

Why a Record Number of Lawmakers Are Quitting Congress

Updated list shows House departures hitting a new high for midterms as members cite a range of political and personal

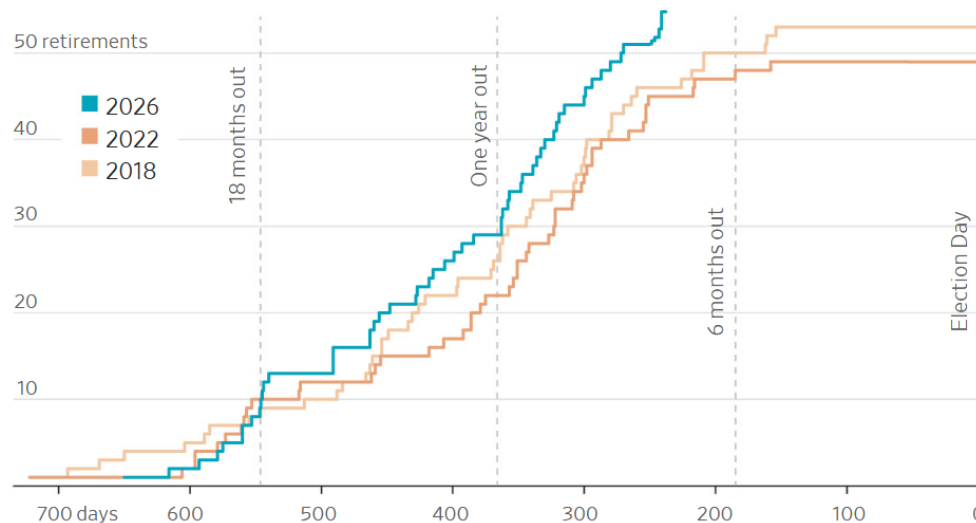
By
[Anvee Bhutani](#)
Follow
and
[Brian McGill](#)
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House retirements have hit a record for a midterm-election cycle. More than 50 lawmakers have announced they won't seek re-election, with more departures continuing to trickle in.

Retirements can reshape the battlefield. An open seat is typically more competitive than one defended by an incumbent, who benefits from name recognition, fundraising networks and established voter relationships. When those decisions come early, both parties have more time to recruit candidates and redirect national resources, expanding the map of competitive districts. Republicans now have a 218-214 advantage in the House.

