

***Please Discuss ...* podcast**
The Brookings Institution

"Please Discuss ... governing in Washington after the 2026 midterms"

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Episode Summary:

In this last of three episodes of *Please Discuss* focused on the U.S. midterm elections, E.J. Dionne moderates a post-elections conversation with Brookings scholars Katie Dunn Tenpas, Bob Kagan, and Molly Reynolds on what drove Democrats' resounding victory on November 3, what it could mean for governing in Washington in 2027, and how the results might shape the 2028 presidential election.

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TENPAS: I actually think this was more of a vote against Trump as opposed to a vote for the Democrats.

KAGAN: I think that what we're looking at in the Republican Party is a complete fracturing. I don't see anybody unifying the party, and I think the party's in desperate shape.

REYNOLDS: Big question for me going forward is, where does all this go from here?

[0:29]

DIONNE: Welcome to *Please Discuss*, our podcast that brings together Brookings scholars to unpack the defining issues of our time.

I'm E.J. Dionne, a senior fellow in Governance Studies. We are recording this conversation on Tuesday, November 10th, and this is the last of three episodes focused on the U.S. midterm elections. In previous editions, our scholars looked at the changing map of the elections and the issues facing the voters.

Now, the midterms have happened. What we witnessed wasn't just a blue wave. Many have settled on calling it a political tsunami. It reached deep into red America. Democrats won the national popular vote in House races by roughly 13 points, delivering Republicans their worst midterm defeat in the last century.

To give a sense of just how big the shift was, as of the latest count, Republicans had won 5 million fewer votes than they did in the 2022 midterm elections during President Biden's time in office, while the Democrats won 13 million more votes, a number that is likely to continue to rise as California keeps counting.

It was a story of dispirited Republicans and energized Democrats. In the Senate, Democrats have already locked up 54 seats and seem to be on track for 56, flipping states such as Texas, Ohio, Iowa, and Kansas that President Trump won by double digits just two years ago.

And in the House, the Democrats have blown past their 2018 numbers and appear to be on pace to win 260 seats, their largest majority in a generation.

And so, now, our attention turns again to governing as the new Democratic majority takes control of Congress in the new year. To look more deeply at what drove this historic realignment and what it means moving forward, I'm joined by another terrific panel. Joining me in the studio today are Katie Dunn Tenpas, a visiting fellow in governance studies who hosted a wonderful podcast series earlier this year called *Democracy in Question: America at 250*.

Katie, welcome.

TENPAS: Thank you.

DIONNE: Bob Kagan, the Stephen and Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy. Welcome, Bob.

KAGAN: Thank you.

DIONNE: And Molly Reynolds, the vice president and director of Governance Studies. Welcome, Molly.

REYNOLDS: Thanks for having me

[3:03]

DIONNE: Before we dive into what this means for governing in the next two years, let's do a quick round robin on the results themselves. Why did this happen, and in particular, what surprised you? Katie, start us off.

[3:16]

TENPAS: Yeah. I would say what surprised me most was the magnitude of the Democratic victories, especially with the Senate seats. I think all of them that were up, they won, and that was quite surprising.

The other thing that surprised me was the fluidity of the Trump voters. I would've thought there might've been more loyalty towards Trump and therefore more more likely to vote for the Republican congressional candidates.

And then finally, I I would say I was surprised by the absence of shenanigans. Given the lawsuits that were filed in California and Alaska, I thought that there would be more legal types of shenanigans in the aftermath of the elections, and there wasn't.

DIONNE: Do you think that had to do with the outcome itself, the size of it, or the organizing before, which made the shenanigans harder? They lost a lot of suits in court.

TENPAS: It could've been the fact that they were losing these efforts. The magnitude of the election makes all of their efforts to kind of grasp at sort of claims of rigging an election just seem untenable.

[4:06]

DIONNE: Yeah, that make, that makes sense. Bob, what surprised you, and why did this happen?

[4:10]

KAGAN: I guess it's because we had the worst presidency in living memory, and Americans actually woke up to that reality. I mean, obviously the war had a tremendous amount to do with it.

