



2026 MIDTERM UPDATE AND STRATEGY

Election Day: November 3, 2026

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Race ratings, seat projections, and characterizations of which races are toss-ups or leaning toward either party reflect conditions as of September 30, 2026 and are provided as a point-in-time snapshot. Electoral outlooks can shift significantly before the November 3, 2026 midterm elections, and this report should not be read as a prediction of final outcomes.

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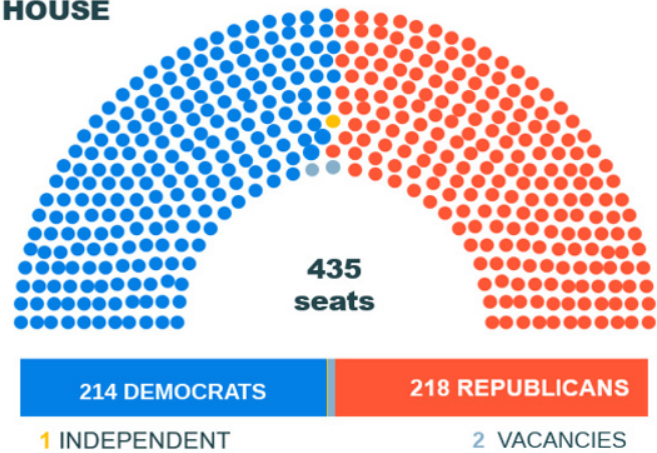


Composition of the 119th Congress

House of Representatives

- The House stands at 218 Republicans, 214 Democrats, 1 independent, and 2 vacancies (FL-20 and TX-23).
- If vacancies are filled by the party that previously held them, the House makeup becomes 219R-215D (1R – 1D), plus 1 independent.
- Assuming a full 435-seat House (218 for a majority), Democrats would need a net gain of 3 seats in the 2026 midterm elections to win a House majority.

HOUSE



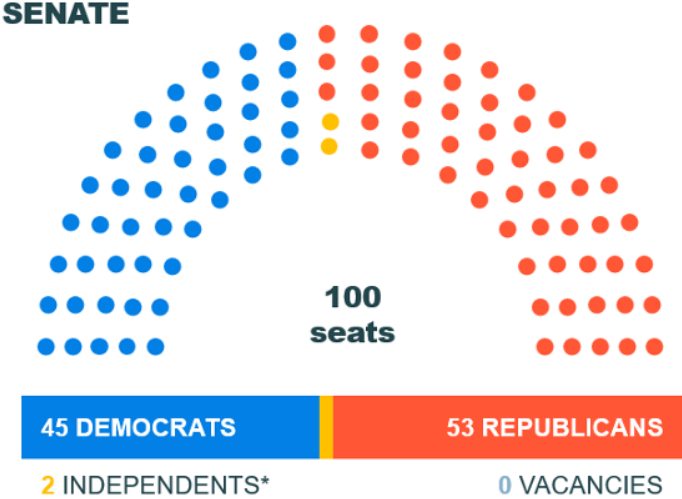
Vacancies: FL-20, TX-23

**Rep. Kiley (I-CA) caucuses with the Republicans*

Senate

- The Senate currently stands at 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats, 2 Independents, and 0 vacancies (100 seats total).
- Because the two Independents (Sanders and King) caucus with Democrats, the caucus split is described as 53R-47D.
- Assuming a full 100-seat Senate (51 votes for a majority), Democrats would need a net gain of 4 seats in the 2026 Senate elections to reach 51 seats.

SENATE



**Sens. Sanders (I-VT) and King (I-ME) caucus with the Democrats*

2026 Midterm Elections – House of Representatives

On November 3, 2026, voters will elect representatives in all 435 congressional districts across all 50 states, with 218 seats required for either party to win control of the chamber. 63 representatives, **39 Republicans** and **24 Democrats**, are not running for re-election. There are currently 22 House seats rated as Toss Ups (**16 currently Republican-held** and **6 Democratic-held**).

22 House districts are considered toss-ups in the 2026 election and Democrats are currently favored to win a majority in the House.

