

# ‘Inside baseball:’

## A by-the-numbers look at this fall’s election landscape

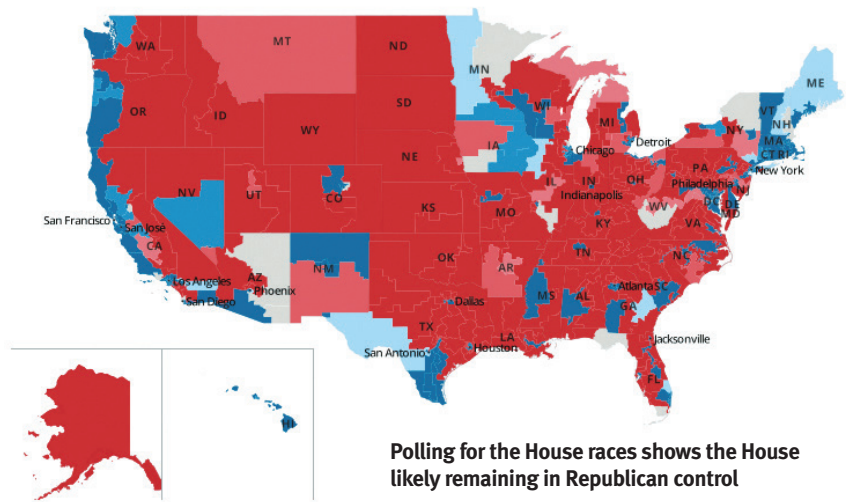
**U**nquestionably, the 113th Congress has put letter carriers on the defensive as some in Washington, DC, continue to push anti-worker, anti-union and even anti-postal agendas. This Election Day is our turn to fight back in support of Republicans and Democrats who support letter carriers.

On Tuesday, Nov. 4, voters in all 50 states will head to the polls to make their voices heard by exercising their right to vote. It’s an opportunity to pave the way for a Congress that will work for letter carriers and their families, not against us.

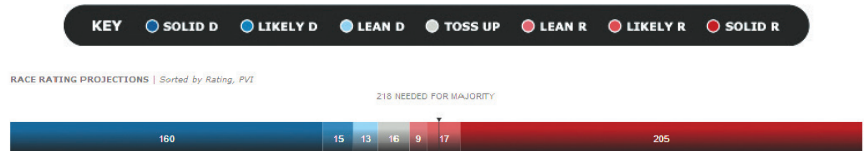
With no presidential election at the top of the ticket this year, both parties are having a difficult time finding a message that resonates with voters, and that typically equates to lower voter turnout and a net loss for the president’s party. Meanwhile, lower turnout tends to favor Republicans. In a year when dissatisfaction about Washington is at a record high, both parties are spending substantial resources to turn out their bases this fall.

In the House of Representatives, there are 233 Republicans, 199 Democrats and three vacant seats. While all of these seats are up for election, there are very few competitive “swing districts”—a result of redistricting after the 2010 census—and that means more “safe” seats and limited opportunities for Democrats to increase their numbers in this election cycle. And despite the Tea Party’s surges in 2010 and 2012, establishment Republican candidates overwhelmingly won in GOP primaries across the country this year, which may help Republicans retain these seats.

While Democrats are forecast to net a few pick-ups in the House, the general prediction in Washington is that Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH) will retain the gavel (see graphics above). It’s widely believed that Democrats don’t have a realistic shot of retaking control of the House until the redistricting that will follow the 2020 census.



Polling for the House races shows the House likely remaining in Republican control



In the Senate, there are 53 Democrats, 45 Republicans and two independents. The Senate is divided into three “classes,” with each class up for re-election every two years. This year, it’s Class 2’s turn, and Democrats are defending 21 of 36 seats—36 because of special elections in Hawaii, Oklahoma and South Carolina. (This gives Republicans a built-in advantage.) Of these, seven—Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia—were carried by Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney in the 2012 election, six by a double-digit margin. When Class 2’s Democrats won their elections in 2008, they were riding on the coattails of their party’s presidential nominee, Barack Obama. But the president’s current low approval ratings could hurt the same candidates who benefited from his popularity in 2008.

For Republicans to take control of the Senate, they need to net six seats. While Democrats are on the defensive and Republicans are expanding their influence on the electoral map, there are so many races with no clear front-runner—“toss-ups”—that accurately predicting the outcome for the Senate is extremely difficult. Control of the Senate, in fact, could be decided by a few thousand votes. For letter carriers, keeping the Senate controlled by a traditionally labor-friendly party could prove crucial in fending off an onslaught of bad proposals and legislation coming from a less labor-friendly House. (Read the “President’s Message” on page 1 to find out more about the special voter guide that will

be posted on [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) ahead of Election Day.)

In addition to federal races, in 36 states voters also will choose a governor. While letter carriers are federal employees and governors do not have a direct impact on our workplace, it’s important to educate all candidates seeking elected office. The NALC continues to work with state legislative bodies to pursue vote-by-mail legislation. Furthermore, the right for some workers to form unions has been restricted in recent years by decisions made at the state level, and we believe that all workers should have the right to join unions and to bargain collectively with their employers.

With so much at stake on Election Day, the NALC is seeking new and innovative ways to support candidates through our political action committee, the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE). Thanks to the continued prominence of so-called super PACs (organizations that allow unlimited funds to be used for—and against—candidates), organizations like the NALC must play the political game in new ways, exploring every potential avenue to use our COLCPE funds to defend and build on our political capital. Additionally, NALC will continue to participate in the AFL-CIO’s election effort, with letter carrier activists released to work on targeted election campaigns in support of pro-labor candidates.

And of course, letter carriers from across the country once again will step up to the plate and volunteer their time—whether there is an election in their back yard or not. **PR**