What surprised me the most, and what I think to some extent, at at least when it comes to preventing dictatorship, is the most important thing, is the degree to which Democrats flipped state houses.

The fact that you now have Democratic state attorneys general instead of Republican, the fact that Texas is now completely controlled by Democrats, that's a big deal because one of the efforts to impose dictatorship requires sort of a little bit of state cooperation, and the fact that the states are now going to be independent and fighting back, I think, against the administration was a really big blow in favor of democracy.

[4:54]

DIONNE: You know, I'm glad you raised that because the victories in the states were huge. If the Kansas result holds, there's a close race out there for governor, it'll be 30 Democratic governors, which they haven't seen in forever. And that is something that's often overlooked because we're focusing so much on Congress.

Molly, what happened and what surprised you?

[5:12]

REYNOLDS: So, in terms of what happened, I think it's a little bit of an all of the above election. So, given how big the wave was, there isn't one single thing that we can point to. Yes, it was the war. Yes, it was tariffs. Yes, it was the effect of both of those things on prices. Yes, it was corruption. All of those things sort of were working in different ways, in different combinations, in different races.

It also mattered a great deal that Democrats in particular did really well in recruiting some strong candidates. Texas, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, the size of Roy Cooper's Senate victory in North Carolina all are just much bigger than I think folks were really expecting.

And I think for me, all of this is a really good reminder that we talk a lot about how much of what happens in American politics is structural. Most of the time, Republican voters vote for the Republican candidate, Democratic voters vote for the Democratic candidate, and then there's just a little bit of play in the middle that decides elections.

But you can still get these waves that really dismantle some of that structure, at least temporarily. And so, a big question for me going forward is, where does all this go from here? So, you know, you have these senators who, they'll be in office for all of the first term of the next president, whoever that may be.

But is this really a realignment? I don't think we know that yet, and I think we will have to ask some big questions about that as we go forward.

[6:40]

DIONNE: Molly, I'm so glad you raised that because it was candidate quality on both sides because the president intervened in a number of races, you know, notably Texas and South Carolina, and the quality of, or lack thereof, of the Republican candidate really mattered.

[6:56]

REYNOLDS: I think another thing that those two races in particular remind us of that's an important lesson that sometimes we forget, is that we live in an era of very nationalized politics. But in individual states, there are state-specific dynamics that sometimes get washed out in a national environment, but sometimes can turn out to be really important.

So, for example, Lindsey Graham, before he passed away, historically had run pretty weak in the upstate part of South Carolina. That is a part of the state that really swung in favor of Annie Andrews, the Democratic candidate, when Lindsey Graham's sister was on the ballot.

That has a lot to do with Republican politics in South Carolina specifically. But turns out, in an election like this, that can be very consequential even in determining what happens nationally.

[7:44]

TENPAS: I would just talk, you know, to get back to the prior topic on realignment versus referendum. I actually think that the fluidity of the Trump voters suggests that this is not a realignment per se.

Political scientists always want to look for realignments. We love the historical precedents where there were realignments, but I actually think this was more of a vote against Trump as opposed to a vote for the Democrats.

And it reminded me of the 1980 election, even though this was a presidential election, where the campaign was called the ABC campaign, where people voted "anybody but Carter."

And so, in this election, I would say it would be more likely a referendum as opposed to a realignment.

[8:17]

DIONNE: Yeah, I liked Ezra Klein's point in *The New York Times* where he said this is a "dealignment." It's not a realignment yet. It opens some doors. And and just on your local specificity, big deal what happened in farm country and what happened in Iowa and Kansas and the war, high diesel prices, high fertilizer prices. This really mattered. His immigration enforcement really mattered. There're a lot of Latino counties now all over the country.

But we should probably look forward, since that's what we do here. Molly, could you tell us the challenges to both the country with this divided government we have, and Democrats in particular, they have this peculiar problem of they need to look like a success for the sake of 2028.

They don't really want President Trump to look like a success by 2028. And they have this first 100 hours plan. Talk about what you see Democrats seem to have planned, and more generally, how you look forward to this relationship.