LIKELY D (12) 12 Dem 0 Rep	LEAN D (11) 7 Dem 4 Rep	TOSS UP (22) 6 Dem 16 Rep	LEAN R (10) 2 Dem 8 Rep	LIKELY R (19) 4 Dem 15 Rep
CA-21 Costa	AZ-01 OPEN (Schweikert)	AZ-06 Ciscomani	CO-05 Crank	AK-AL Begich III
CA-45 Tran	CA-13 Gray	CA-22 Valadao	FL-13 Luna	AL-02 Figures
IN-01 Mrvan	CA-48 OPEN (Issa)	CO-08 Evans	FL-27 Salazar	AZ-02 Crane
MI-08 McDonald Rivet	NE-02 OPEN (Bacon)	FL-14 Castor	IA-02 OPEN (Hinson)	CO-03 Hurd
MN-02 OPEN (Craig)	NJ-07 Kean Jr.	FL-22 OPEN (Frankel)	MI-04 Huizenga	FL-07 OPEN (Mills)
NH-01 OPEN (Pappas)	NM-02 Vasquez	FL-25 Moskowitz	MT-01 OPEN (Zinke)	FL-09 Soto
NJ-09 Pou	NV-03 Lee	IA-01 Miller-Meeks	NC-01 Davis	KY-06 OPEN (Barr)
NV-01 Titus	NY-03 Suozzi	IA-03 Nunn	TX-35 OPEN (Casar)	ME-02 OPEN (Golden)
NV-04 Horsford	NY-04 Gillen	MI-07 Barrett	VA-01 Wittman	MN-01 Finstad
NY-19 Riley	OH-01 Landsman	MI-10 OPEN (James)	WI-01 Steil	MO-02 Wagner
OH-13 Sykes	TX-28 Cuellar	NC-11 OPEN (Edwards)		NV-02 OPEN (Amodei)
VA-07 Vindman		NY-17 Lawler		NY-21 OPEN (Stefanik)
		OH-07 Miller		OH-10 Turner
		OH-09 Kaptur		OH-15 Carey
		PA-07 Mackenzie		PA-01 Fitzpatrick
		PA-08 Bresnahan		SC-01 OPEN (Mace)
		PA-10 Perry		TX-09 OPEN (Green)
		TX-15 De La Cruz		TX-23 VACANT
		TX-34 Gonzalez		VA-05 McGuire
		VA-02 Kiggans		
		WA-03 Perez		
		WI-03 Van Orden		

Key Races – House

These races feature incumbents who currently serve on House committees directly relevant to The Vision Council, including the Energy & Commerce and Ways & Means Committees. Four races are rated Toss Up, while NJ-07 and MI-04 are still competitive but lean Democratic or Republican, respectively. Rep. Huizenga's race is especially notable due to continued engagement and his sponsorship of The Vision Council's affordability legislation.

Toss Up

Lean Democratic

Lean Republican

(CO-08) | Evans (R) vs. Rutinel (D)

Energy & Commerce Subcommittees on Environment and Commerce, Manufacturing & Trade

Toss Up

(FL-14) | Castor (D) vs. Beltran (R)

Energy & Commerce Subcommittees on Energy (Ranking Member) and Commerce, Manufacturing & Trade

Toss Up

(NJ-07) | Kean Jr. (R) vs. Bennett (D)

Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing & Trade

Lean Democratic

(MI-04) | Huizenga (R) vs. McCann (D)

Sponsor of The Vision Council's Affordability Legislation

Lean Republican

(IA-01) | Miller-Meeks (R) vs. Bohannon (D)

Energy & Commerce Subcommittees on Health, Environment, and Energy

Toss Up

(OH-07) | Miller (R) vs. Poindexter (D)

Ways & Means Committee

Toss Up



House Ways & Means Committee

Democratic Majority

Chair: Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-01)

Ranking Member: Rep. Jason Smith (R-MO-08)

Expected Priorities:

- Increased oversight of Trump administration tax policy and implementation
- Reassert congressional trade authority while replacing broad tariffs with targeted enforcement and stronger United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) labor and manufacturing provisions
- Bipartisan retirement policy, including further work on automatic enrollment, portability, small business incentives, and the Saver’s Match

Republican Majority

Chair: Rep. Jason Smith (R-MO-08)

Ranking Member: Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-01)

Expected Priorities:

- Continued implementation and defense of the Working Families Tax Cuts
- Business tax policy and opposition to corporate tax increases
- Attention to expiring provisions on tips, overtime, and the Trump Account pilot ahead of 2029

