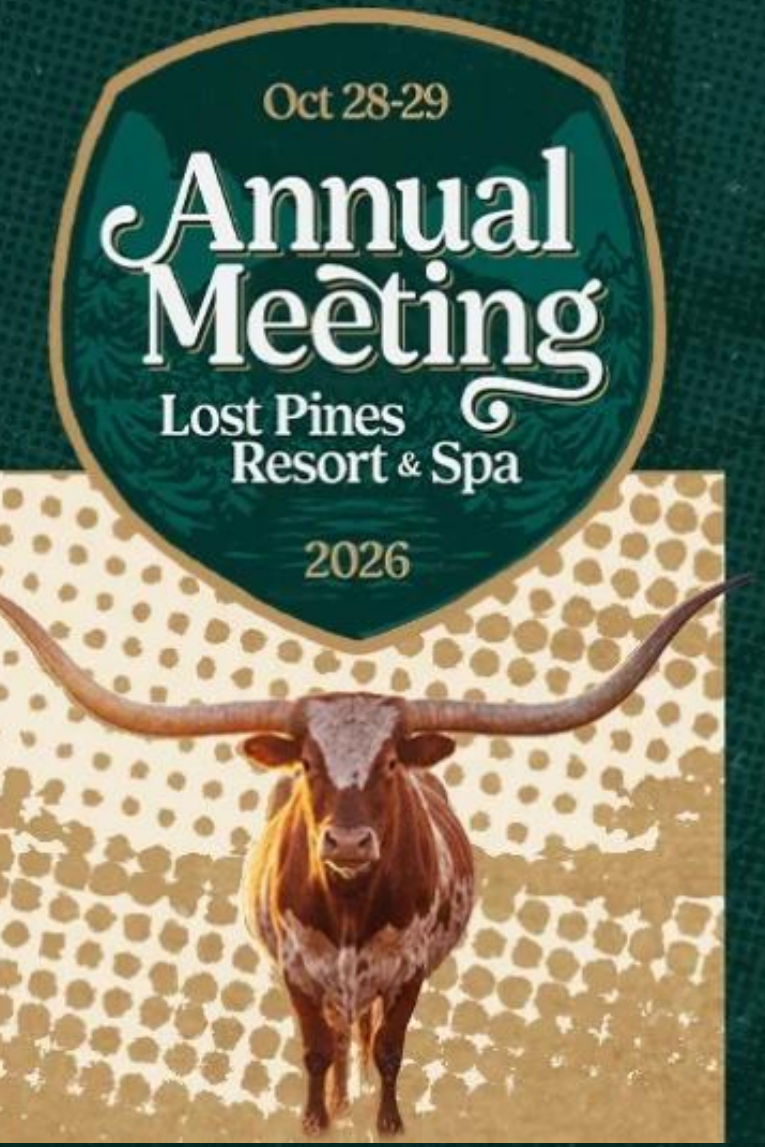


SESSION:

Government Affairs Sprint

Thursday, October 29th

11:45 AM-12:05 PM CT



SPEAKER

Lindsay Austin

the sequoia project®

Oct 28-29
Annual Meeting
Lost Pines Resort & Spa
2026

carequality

What's Driving Federal Policy

Wrapping up 2026 and Looking Ahead to a New Congress

Lindsay Austin – Principal, Troutman Strategies

Factors Shaping HIT Policy

You've heard the vision. Now for the timing realities.