[9:19]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, so the first thing I'd say is that one consequence of such a large wave for Democrats, it's looking like it'll be about 260 seats, is that that majority is full of new members who will immediately be vulnerable in the 2028 elections.

So, it looks quite possible that Democrats will have won every House seat that Trump won by less than nine points. So, it's a huge number of House Democrats who are now in Trump districts. And those folks will be immediately putting pressure on presumptive Speaker Jeffries to use the House's time to do things that they will be able to run on in two years, and be able to say to voters, "Look, this is what we did for you in these two years. Importantly, this is what we tried to do for you in these two years, and we couldn't get it all the way across the finish line because of the filibuster in the Senate, and because more importantly, President Trump is still in the White House. And so, this is what we would do for you if you return to unified Democratic Party control to White House in the 2020 election."

So, I expect that we'll see a lot of kind of trying to balance, are there any places where there is the opportunity for bipartisan compromise that Trump would sign, with what are things that these majority makers, as we sometimes call them, want to be able to run on in two years.

So, presumptive Speaker Jeffries has talked about repealing the Medicaid cuts that were enacted as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill. I think there's also a lot of push to try and undo some of the changes to SNAP that were part of that legislation, restoring the lapsed subsidies under the Affordable Care Act, legislation to potentially roll back some of the tariffs—

DIONNE:—particularly against Canada—

REYNOLDS:—exactly, exactly—.

DIONNE:—Our great enemy in the world.

[11:18]

REYNOLDS: And so that's legislatively where I expect them to go.

Non-legislatively, thinking about oversight. So, lots of talk about this on the campaign trail, and just what will it look like for the House and the Senate to try and hold the Trump administration accountable for any number of different things that have unfolded over the past two years.

[11:39]

TENPAS: I wanted to take sort of a less specific approach to what what it means with divided government, and think more thematically about it. And this, I think, complements, Molly's comments. But number one, I think that divided government, what we have now, is a return to checks and balances.

It's a fundamental component of our political system, and it was really skewed. The House of Representatives and the Senate during the first two years of Trump's

second term were basically an annex of the White House. There was little to no oversight. And so, I feel like divided government at least provides some restoration of checks and balances.

Secondly, I'd say more broadly, divided government provides both parties with political cover. And all you need to do is go back to President Clinton with welfare reform and saw that he was able to make a deal, and he could tell the Democrats that were disappointed, "This is the best I could do." And so, I do think it does provide some opportunity for bipartisan cooperation, probably on small bills. There will not be anything sort of that's comprehensively changing things, but I do think there is opportunity for that.

And then finally, what I would say is the institution of Congress and divided government could benefit greatly. If you look back historically, when Democrats were in control in the aftermath of the 1974 elections, they cared about the institution. They established the Congressional Budget Office. They established the Office of Technology Assessment. They realized that in order to compete with the executive branch, they needed to increase and improve their capacity.

Right now, Congress needs bigger committee staffs. They need a committee to address issues having to do with technology and AI. And so, I think divided government at this moment can provide all of that.

[13:08]

DIONNE: Now, a lot of that also depends on whether President Trump is the President Trump who went on CBS and said, "I'd like to make a deal on immigration reform," or the President Trump who appointed Stephen Miller as his new chief of staff. It's just very unclear.

[13:22]

REYNOLDS: I think this is one of the huge unresolved questions for me of what's coming. So, if you think back to the second two years of the first Trump administration, there were moments in those two years with Trump in the White House, Democrats controlling the House, where we saw kind of flashes of bipartisan legislative productivity. And so, that's possible.

I think equally possible, if not more likely, is that we get the Trump of this term, who is backed into a corner. He's a lame duck in the last two years of his presidency, has clearly demonstrated already a willingness in this term to use presidential power even more aggressively. And do we get that Trump? That's the sort of appoint Stephen Miller chief of staff Trump versus the goes-on-60-Minutes Trump.

And I think the pressure on Democrats in Congress not to cut deals with Trump is actually much higher this time than it was in the second part of the first Trump administration because there are lots of Democratic voters, some of whom are calling House Democrats now and saying, "Don't elect Hakeem Jeffries Speaker," because they're not happy with how the House leadership and the Senate leadership in the form of Chuck Schumer conducted themselves in the minority.