Implications: A Democratic majority would likely seek to constrain executive tariff authority and would be more receptive to industry-specific tariff exclusions. The committee would also be significantly more likely to pursue expansion of Medicare vision benefits. However, the Democrats’ tax priorities would likely center on Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidy extensions and working-family relief, resulting in less alignment on Section 199A and corporate rate provisions. A Republican majority would remain closely aligned with The Vision Council’s tax priorities, including Section 199A, corporate rate stability, the estate tax exemption, and research and development (R&D) expensing. However, the committee’s deference to the executive branch on trade would limit opportunities to secure eyewear tariff exclusions through the committee process. Appetite for Medicare vision coverage expansion would remain limited.

House Committee on Energy & Commerce

Democratic Majority

Chair: Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ-06)

Ranking Member: Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02)

Expected Priorities:

- Affordability agenda focused on health care, energy and utility, grocery, and other consumer costs
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) user-fee reauthorization
- Artificial intelligence (AI) policy and safeguards, including data centers, electricity demand, and responsible AI uses
- Oversight of Trump administration actions and related corporate activity

Republican Majority

Chair: Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02)

Ranking Member: Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ-06)

Expected Priorities:

- Energy affordability and permitting reform, including grid reliability and expanded nuclear deployment
- Health care affordability, price transparency, Medicare reform, and Medicaid program integrity
- FDA user-fee reauthorization
- AI and communications policy focused on innovation, network security, and U.S. competitiveness

Implications: A Democratic majority's consumer protection agenda could provide a vehicle for Federal Trade Commission (FTC) labeling and Eyeglass Rule issues, and interest in digital health device regulation could clarify the Class I treatment of eyewear. The majority's focus on supply chain resilience and reducing reliance on China would align with The Vision Council's reshoring priorities. The committee may also prioritize restoring Medicaid and ACA coverage. Conversely, a Republican majority would offer bipartisan opportunities on health care price transparency, including the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act. Transparency for Medicare Advantage supplemental vision benefits would be a further opportunity. However, the committee would be less likely to focus on FTC labeling or medical device consumer issues specific to the optical sector than under a Democratic majority.

House Committee on Appropriations

Democratic Majority

Chair: Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-03)

Ranking Member: Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04)

Expected Priorities:

- Completing unresolved fiscal year 2027 (FY27) funding and beginning FY28 funding work under divided government
- Restoring funding affected by Trump administration and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) program and workforce reductions
- Oversight of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), impoundment, rescissions, grants, and Congress's power of the purse
- Scrutiny and negotiation of defense, disaster, and other supplemental funding requests

Republican Majority

Chair: Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04)

Ranking Member: Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-03)

Expected Priorities:

- Completing unresolved FY27 funding and beginning FY28 funding work
- Prioritizing defense, veterans, homeland security, border enforcement, and other national security funding
- Reducing or reprioritizing non-defense discretionary spending and federal programs
- Aligning funding and policy riders with Trump administration priorities and supplemental requests

Implications: A Democratic majority would likely push for higher National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Eye Institute (NEI) funding and show greater receptivity to directing funds toward vision health programs. The committee would also be expected to increase FDA and FTC appropriations. Expanded Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) workforce investment would directly benefit optometry and ophthalmology training programs. On the other hand, a Republican majority has already rejected proposed NIH cuts, making NEI funding a bipartisan area of opportunity. The Committee Republicans' tendency to constrain FTC budgets could limit new labeling and consumer protection rulemaking. Positively, report language on foreign medical device inspections supports product safety for imported optical goods. Under either majority, FY2027 is likely to begin under a continuing resolution, which would protect NEI's current \$896.5M level but limit opportunities for increases.

