

# Charlie Cook's Tour of American Politics

Insights into the 2018 midterm elections

**September 2018**

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# Roadmap



## Eight things to watch in 2018

1. Generic ballot polling
2. Direction of country polling
3. Trump approval ratings
4. Trump approval by intensity
5. Political party approval ratings
6. Consumer confidence/consumer sentiment
7. Unemployment rate
8. Policy polling: tax reform vs. ACA

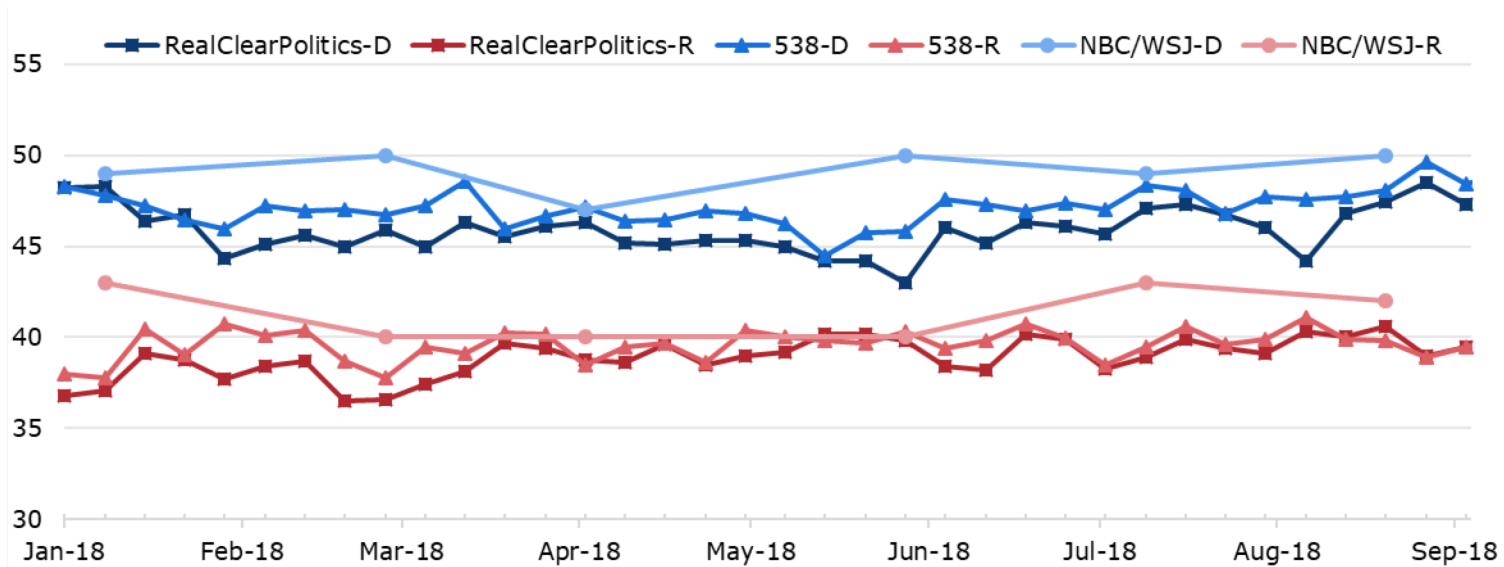
## Political trends in the US

- Previous wave elections
- Insights on 2020

# Democrats hold about a 8-point lead in generic ballot polling

## Do you prefer a Congress controlled by Republicans or Democrats?

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES



**D+8.3**

RealClearPolitics Average  
Week of Sept. 16, 2018

**D+9.1**

FiveThirtyEight Average  
Week of Sept. 16, 2018

**D+8.0**

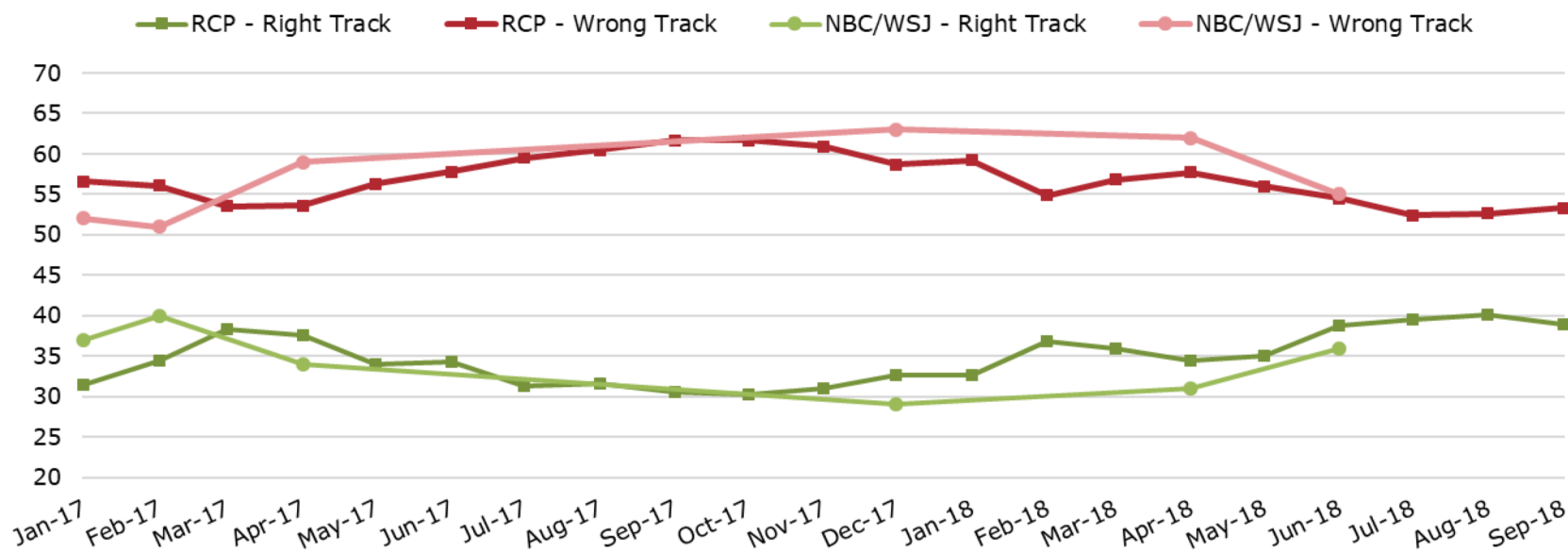
NBC News/WSJ  
Last poll: Aug. 18, 2018:

Sources: RealClearPolitics.com, FiveThirtyEight.com, NBC News/WSJ survey, 2018.

# Americans hold a pessimistic view of the country's future

## In what direction is the country headed?

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES



**38.9%**

**53.3%**

RealClearPolitics Average  
Week of Sept. 1, 2018

**36%**

**55%**

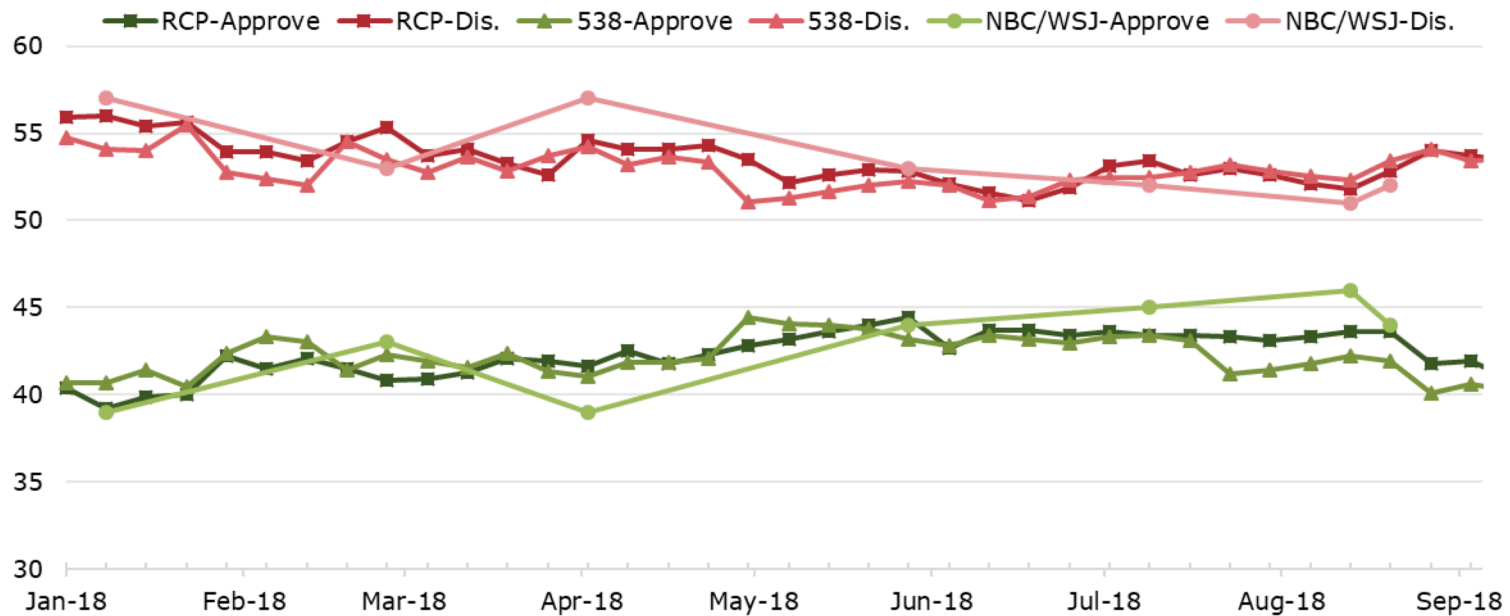
NBC News/WSJ  
Last poll: June 4, 2018:

Sources: RealClearPolitics.com, NBC News/WSJ survey, 2018.

# Trump's approval rating has hovered in the low 40% range

## Do you approve or disapprove of President Trump's job performance?

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES



**40.9%**

**53.4%**

RealClearPolitics Average  
Week of Sept. 16, 2018

**40.2%**

**53.6%**

FiveThirtyEight Average  
Week of Sept. 16, 2018

**44%**

**52%**

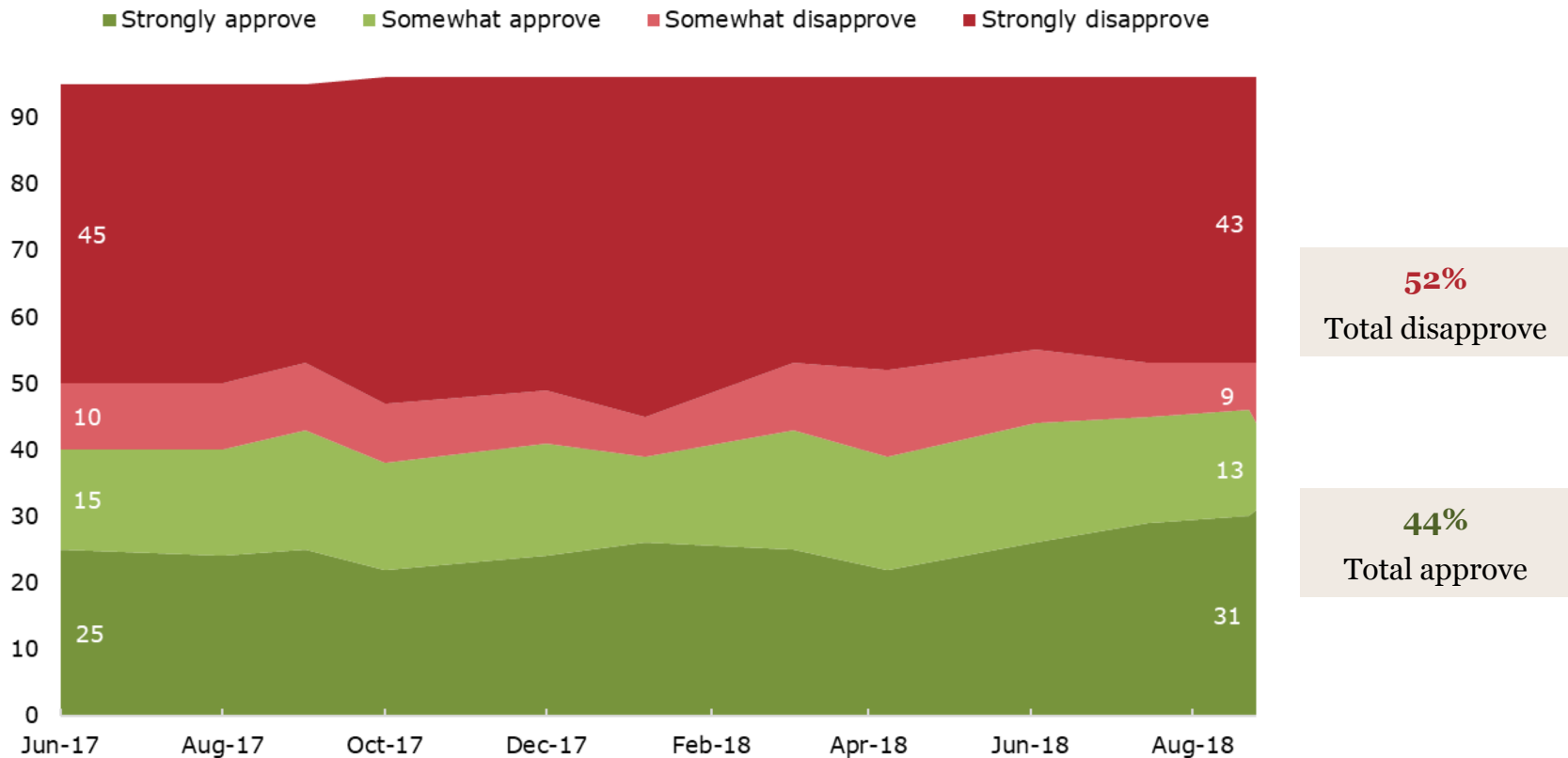
NBC News/WSJ  
Last poll: Aug. 25, 2018:

Sources: RealClearPolitics.com, FiveThirtyEight.com, NBC News/WSJ, 2018.

# More people strongly disapprove of President Trump's job performance than strongly approve

How much do you approve or disapprove of President Trump's job performance?

NBC/WSJ; AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES

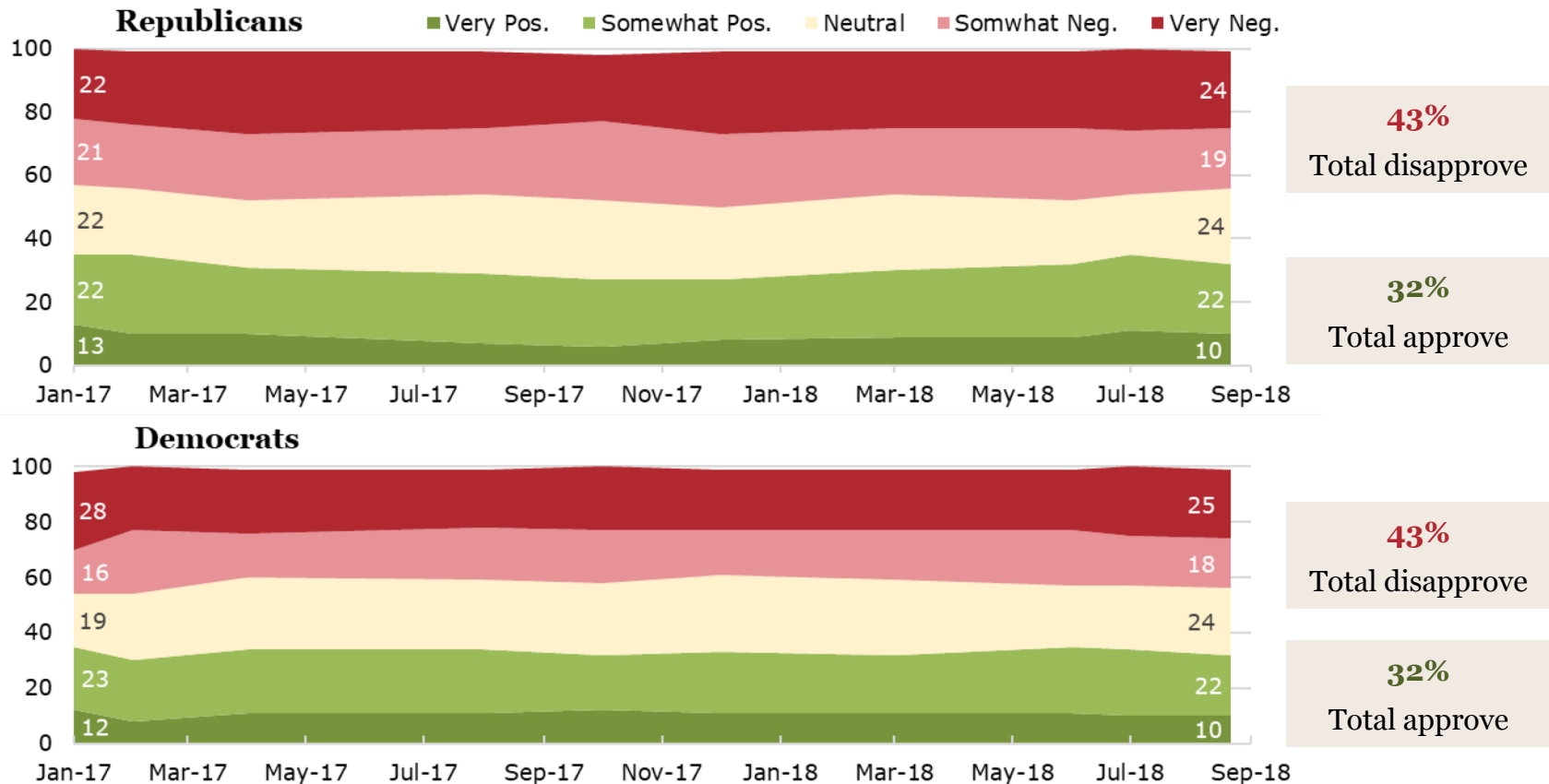


Sources: NBC News/WSJ survey, 2018.