Now, do I think that either Hakeem Jeffries or Chuck Schumer is going to lose their leadership election? I do not.

DIONNE: Not after this result.

REYNOLDS: Exactly. And also, part of the job of being leader is to take all of the heat. It is, in fact, in some ways the most important job of being a congressional leader is to deflect blame from your rank-and-file members. That's your job as the leader.

But I do think there are some ways in which those second two years of the first Trump administration are illustrative, but I think there are also some ways in which the political context of this one is really different.

[15:11]

DIONNE: Yeah, I want to go back to that, but I want to go to Bob just on the irony of history. It's always struck me that Democrats winning in 2018 actually helped Trump during the pandemic because they helped create an even more generous relief package, which I think had something to do with why people look back more fondly on Trump in 2024 than people thought. It was obviously the performance of the economy before the pandemic, but the interventions in the economy actually held up living standards of a lot of people, and Democrats fought for more in that package.

But but before we go back to the Congress, Bob, what impact can the Congress, a Democratic Congress, have on Trump's conduct of foreign policy? The Constitution gives him quite a lot of power anyway. He's prepared to take even more. What controls are there? How are you looking forward to these last two years?

And are some of our allies worried that with Trump not being able to do much domestically, he may make a lot of moves in foreign policy that may, to put it mildly, discomfort our allies?

[16:16]

KAGAN: Yeah, and he's already doing that. I mean, the the the big deal that he's working on with Russia shows every sign of, on the one hand, first of all, selling out Ukraine in a fundamental way, and also he's talking about a new security architecture in Europe, which is the old Russian plan of having a kind of two-tier NATO so that NATO has to pull out of places like Poland and the other frontline states.

If that is what this deal is about, that is a real blow to Europe, and obviously conducted in a negotiation without European participation, at least so far. So, there's very little that that Congress can do about that.

Congress does have the one power which it has refused to exercise under Mike Johnson, which is the power of the purse. And that is really the only control they have over foreign policy, is the ability to either approve or not approve a Pentagon budget, either to approve or not approve funding for the State Department even, if they want to play that. And that'll get to the question of whether the Democrats are in a confrontational mood or not.

I think the anti-war sentiment is so great that there will be some effort to hem Trump in, but then they'll be accused of undermining our troops in the middle of a conflict, et cetera, et cetera. So, we'll see where it goes.

But one thing is certainly true, the the one place where if this were a normal presidency, you'd say, "Okay, with a loss like this, the one place he can operate is in foreign policy." It's just that I'm not sure ... we don't really have a foreign policy in America. We have a predatory criminal enterprise seeking to make as much money as it possibly can. That can continue.

But that is also why it is important for Congress to do oversight and really nail down the extensive corruption that has accompanied our foreign policy over the past couple of years.

[17:59]

DIONNE: Just on one particular point, if it comes down to it, can Congress say, and there would clearly be a big majority in both houses to support Ukraine, there might even be still some Republicans who go along with that, although a lot of the more moderate conservatives lost because their, of nature of their districts. Can Congress have the power to continue helping Ukraine, or can the president just block that no matter what Congress does?

[18:28]

KAGAN: Congress can obviously pass aid to Ukraine if if they want to, but the president can also veto that aid. I mean, they can't force the president to distribute aid to to Ukraine.

And by the way, you know, we're talking about this world as if it's a steady state world. Within the next six months, we could have a Russian major military attack on a NATO ally, which will then raise the question of whether the United States is there or not. Congress can express an opinion on that subject, but only Trump can actually be there or not be there.

We are in a situation where the Middle East now has entirely exploded as far as American influence is concerned. America is in retreat. That is gonna have all kinds of ramifications. So, a lot of these sort of will Congress have a say or not are gonna be blown away by what I think are gonna be a series of unfolding crises in the international system.

[19:14]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, I'll just say that, you know, Ukraine is a specific example of a more general phenomenon that we've seen over the first two years of the Trump administration, which is that Congress can appropriate all the money it wants.