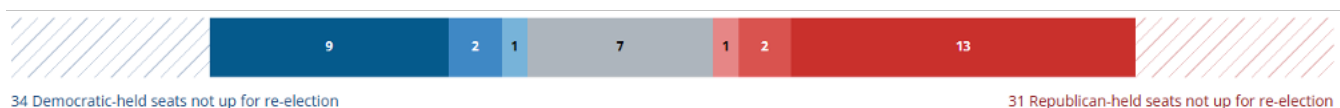
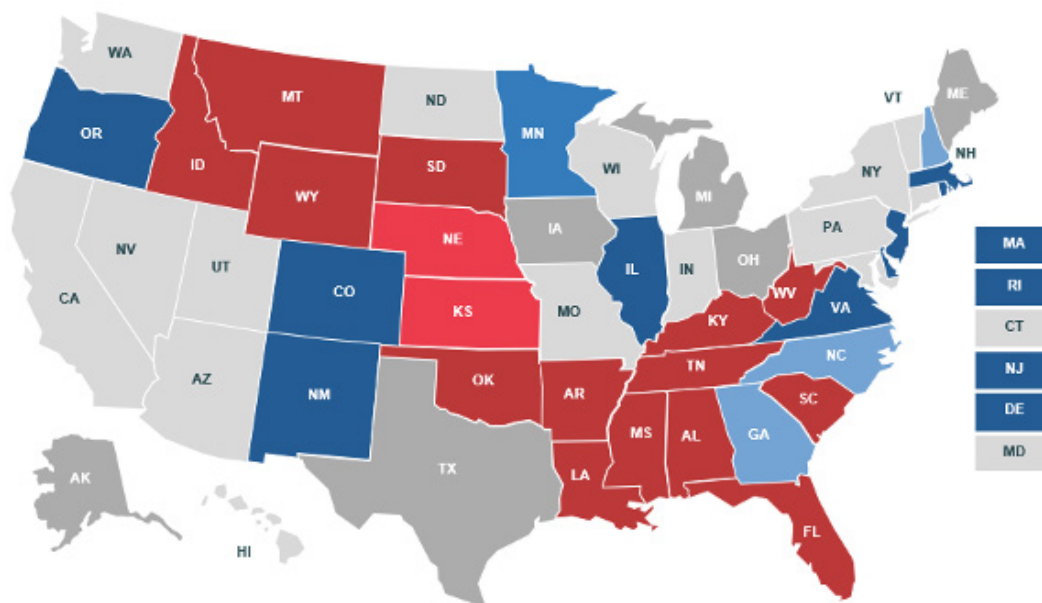
2026 Midterm Elections – U.S. Senate

On November 3, 2026, 35 of the 100 US Senate seats will be contested. Thirty-three of these elections are regular elections for senators who were last elected in 2020, and two are special elections.

Republicans are favored to maintain their majority in the Senate, while Democrats need a net gain of 4 seats to gain control.

COOK POLITICAL REPORT: 2026 SENATE RACE RATINGS

■ Solid D ■ Likely D ■ Lean D ■ Toss Up ■ Lean R ■ Likely R ■ Solid R ■ No election



■ Solid Democrat (9) ■ Likely Democrat (2) ■ Lean Democrat (1) ■ Toss Up (7) ■ Lean Republican (1) ■ Likely Republican (2) ■ Solid Republican (13)

SOLID D (9) 9 Dem • 0 Rep	LIKELY D (2) 2 Dem • 0 Rep	LEAN D (1) 0 Dem • 1 Rep	TOSS UP (7) 2 Dem • 5 Rep	LEAN R (1) 0 Dem • 1 Rep	LIKELY R (2) 0 Dem • 2 Rep	SOLID R (13) 0 Dem • 13 Rep
CO Hickenlooper DE Coons IL OPEN MA Markey NJ Booker NM Luján OR Merkley RI Reed VA Warner	GA Ossoff MN OPEN	NC OPEN	AK Sullivan IA OPEN ME Collins MI OPEN NH OPEN OH Husted TX OPEN	KS Marshall	NE Ricketts SC Graham	AL OPEN AR Cotton FL Moody ID Risch KY OPEN LA OPEN MS Hyde-Smith MT OPEN OK OPEN SD Rounds TN Hagerty WV Capito WY OPEN

Key Races – Senate

These races combine potential implications for Senate control with direct relevance to committees important to The Vision Council, including the Finance, Commerce, Appropriations, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), and Environment & Public Works Committees. Open-seat turnover is also notable because of guaranteed changes in leadership and membership on several key committees and subcommittees.