Midterm elections

Outcome will shape the healthcare priorities for 2027-28

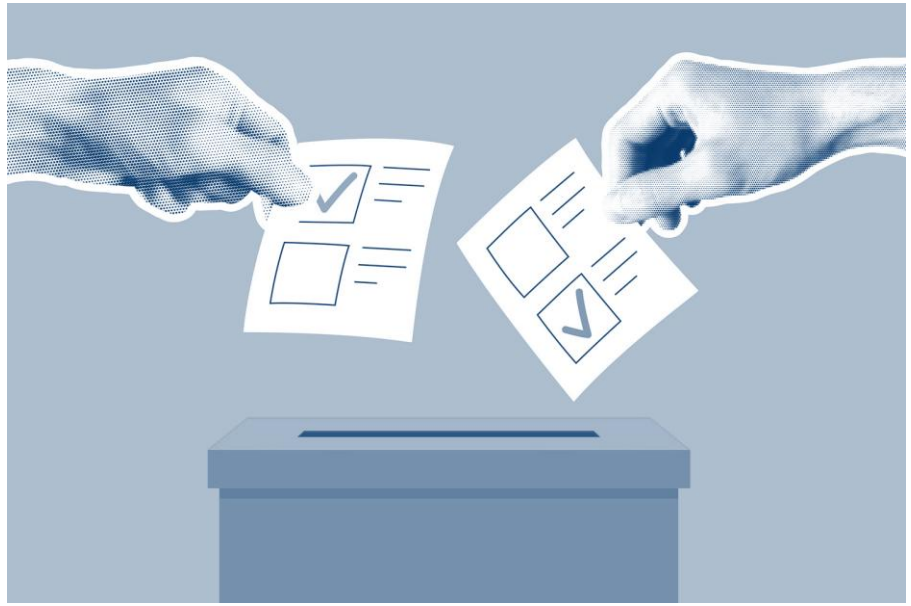
Congress

Productivity in the lame-duck session will set the stage for the next Congress

The administration

HHS, CMS, and ONC are moving on health IT without waiting on Congress

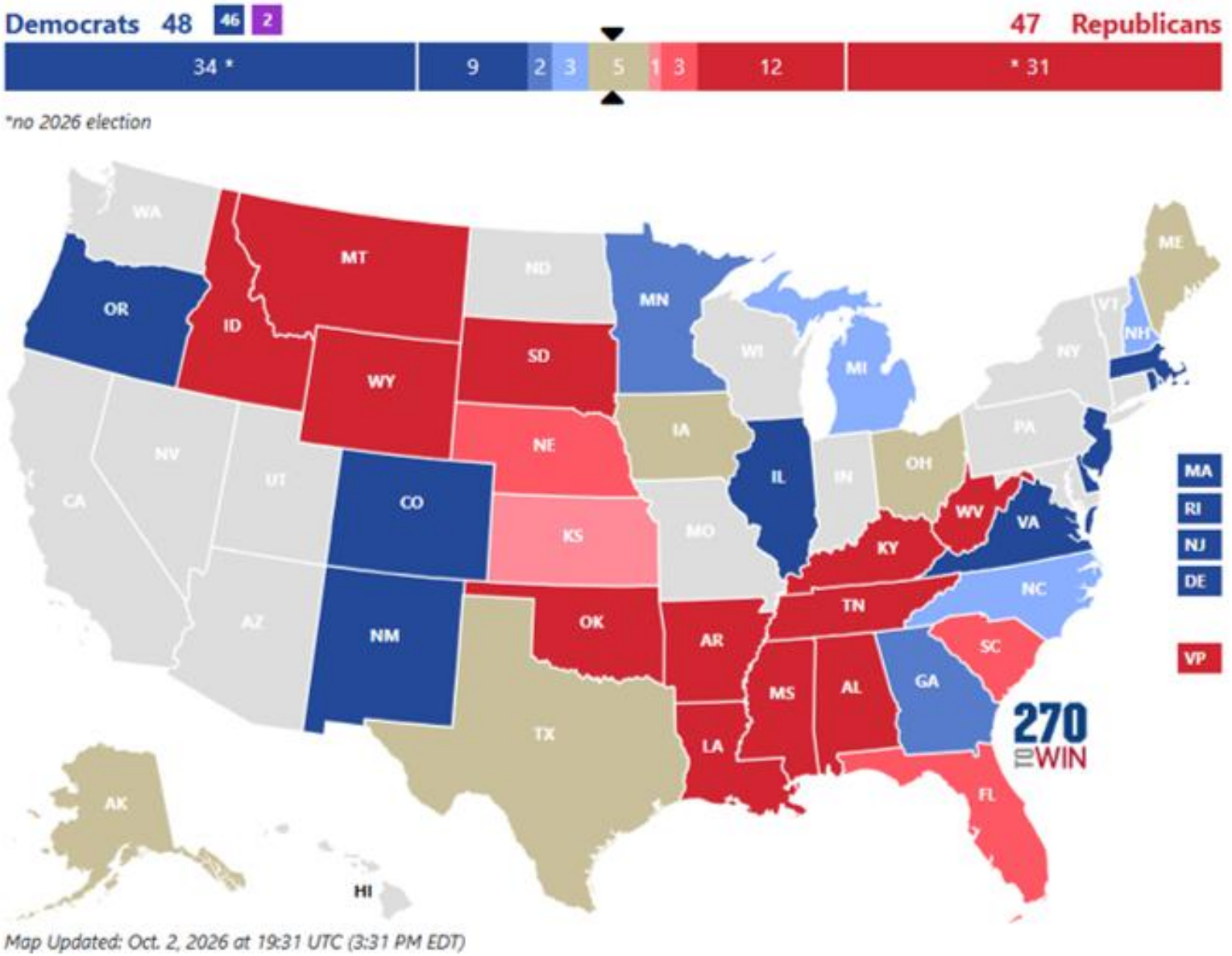
Midterm elections



National Look:

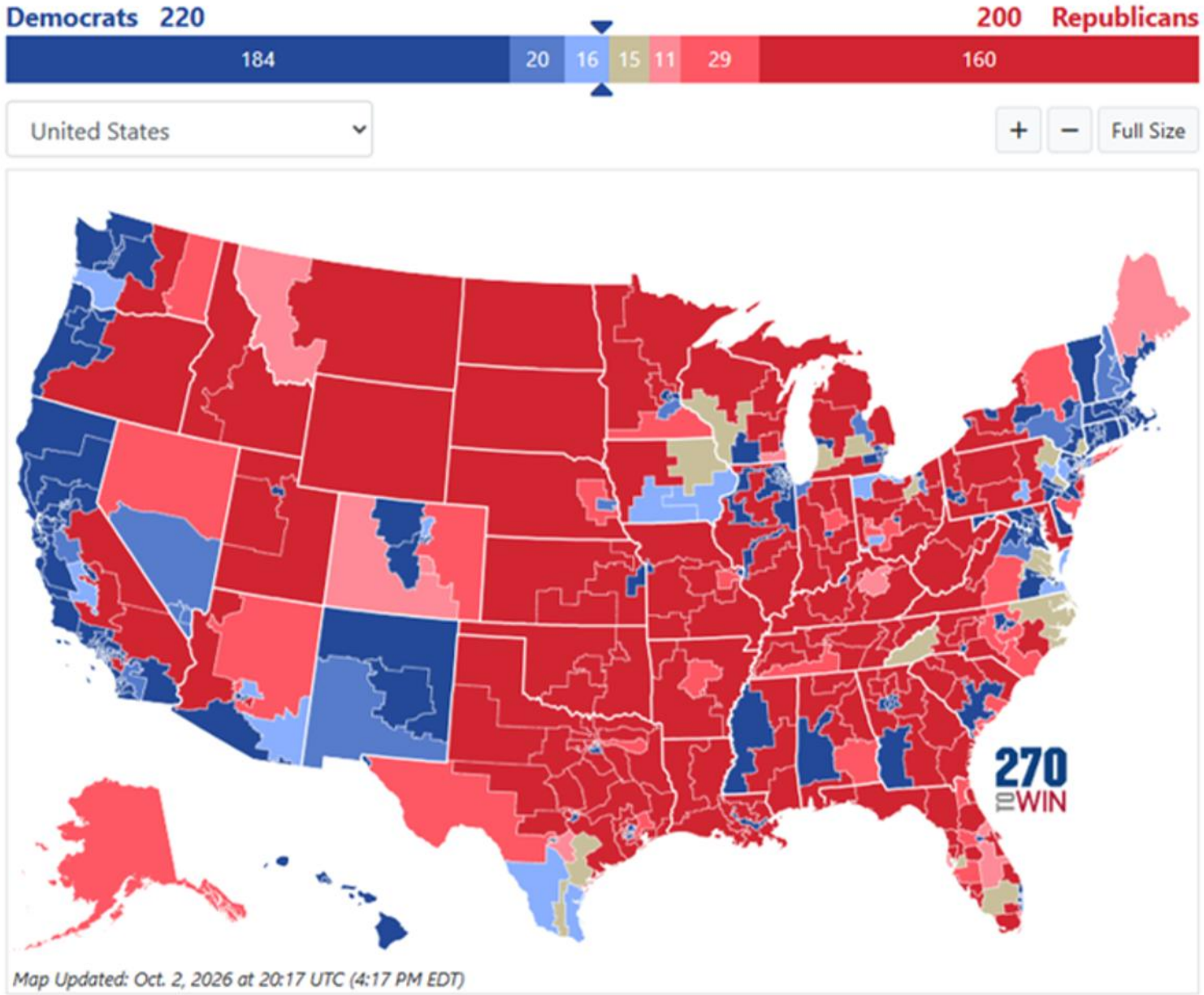
Senate – 35 total seats up for election

(including 2 special elections in FL & OH)



National Look:

House – All 435 seats up for election



The Election

5 days away with control of Congress in play

House today

- 220 Republicans to 215 Democrats
- Democrats need a net gain of 3 seats to flip