Unless and until it is willing to threaten to do other things that the Trump administration doesn't like. It has trouble forcing the executive branch to actually spend the money in the way that it has directed. And so, that that's happened across a really wide range of issue areas over the last two years.

And so, going forward, you either need a Congress that's willing to say, "If you don't spend money on X, Y, or Z, we're going to reduce the budget for the Office of Management and Budget by a million dollars a day until you do that."

Or you need a shift in the underlying politics where Republican members of Congress start to see their interests as not as inextricably tied to Trump's own interests and start to put political pressure on the administration to behave differently.

I am not ready to say that that second thing is gonna happen. I'll be watching very closely where Trump's approval rating among Republicans goes. So, his approval rating generally going into the midterms was quite low, but it was still in the high 70s among Republican voters. That might seem high. It's relatively low for a same-party president in our in our modern era.

But unless and until that number keeps going down, I think the political incentives facing Republican members, particularly of the House, aren't gonna change dramatically such that they're gonna want to exert political pressure on the administration to behave differently.

[20:49]

DIONNE: Oh, and one fact about the Republicans in the House is that the remaining Republicans in the House represent very, very Trumpy districts—

REYNOLDS:—yes. I mean, sort of definitionally—

DIONNE:—-because so many of the others have been wiped out—

REYNOLDS:—if you have a wave big enough to wipe out many people who want a seat that is bluer than Trump +9, that just drives your conference dramatically to the right.

[21:10]

KAGAN: By the way, we're presuming that the Democratic Party is sort of the party of American global leadership going forward, and that's why it's gonna be opposing Trump on one thing or another.

I'm not at all persuaded that that's what the Democratic Party stands for. I think the Democratic Party's gonna be very divided on foreign policy. I think the isolationist sentiment that has been goosed up a lot by the Iran war is affecting both parties, and whether we really are gonna say, "Okay, it's time to get America back in the game," I don't sense a national consensus for that.

So, I'll be interested to see how much Democrats really want to fight on foreign policy rather than simply take advantage of the failures of foreign policy and and and point to them.

[21:50]

DIONNE: I agree with you. I think there's gonna be a big argument in the 2028 Democratic presidential campaign about foreign policy, but I do think that within Democratic ranks there is broad sympathy for Ukraine, broad skepticism of Vladimir Putin, and that may be an area that—

KAGAN:—unquestionably—

DIONNE:—pulls most of the party together.

KAGAN: Unquestionably, but if the question is gonna move from can you provide aid to are we gonna send forces to Europe to defend against a Russian attack, I'd be curious to see what the response to that is.

[22:20]

DIONNE: Bob raised investigations and, you know, and Katie rightly raised this whole question of does the balance of power change? I think this debate, well, they can only investigate or only pass legislation, is a false debate. Obviously, they can do both.

But how you organize these investigations, how you confront the administration when it says, "No, we're not gonna cooperate. We're not gonna respond to these subpoenas," how you organize hearings. I mean, congressional hearings are badly organized for messaging purposes with five minutes here, five minutes there.

How do you look at this, and what would be a success in organizing these investigations, and what are the pitfalls, Molly?

[23:04]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, so, here I think it's helpful to distinguish between a couple of different kinds of oversight and investigations that we're likely to see.

So, on one hand, there's any number of things that the Trump administration has done over the last two years, particularly in terms of its conduct of its influence over federal spending.

So, canceling NIH grants, dismantling USAID, farming out functions of the Department of Education to other agencies, where if you're Democrats and part of what you want to do is tell a compelling story to the American people about these are the consequences of having elected Donald Trump president, you can do that through hearings without a whole lot of cooperation from the administration itself.

So, you can tell agencies, "send witnesses." You can subpoena them. You can subpoena documents. You can tell agencies to preserve documents. In fact, we've already started to see the Democratic staffs and the Democratic leadership on some committees send letters to agencies saying, "Don't destroy things." That's kind of one bloc.