 **Toss Up**  **Lean Democratic**  **Lean Republican**

OHIO | Husted (R) vs. Brown (D)

Health, Education, Labor and Pensions + Environment & Public Works Committees

Toss Up

ALASKA | Sullivan (R) vs. Peltola (D)

Commerce, Finance, and Armed Services Committees

Toss Up

MICHIGAN | Rogers (R) vs. El-Sayed (D)

Open seat – Sen. Peters’ departure ensures turnover on Senate Commerce and Appropriations Committees

Toss Up

MAINE | Collins (R) vs. Jackson (D)

Appropriations Chair and Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee

Toss Up

NORTH CAROLINA | Whatley (R) vs. Cooper (D)

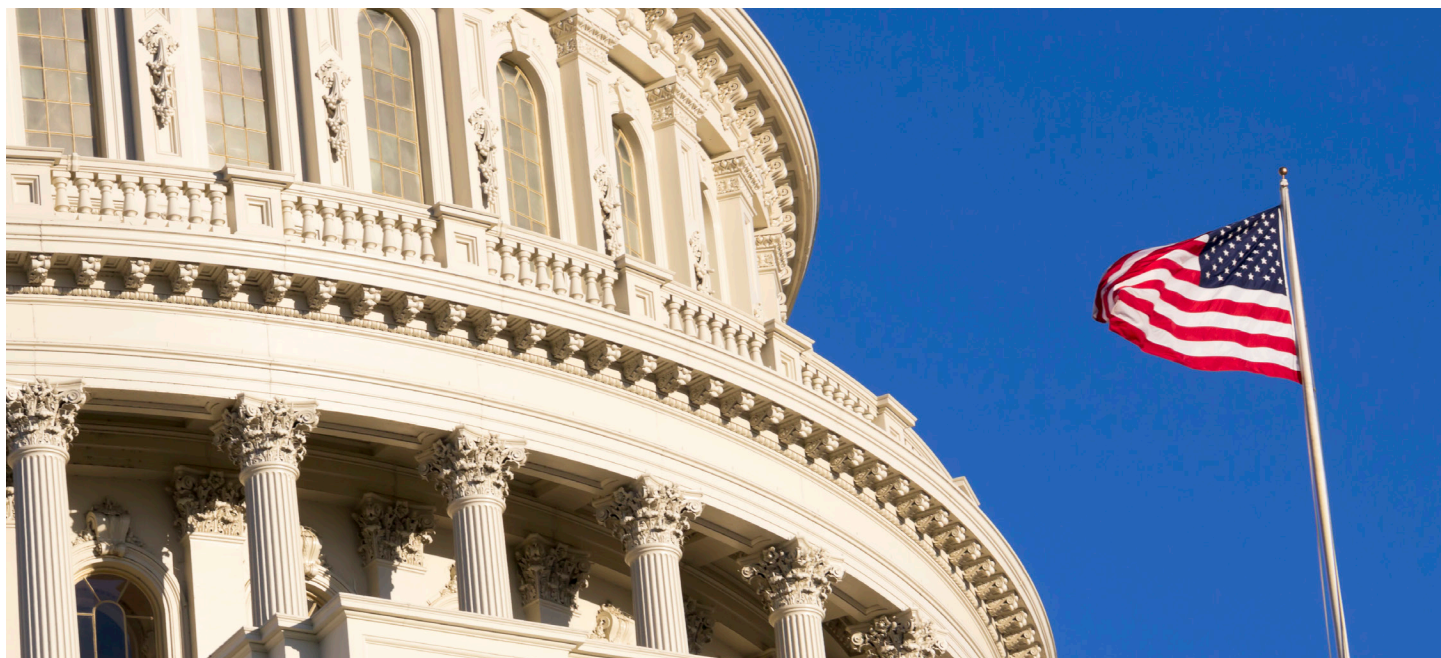
Open seat – Sen. Tillis’ departure ensures turnover on the Senate Finance Committee

Lean Democratic

TEXAS | Paxton (R) vs. Talarico (D)

Open seat – Sen. Cornyn’s departure ensures new Republican leadership on the Senate Finance Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs, and Global Competitiveness

Toss Up



Republican Majority

Chair: Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)

Ranking Member: Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)

Expected Priorities:

- Implementation and preservation of recently enacted tax provisions
- Attention to provisions scheduled to expire after 2028, including tips, overtime, and Trump Accounts
- Bipartisan retirement legislation focused on expanding savings and employer participation

Democratic Majority

Chair: Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)