Senate today

- 53 Republicans to 47 Democrats
- Democrats need a net gain of 4 seats to flip
- 50-50 split gives VP Vance tie-breaking vote

Polling

- Generic ballot – Dems are roughly +8 according to aggregation sources (as of 10/26)
- Health care costs – Dems are trusted 42% vs. 22% for Republicans (KFF Health Tracking Poll, September 16-21, 2026)

The Election

Races to watch

- 7 Senate seats are toss-ups (AK, IA, KS, ME, MI, OH, and TX)
- Democrats favored in NC
- 21 House seats are toss-ups
  - 15 held by Republicans
  - 6 held by Democrats

Potential outcomes

- ***Republicans hold both chambers*** – status quo maintained
- ***Divided Congress*** – legislating means bipartisanship, otherwise gridlock
- ***Democrats win both chambers*** – emphasis on oversight and reversing Republican policies (Trump veto threat)

Congress



Congress

Returns to DC Nov. 9, only 24 legislative days scheduled

Must Pass

- CR/government funding
- National Defense Authorization Act
- Year-end health extenders (expiring Dec. 31)

Aspirations

- Reconciliation 3.0
- Farm bill
- Permitting reform
- Healthcare cybersecurity
- Transparency
- Healthcare package

Congress

The 120th Congress will look very different

- 76 House members not returning (retirements, running for other office, or lost primary, as of Oct. 15)
  - Members who lose reelection on Nov. 3 will add to this number
- 12 Senate members not returning (8 Rs and 4 Ds)
- Leadership turnover if parties switch control:
  - Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) likely Speaker if Dems win
  - Chuck Schumer (D-NY) likely Majority Leader if Dems win

Congress

Health care leadership will also see significant changes

- **E&C Committee**
  - Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) likely to take over from Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY)
- **E&C Health Subcommittee**
  - Ds will have a new leader (*Ruiz, Castor, Dingell*). Rep. Griffith (R-VA) expected to remain
- **W&M Health Subcommittee**
  - Rs & Ds will have new leaders with retiring chairs
    - *Ds- Thompson, Sewell, Chu*
    - *Rs- Smith, Kelly, Murphy*
- **Senate HELP Committee**
  - Chair Cassidy (R-LA) lost primary, could be replaced by Senators Rand Paul (R-KY), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), or Roger Marshall (R-KS)
  - RM Bernie Sanders (I-VT) will become chair if Dems win
- **House/Senate Appropriations, Senate Finance**
  - No major leadership changes expected, unless Sen. Collins loses.

Congress

What could health policy look like in 2027-2028

Democratic priorities*

- Oversight of Sec. Kennedy/HHS
- Reversing OBBBA Medicaid cuts
- Restore ACA tax credits
- Expanding coverage
- Strong gov. investment in HHS/public health
- Scrutiny of private equity, consolidated health firms

*Trump veto threat on most policies

Bipartisan territory

- Appropriations
- Hospital price transparency
- Health care cybersecurity
- Drug pricing (most favored nation, 340B reform, price caps, etc.)
- AI guardrails in healthcare
- PBM reform
- FDA user fee reauthorization

Republican priorities

- Preventing fraud, waste, and abuse
- Bolstering rural health initiatives
- Reducing gov. spending in healthcare
- Advancing Trump health nominations

The administration



The administration

Policy initiatives at HHS continue regardless of election outcome

CMS

- Evolution of Office of Health Technology & Products (OHTP)
- Fraud, waste, and abuse in federal programs
- RHTP implementation
- Innovative payment models (ex. ACCESS, WISeR)
- Kill the Clipboard

ONC

- HTI-5 (10/26 final rule)
- HTI-6 proposed rule soon after
- Information blocking enforcement
- TEFCA adoption push

CMS + ONC

- TEFCA + CMS Aligned Networks
- Health Tech Ecosystem driving ONC policy

"ONC will align our certification requirements, our information blocking guidance, and our TEFCA governance with what the ecosystem has proven works" – Dr. Tom Keane (July 2026)

The administration

Additional health care topics to watch

- Potential HHS leadership turnover
- HHS “pocket rescissions”
- AI policy
- Executive orders (drug pricing, MAHA agenda, vaccine policy, etc.)
- Spring regulatory agenda

What does this mean for you?

No matter who wins – Health IT is bipartisan ground with lots of interest

- Leverage your knowledge – help government decision makers know more, bring real data and evidence
- Get to know new members and key committee leaders
- Keep your voice prominent early and often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