. This was particularly the case in Delaware, where long-term moderate GOP congressman Mike Castle was leading the Dem by double-digits in polls before he lost the Senate primary in Sept '10 to extremist Christine O'Donnell, who was thrashed by 17% at the general election.

One remarkable contest was in Alaska, where incumbent GOP Senator Lisa Murkowski lost her primary to extremist Joe Miller. Rather than giving up, she ran as a

write-in candidate, and won the general election, the first time a write-in candidate has succeeded in the Senate since 1954. This was the reverse of what happened in Florida, where moderate GOP governor Charlie Crist, who ran as an Independent, was thrashed by charismatic right-winger Marco Rubio.

Full Senate Results

Democrats 53 (-6) Republicans 46 (+5), 1 Write-In GOP (Alaska)

State	Democrat	Republican	Other	Status
Alabama	Barnes 34%	Shelby (I) 66%		GOP Hold
Alaska	McAdams 23%	Miller 35%	Murkowski (I) (W/I) 39%	GOP Hold
Arizona	Glassman 35%	McCain (I) 59%		GOP Hold
Arkansas	Lincoln (I) 37%	Boozman 58%		GOP Gain
California	Boxer (I) 52%	Fiorina 42%		Dem Hold
Colorado	Bennet (I) 48%	Buck 46%		Dem Hold
Connecticut	Blumenthal 55%	McMahon 43%		Dem Hold
Delaware	Coons 57%	O'Donnell 40%		Dem Hold
Florida	Meek 20%	Rubio 49%	Crist 30%	GOP Hold
Georgia	Thurmond 39%	Isakson (I) 58%		GOP Hold
Hawaii	Inouye (I) 75%	Cavasso 22%		Dem Hold
Idaho	Sullivan 25%	Crapo (I) 71%		GOP Hold
Illinois	Giannoulis 46%	Kirk 48%		GOP Gain
Indiana	Ellsworth 40%	Coats 55%		GOP Gain
Iowa	Conlin 33%	Grassley (I) 64%		GOP Hold
Kansas	Johnston 26%	Moran 70%		GOP Hold
Kentucky	Conway 44%	Paul 56%		GOP Hold
Louisiana	Melancon 38%	Vitter (I) 57%		GOP Hold
Maryland	Mikulski (I) 62%	Wargotz 36%		Dem Hold
Missouri	Carnahan 41%	Blunt 54%		GOP Hold
Nevada	Reid (I) 50%	Angle 45%		Dem Hold
New Hampshire	Hodes 37%	Ayotte 60%		GOP Hold
New York	Schumer (I) 66%	Townsend 32%		Dem Hold
New York (sp)	Gillibrand (I) 63%	DioGuardi 35%		Dem Hold
North Carolina	Marshall 43%	Burr (I) 55%		GOP Hold
North Dakota	Potter 22%	Hoeven 76%		GOP Gain
Ohio	Fisher 39%	Portman 57%		GOP Hold
Oklahoma	Rogers 26%	Coburn (I) 71%		GOP Hold
Oregon	Wyden (I) 57%	Huffman 39%		Dem Hold
Pennsylvania	Sestak 49%	Toomey 51%		GOP Gain
South Carolina	Greene 28%	DeMint (I) 61%		GOP Hold
South Dakota	Thune (I) 100%	Unopposed		GOP Hold
Utah	Granato 33%	Lee 62%		GOP Hold
Vermont	Leahy (I) 64%	Britton 31%		Dem Hold
Washington	Murray (I) 52%	Rossi 48%		Dem Hold
West Virginia	Manchin 53%	Raese 43%		Dem Hold
Wisconsin	Feingold (I) 47%	Johnson 52%		GOP Gain

(I) denotes incumbent Senator, (W/I) denotes write-in candidate

State Results

All US states except Nebraska have a state House and state Senate; Nebraska's unicameral legislature is officially nonpartisan. Most states hold their state elections concurrent with Federal elections, though a few hold their state elections in odd numbered years, which are not Federal elections. In most cases, all of the state House and a portion of the state Senate is up for election every two years. Most statewide elected officials have four year terms, and gubernatorial elections are usually held on a Federal mid-term election date. A party has control of the state legislature if it has a majority in both state chambers, and a party has complete control of state government if it provides the governor as well as majorities in the state legislature.

The GOP dominance of Federal races carried over into state races, as they now hold 29 of 50 governors to 20 Dems and 1 Independent; this was a net gain for the GOP of 5 seats, with 6 Dem losses. The carnage was even greater in the state legislatures; pre-election the Dems had controlled both chambers in 27 states and the GOP 14, with the rest having divided control. After the election, the GOP controls 25 state legislatures, the Dems 16 and the rest are divided. The GOP now has more state legislators than it has had at any time since 1928.

The gains came at the right time for the GOP because congressional districts will need to be re-drawn following the publication of the 2010 census; a census only happens once every decade. In the US, most electoral districts are drawn up by state legislatures. Although the population of each district must be roughly the same, that does not prevent extreme gerrymandering to advantage one party or the other, and some congressional districts look very strange. In this respect, the GOP gained complete control of government in the key big Presidential states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, and held complete control in Texas and Florida; districts in these states will now be gerrymandered in the GOP's favour. Gaining control of the New York State Senate will prevent NY's districts being gerrymandered in the Dems' favour.