House retirements by days before midterm election

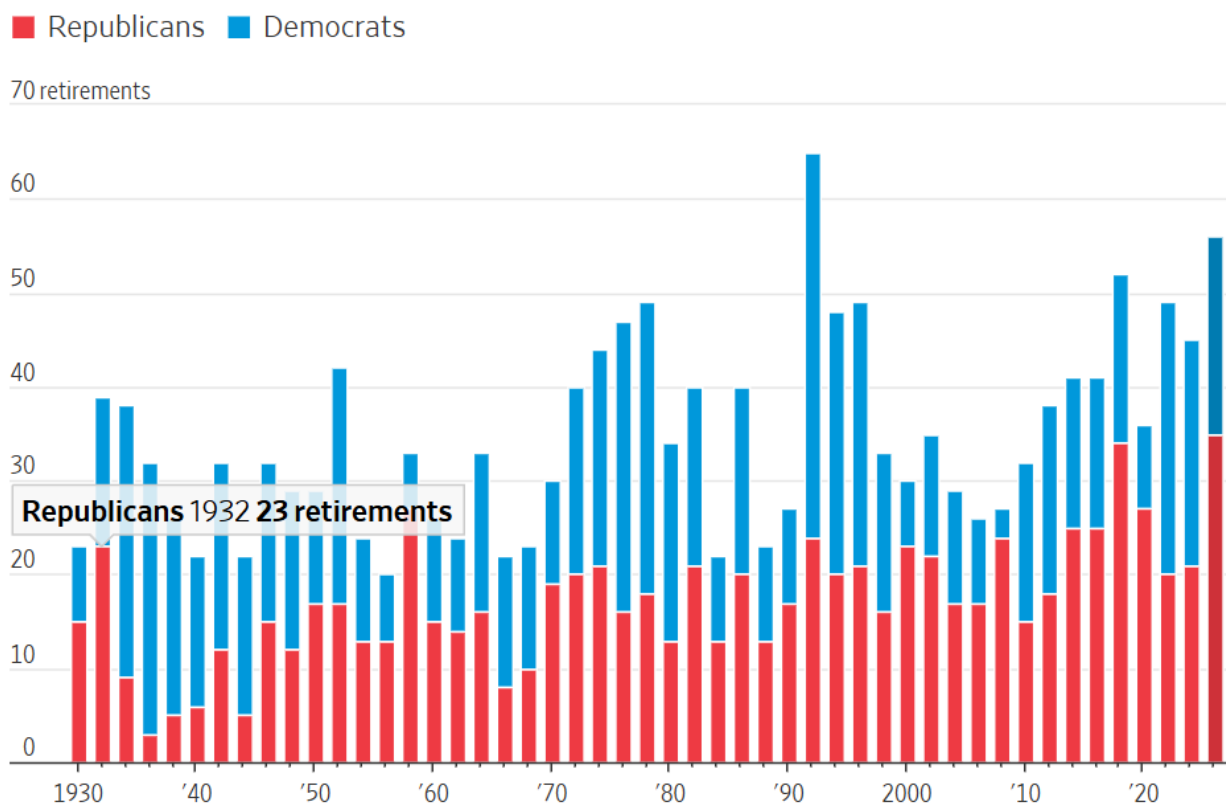


Note: Through March 14
Source: Ballotpedia

Midterm elections often serve as referendums on the party in power, and retirements can track expected gains or losses. Members considering retirement might want to stick around if their party will be in the majority—but might decide to hang it up if their party’s prospects look bleak. The previous high mark for departures in a midterm cycle was set in 2018, during President Trump’s first term, when Republicans faced an uphill fight to hang onto the majority. The overall record was set in 1992, when a wave of Democrats quit office.

This cycle marks the largest midterm exodus of House members in nearly a century of data. The moves signal broader unease inside the chamber about the direction of the political winds—and the value of remaining in office in a fraught political environment.

House retirements by party



Note: 2026 through March 14

Sources: Brookings Institution’s Vital Statistics on Congress (1930-2022); Ballotpedia (2024); WSJ analysis (2026)

Retirement decisions stem from a mix of political and personal factors. Some lawmakers are at or above the traditional Social Security retirement age of 67 and are ending long congressional careers. Rep. Ryan Zinke (R., Mont.), one of the most recent members to announce they were stepping aside, cited health problems related to injuries from his military career.

Others are pursuing different offices, such as the Senate or governor, or navigating newly redrawn district lines. Some faced potentially difficult re-election campaigns. On the Republican side, run-ins with Trump have made life difficult for a number of lawmakers who have decided to quit.

And some lawmakers have decided to stick around. Rep. Jim Clyburn (D., S.C.), 85 years old, said he would run for another term, despite speculation the party legend would step aside.

Thirty-five Republican and 21 Democratic representatives are moving on from the House for myriad reasons. Here are some notable retirements from this term:



Elise Stefanik (R., N.Y.): Her United Nations ambassador nomination was pulled after Trump got nervous about the House majority. She then [dropped](#) her bid for New York governor and said she planned to quit Congress, a significant turn for a once-rising star in GOP leadership.



Chip Roy (R., Texas): A [frequent thorn](#) in the side of GOP leadership, the House Freedom Caucus member is leaving the Congress to run for Texas attorney general.



Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.): She stepped down as party leader several years ago and the former House speaker is now leaving Congress, marking the [end of an era](#) in American politics.



Jared Golden (D., Maine): A centrist who was looking at a tough re-election bid in a red-leaning district, Golden cited the threat of [political violence and dysfunction](#) in Washington for not seeking another term.



Nancy Mace (R., S.C.): Always a political [wild card](#), the first female graduate of the Citadel is trading her coastal seat for a run at the South Carolina governor's mansion.



Jodey Arrington (R., Texas): Arrington served as a primary architect of the landmark 2025 tax package. Having reached the pinnacle of his legislative influence as [Budget Committee chair](#), he is framing his exit as a return to citizen-stewardship.



Don Bacon (R., Neb.): Facing another exhausting campaign in a blue-leaning district and after several clashes with Trump, Bacon is opting for retirement. He cited a combination of [political burnout](#) and a desire to spend time with his growing family.



Dan Newhouse (R., Wash.): One of the 10 House Republicans who backed [Trump's second impeachment](#), Newhouse is bowing out after surviving Trump-backed primary challenges. Of the group, only one, Rep. David Valadao of California, is still in Congress and seeking another term.



Jasmine Crockett (D., Texas): Following a redistricting shift that altered her home base, Crockett tried to parlay her [viral national](#)

[profile](#) into a Senate win. But she [fell short](#) in the primary in early March, losing to James Talarico.

Note: 'Crossed Trump' retirements refer only to Republicans.

Photos: Zuma Press (Arrington, Bacon, Mace, Newhouse, Pelosi); Associated Press (Crockett, Golden, Roy); Reuters (Stefanik)

This explanatory article may be periodically updated.