Ranking Member: Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)

Expected Priorities:

- Increased oversight of corporate tax policy and Trump administration tax implementation
- Reassert congressional trade authority, curb broad tariffs, strengthen targeted enforcement against China and unfair trade practices, and improve USMCA enforcement and Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) oversight
- Continued retirement policy work, including savings incentives, portability, and implementation of the Saver's Match

Implications: A Republican majority would prioritize protecting Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) provisions, aligning with The Vision Council's positions on Section 199A, the corporate rate, and the estate tax exemption. Protecting R&D expensing would also continue to enjoy bipartisan support. However, the committee would likely continue to support Section 301 tariffs on China and defer to executive tariff authority. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) reauthorization and Medicare vision benefit expansion would not be expected priorities. On the other hand, a Democratic majority would likely advance legislation constraining executive tariff power and seeking tariff refunds for consumers and small businesses. The committee would also be more receptive to adding vision benefits to traditional Medicare. By contrast, Section 199A and estate tax exemption would be less likely to receive priority.

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Republican Majority

Chair: Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS) / Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) / Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Ranking Member: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

Expected Priorities:

- FDA user-fee reauthorization, biomedical innovation, and generic and biosimilar competition
- Health affordability and access, including transparency, drug costs, 340B, and rural care
- Health-workforce programs, community health centers, mental health, and primary-care capacity
- Education, workforce, and labor reform, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), AI skills, student aid, and agency restructuring

Democratic Majority

Chair: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

Ranking Member: Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS) / Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) / Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Expected Priorities:

- FDA user-fee reauthorization and oversight of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and NIH
- Drug affordability, community health centers, primary care, and health-workforce expansion
- Worker rights, wages, organizing, AI protections, and Department of Labor (DOL) and National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) oversight
- Public education, child care, student debt, and Education Department oversight

Implications: A Republican majority would bring new committee leadership following the current chair's departure, creating an important opportunity to build relationships and shape the committee's agenda on FDA regulation and workforce issues. Efforts to reduce FDA approval barriers and expand Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) could address eyewear classification inconsistencies and improve access to vision care. Meanwhile, a Democratic majority could expand vision, dental, and hearing benefits under Medicare, reverse recent Medicaid cuts, and increase workforce funding for optometry and ophthalmology training. Greater oversight of digital health and direct-to-consumer products could clarify online eye exam regulation, while scrutiny of private equity ownership could be relevant to optical retail consolidation.

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Republican Majority

Chair: Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX)

Ranking Member: Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

Expected Priorities:

- AI policy focused on innovation, regulatory flexibility, and targeted safeguards
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization ahead of FY2028 expiration, with continued aviation safety and air traffic modernization
- Spectrum, satellite, broadband, and next-generation communications policy
- Surface transportation reauthorization focused on vehicle affordability, autonomous vehicles, freight efficiency, safety, and regulatory modernization

Democratic Majority

Chair: Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

Ranking Member: Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX)

Expected Priorities:

- AI safeguards, consumer privacy, online safety, and U.S. technology competitiveness
- FAA reauthorization ahead of the September 2028 expiration and continued aviation safety reforms
- Increased oversight of Trump administration actions across federal regulatory, transportation, and science agencies
- Surface transportation reauthorization focused on multimodal funding, freight and passenger rail, safety enforcement, and autonomous-vehicle safeguards

Implications: Under a Republican majority, optical industry issues are less likely to be a committee priority, given the focus on online safety and AI. A lighter-touch FTC enforcement posture may delay resolution of “Made in USA” labeling ambiguity for eyewear. However, support for reshoring and U.S. technology leadership could benefit domestic optical manufacturing. Under a Democratic majority, the committee may push for stronger FTC enforcement and “Made in USA” labeling standards. The committee would likely support efforts to constrain executive tariff authority. Its data privacy focus could intersect with optical telehealth and direct-to-consumer eye exam regulation, in which a product safety enforcement posture would generally benefit quality-focused industry participants.