The one bright spot for the Dems was California, where they won the Cal governor, Cal US Senator, and every other statewide elected office, and easily held the state legislature. A referendum that proposed delaying climate change policies until Cal's unemployment had been less than 5.5% for at least a year was heavily defeated, 62-38. A referendum also approved having an independent commission draw up the congressional districts, thus taking this power away from the state legislature.

A look at the federal 2012 races

President: A presidential year will have much greater turnout than a mid-term year, and this will help the Dems generally. Obama's approval ratings are currently in the mid-40's; this is well ahead of the perception of Congress, and other major Dem political figures. Against a decent GOP candidate, Obama's current approval would probably mean a close election. If the US unemployment rate drops significantly from its current level of 9.8%, it is likely that Obama's approval will rise, and he would then be favoured to win against a decent GOP candidate. There is also the possibility that the GOP could nominate someone like Sarah Palin. Palin is very popular with the GOP base, but very

unpopular elsewhere. 2010 Senate results indicate that Palin would be unlikely to do well, and Obama would probably win easily against her.

Senate: In 2012, the '06 Senate seats will be up for election. The Dems did very well in '06, winning 24 of the 33 Senate seats in that year, with one since lost to the GOP in Massachusetts. This means that the Dems will have to defend 23 seats, and the GOP only 10. Most of the Senate gains were in states that tend to be competitive in Presidential elections, so if Obama wins it should help the Dems retain their Senate seats. There are a few clear opportunities for either party to make a gain, but the Dems Senate performance will largely depend on Obama's performance.

House: The GOP won 242 seats at this election. Natural population flow and gerrymandering will give the GOP extra seats, and they will probably have around 260 notional House seats at the next election. If Obama wins, the GOP will lose some of these seats – the question is how many. If the US unemployment rate drops, there may be a more pro-incumbent mood, which could help incumbents from both parties. The other possibility is that Presidential and House voting is becoming more aligned, in which case a big Obama win could see the Dems seize back control of the House.

In general terms the population movement is away from the strong Dem northeast, and towards the southwest and southern states. The GOP does well in southern states, but the Hispanic immigration in the southwest is making these states more Dem-favourable, since Hispanics tend to vote Dem by 20-40% margins. At the last Presidential election, Obama won New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada easily; these were Bush states in '04. Obama would have had a good chance in Arizona had it not been McCain's home state. Eventually, given the continued Hispanic immigration, Texas could become competitive at Presidential elections.

Appendix

Geographic Regions

The Northeast region is bounded by Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware in the south and west, and stretches up to Maine in the far northeast; this is a geographically small but densely populated region.

The South includes all 11 original Confederate states that rebelled against the Union in the Civil War.

The Midwest contains all the non-southern states east of the continental divide extending east to Ohio and West Virginia.

The Mountain and Prairie West includes all states west of the continental divide but east of the Pacific coast states, but Texas is a southern state; this region is geographically vast but sparsely populated.

The Pacific West includes the Pacific Coast states, plus Hawaii and Alaska.

US State Abbreviations

A full list of 2-letter US state abbreviations (used on the Senate map) can be found here:

<http://www.stateabbreviations.us/>

Less obvious ones:

AL – Alabama, AK – Alaska, AZ – Arizona, AR – Arkansas, CT – Connecticut, IA – Iowa, GA – Georgia, KS – Kansas, KY – Kentucky, ME – Maine, MD – Maryland, MA – Massachusetts, MI – Michigan, MN – Minnesota, MS – Mississippi, MO – Missouri, MT – Montana, NE – Nebraska, NV – Nevada, PA – Pennsylvania, TN – Tennessee, TX – Texas, VT – Vermont, VA - Virginia

Sources

House popular votes from the Green Papers

<http://www.thegreenpapers.com/G10/HouseVoteByParty.phtml>

change G10 to G08 for '08 results

Senate results table uses the Green Papers Senate results under

<http://www.thegreenpapers.com/G10/SenateVoteByParty.phtml>

some results have been changed to exclude blank votes

Turnout info can be found at the US election project

http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2010G.html

change 2010 to 2008 for '08, and to 2006 for '06 turnout.

House and Governor results are from Real Clear Politics

http://realclearpolitics.com/elections/2010/house_final_results.html

The info on seats won by the GOP broken down by Obama '08 vote is at 538

<http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/08/2010-an-aligning-election/>

Info on the tea party House candidates, open seats etc is from the *NY Times* House map

<http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/results/house> (click on electoral explorer)

House state delegations and exit polls are from CNN

<http://edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2010/results/main.results/#H>

put 2008 instead of 2010 for the '08 results and exit polls.

The Senate Map and some info used in my look at 2012 is at Electoral-vote.com

<http://www.electoral-vote.com/evp2010/Senate/Maps/Dec08-s.html>

The state results info is from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

<http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=21253>