[24:06]

I think a second bloc we're actually likely to see a lot of effort comes back to something Bob was talking about, about the sort of nature of the conduct of what we might call foreign policy in the first two years, which is it's involved a lot of close relationships between Trump and the Trump administration and private actors where, and so here I'm thinking about, you know, who has been either the targets of or gotten off easy in Trump's trade deals, his critical minerals deals, even things like who gave money to build the ballroom.

So, there are these places where private actors are really key parts of what the Trump administration has done, and those entities have really different incentives than Trump and executive branch officials to comply with Congress.

You know, Trump is only gonna be in office two more years. As we saw in the first Trump administration, I expect them to just try and run out the clock on Congress, refuse subpoenas, try to litigate over them, not show up, not cooperate.

But if you're a large multinational corporation and you get a subpoena from a committee of the House of Representatives, your time horizon is a lot longer than two years.

And I think the places where we're gonna probably see the most oversight energy are on those places where to get at what the Trump administration has done, there's a way to go outside the confines of the federal government.

[25:31]

DIONNE: Yes, and and Congressman Jamie Raskin, who will chair the House Judiciary Committee, has signaled very much that they're gonna be looking at those private actors if they keep getting stonewalled by the administration.

Katie, one of the things I've been thinking about in terms of these investigations and the way in which Democrats are gonna push back on "this is retribution," not about legislating, is there's a lot of legislation that could come out of this—reform legislation. For example, do we need a constitutional amendment to limit the president's pardon power and investigations of the, what's come to be called the pardon industry in Washington. Conflicts of interest over stock ownership, over investments that involve foreign actors.

How do you see this playing into your argument that this really is an opportunity to right the balance between the branches?

[26:27]

TENPAS: So, I actually went back to look at the final two years of President Reagan, of President Clinton, of President Bush, and President Obama to try to get a sense of could they walk and chew gum at the same time? And there were a number of investigations in those final two years. You might recall the Iran-Contra affair, if we're going way back, or the Benghazi investigation that occurred under Obama's watch. And there was also major legislation that passed.

So, to me, it's not an either/or, and I think that in order to restore the important fundamental focus and role of checks and balances in the country, there has to be more oversight.

But Trump is on his way out. If you look at the final two years of those other two-term presidencies, they are focused on legacy building They're not focused on any innovation, any legislation. I I did this study on looking at where do presidents go when they leave Washington, D.C.? In the first four years or the first three years, it's all about swing state travel because they're trying to get reelected.

But if you look at the final two years of other presidential two terms, you find that they spend a lot of time abroad because they can do diplomacy. They have less congressional oversight. So, President Trump's incentives are entirely different from Congress, and so I think that also plays into this whole equation.

[27:33]

DIONNE: I think there's a great paper here, "From swing states to swing countries." But yeah, you're exactly right.

We are running out of time, so I want to do two lightning rounds here. Lightning round number one, since everybody loves to talk, or at least a lot of people in Washington love to talk, about the next presidential campaign and the next election, just from each of you, what does all this mean for 2028 on either or both sides?

Let me just start with Molly and work down the panel.

[28:01]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, so I'll make a comment about the Democratic side of the aisle, which is to say that I think the breadth and depth of the wave really opens up a much wider set of possible Democratic presidential candidates in 2028.

You know, I said at the top that this was kind of an all-of-the-above election. So, if you are someone on the Democratic side of the aisle who was contemplating a presidential run, you can find in these election results your reason why you should run for president.

DIONNE: When everybody wins, everybody can run.

REYNOLDS: Exactly. When everybody wins, everybody can find a reason to believe that they are the person who should be the next Democratic president.

KAGAN: Like they need the reason. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: And so, I think, I think for me, one consequence of this looking forward to 2028 is that we're gonna see perhaps a much larger Democratic field than we might have if the win for Democrats had been narrower.

[28:54]

DIONNE: Bob?

[28:54]

KAGAN: Well, I think that what we're looking at in the Republican Party is a complete fracturing, which gets back to the thing you originally said about, you know, gearing up for '28 to deal with, you know, you don't want to strengthen Donald Trump.