Senate Committee on Appropriations

Republican Majority

Chair: Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

Ranking Member: Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)

Expected Priorities:

- Completing unresolved FY27 funding and beginning FY28 funding work under divided government
- Defense and national security investments while preserving key bipartisan domestic programs
- Oversight of executive spending, rescissions, grant policy, and Congress's power of the purse
- Defense, disaster, agriculture, and other emergency supplemental funding requests

Democratic Majority

Chair: Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)

Ranking Member: Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

Expected Priorities:

- Completing unresolved FY27 funding and beginning FY28 funding work
- Protecting health, housing, education, research, infrastructure, and affordability programs
- Oversight of impoundment, OMB grant policy, and agency funding decisions
- Scrutiny and conditions on defense, emergency, and supplemental funding requests

Implications: A Republican majority would likely maintain a pragmatic, bipartisan approach that is favorable to industry engagement. The committee has kept NIH funding steady and rejected proposed restructuring. The chair's concurrent HELP Committee service offers a unique bridge between authorization and funding priorities. The Vision Council should expect incremental but achievable gains. Meanwhile, a Democratic majority would likely pursue significantly higher NIH and NEI funding and higher overall discretionary spending, creating additional room for vision research investment. The committee would also place greater emphasis on healthcare workforce programs, including optometry and ophthalmology training. Regardless of control, the indefinite delay in Senate markups makes early engagement on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) priorities critical.

Committees of Importance – Overview

Republican (GOP) Senate / Democratic House

GOP Senate: Senate Finance would remain the main vehicle for The Vision Council's tax priorities, including Section 199A, the corporate rate, and the estate tax exemption. The committee would continue to defer to the executive branch on tariffs. New HELP leadership offers an opportunity to shape the agenda on FDA regulation, eyewear classification, and HSA expansion. Appropriations would likely stay pragmatic and bipartisan, delivering incremental but achievable gains.

Dem House: Ways and Means would be the leading venue for tariff relief and eyewear exclusions, as well as for Medicare vision benefit expansion. Energy & Commerce could advance FTC labeling and Eyeglass Rule issues, clarify the Class I treatment of eyewear, and support reshoring priorities. Appropriations would likely push for higher NEI, FDA, FTC, and HRSA workforce funding.

Democratic Senate / GOP House

Dem Senate: Finance would likely advance legislation to constrain executive tariff power and pursue tariff refunds, while being more receptive to Medicare vision benefits. HELP could expand Medicare vision coverage and optometry and ophthalmology workforce funding, and could clarify online eye exam regulation. Commerce would likely push for stronger FTC enforcement and "Made in USA" labeling standards. Appropriations would likely pursue significantly higher NIH and NEI funding.

GOP House: Ways and Means would remain closely aligned with The Vision Council's tax priorities, but tariff exclusions and Medicare vision expansion would face limited prospects. Energy & Commerce would offer bipartisan opportunities on price transparency and on Medicare Advantage supplemental vision benefits, with less focus on optical-specific FTC issues. Appropriations would keep NEI funding a bipartisan opportunity and support foreign device inspection language, but would likely constrain FTC budgets.

Bottom Line: Under a divided Congress, The Vision Council's greatest opportunities lie in priorities with bipartisan support: NEI research funding, R&D expensing, FDA foreign inspection oversight, and healthcare transparency. Under a GOP Senate/Democratic House scenario, The Vision Council's tax agenda would be best advanced in the Senate. Tariff relief, Medicare vision coverage, and FTC labeling would be best advanced in the House. Sen. Collins remains a key ally for incremental wins on both funding and authorization, regardless of which party holds the majority. Unified Democratic control of Congress would give The Vision Council its strongest committee alignment on tariff relief, Medicare vision coverage, FTC labeling, and NEI and workforce funding, while deprioritizing its tax asks such as Section 199A; however, a Republican administration would likely limit major legislative changes, so near-term gains would come mainly through oversight, appropriations leverage, and bipartisan priorities such as R&D expensing.

Lame Duck Issue Watch List

MUST-PASS / FUNDING

- Government funding
- National Defense Authorization Act
- Supplemental funding requests

INFRASTRUCTURE & PERMITTING

- Permitting reform
- Ratepayer Protection Act
- Surface transportation extension
- Aviation safety legislation / FAA positioning

TECH, DATA & SECURITY

- AI legislation
- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) Section 702-related issues
- Digital Asset Market Clarity (CLARITY) Act / crypto legislation
- Kids Online Safety

OTHER LIVE WIRES

- College athletics / name, image, and likeness (NIL)
- Farm Bill
- Debt limit
- Health extenders