Donald Trump is, I think, history, and I don't see a successor. I think what you're gonna have in the Republican Party are several lanes. There's gonna be a harder MAGA lane than we even, you know, a Tucker Carlson lane. There's gonna be a establishment MAGA lane, which is sort of Vance. And then I think there's going to be something coming out of what we used to call "normie" side of Republicans. But in any case, I think MAGA's in bad shape, and I think the party's in bad shape.

And I, and if I were the Democrats, I would, I would try to hammer that down as deeply as possible. And I would say, as opposed to spending a lot of time trying to set the agenda for what we're doing going forward, leave that to the presidential candidates. What Congress should be doing now is ensuring that this Republican Party remains sort of down and under attack and and fractured.

DIONNE: A "normie" Republican I know was asked, "Are you for Rubio or Vance?" And he said, "Actually, it'll be a three-way fight, Rubio, Vance, and a player to be named later." And he said, "I'm for a player to be named later."

KAGAN: I think Rubio is also history, by the way. I don't think he has a future at all.

[30:11]

TENPAS: Yeah, I I was gonna focus on the Republicans, but also say that I went back to look at the elections in this period where there's been a big election, sort of if you look at 2006, if you look at 1986, what you find is that after two terms of of a Republican presidency, a Democrat usually wins, and vice versa. After Obama, a Republican won. So, you usually see this flip-flopping. So, right now the Democratic majority's, if you looked historically, you would expect a Democratic candidate to win the presidential election in 2028.

Going to the Republicans, what I would look at it, the two people who have been most vociferous and are most likely to run would be Rubio and Vance, but they are both right now toxic. Some people say Rubio would have to resign from the cabinet shortly in order to run a re-election campaign, which is true. You do need a lot of time.

Who has time on their hands? The former governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis.

KAGAN: Yeah, sure.

TENPAS: So, I sort of see him—

DIONNE:—And he's, and he's already started making noises—

TENPAS:—yeah—

DIONNE:—in that direction.

TENPAS: But I, but I think anybody that's closely associated with Trump will have a really difficult time winning the nomination.

KAGAN: And especially associated with the war. Rubio was national security advisor and secretary of state throughout this entire thing.

TENPAS: And he was archivist for a while too.

KAGAN: Right.

[31:14]

DIONNE: One last thing very quickly. What one thing should people be looking at going into next year, or what is the thing that you are kind of most focused on? Just very quickly going down.

[31:26]

REYNOLDS: The fact that despite these large victories for Democratic candidates in the House and the Senate, the challenges to our democracy have not gone away.

And thinking about looking, you know, farther ahead than the next two years on what does it mean to rebalance our powers across the federal government to make sure that the states are doing what they need to do. These challenges have not disappeared simply because Democrats had a good night.

[31:52]

DIONNE: What an innovative idea, look past one election cycle. Thank you for that. Bob?

[31:57]

KAGAN: Well, I'm just gonna repeat, I think we are in for a series of major global crises over the next two years, partly stemming from Trump's actions, partly stemming from just the way the world is heading, which are gonna upset things a lot.

I mean, so it's very hard to predict what the American response is gonna be to those crises. It could be the kind of response that you had in 1940, where the country was galvanizing, or it could be the kind of response you had in 1935, where we were trying to make sure that we never got involved again.

So, that is, that's gonna be a big question.

[32:27]

DIONNE: Katie?

[32:27]

TENPAS: And I would just echo Molly. I think it's important to think about democracy long-term, to think about all of the attempts to sort of weaken our democracy, weaken checks and balances. It's hard to have that as a high item on the agenda, but think about the abuse of emergency powers. I mean, President Trump claimed that left and right. That needs to be hemmed in. The pardoning needs to be hemmed in. A lot of these these things need to be addressed.

But I think it's hard when the members of Congress realize that the clock is ticking, they have two years, a presidential election within there that they really want to win, and they want to maintain their gains.

So, it seems to me they're gonna listen to voters, they're gonna think about the economy, they're gonna think about cost, corruption. Schumer the other day mentioned three C's of cost, corruption, and chaos, and addressing those, and we'll see how that goes.

DIONNE: One of the great things about hanging around this place is you get to talk to great people. This was a great conversation.

I want to thank you so much, Molly, Bob, and Katie.

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