# Both parties have the same approval and disapproval ratings

## Do you approve or disapprove of the Democratic/Republican party?

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES

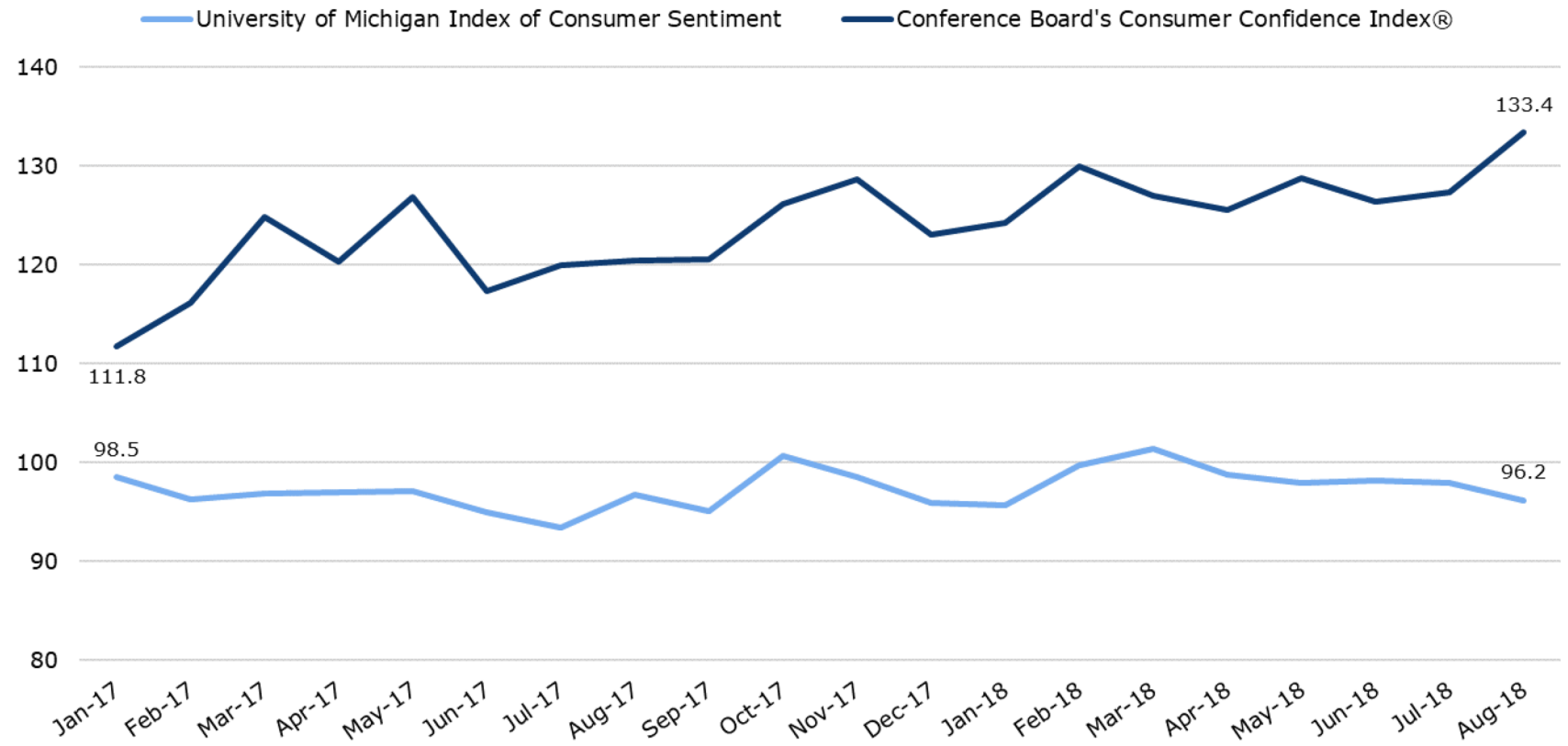


Sources: NBC News/WSJ survey, 2018.

# Consumer confidence indices have diverged in recent months

## Tracking polls of consumers

INDICES CALCULATED BY THE SURVEYING ORGANIZATIONS



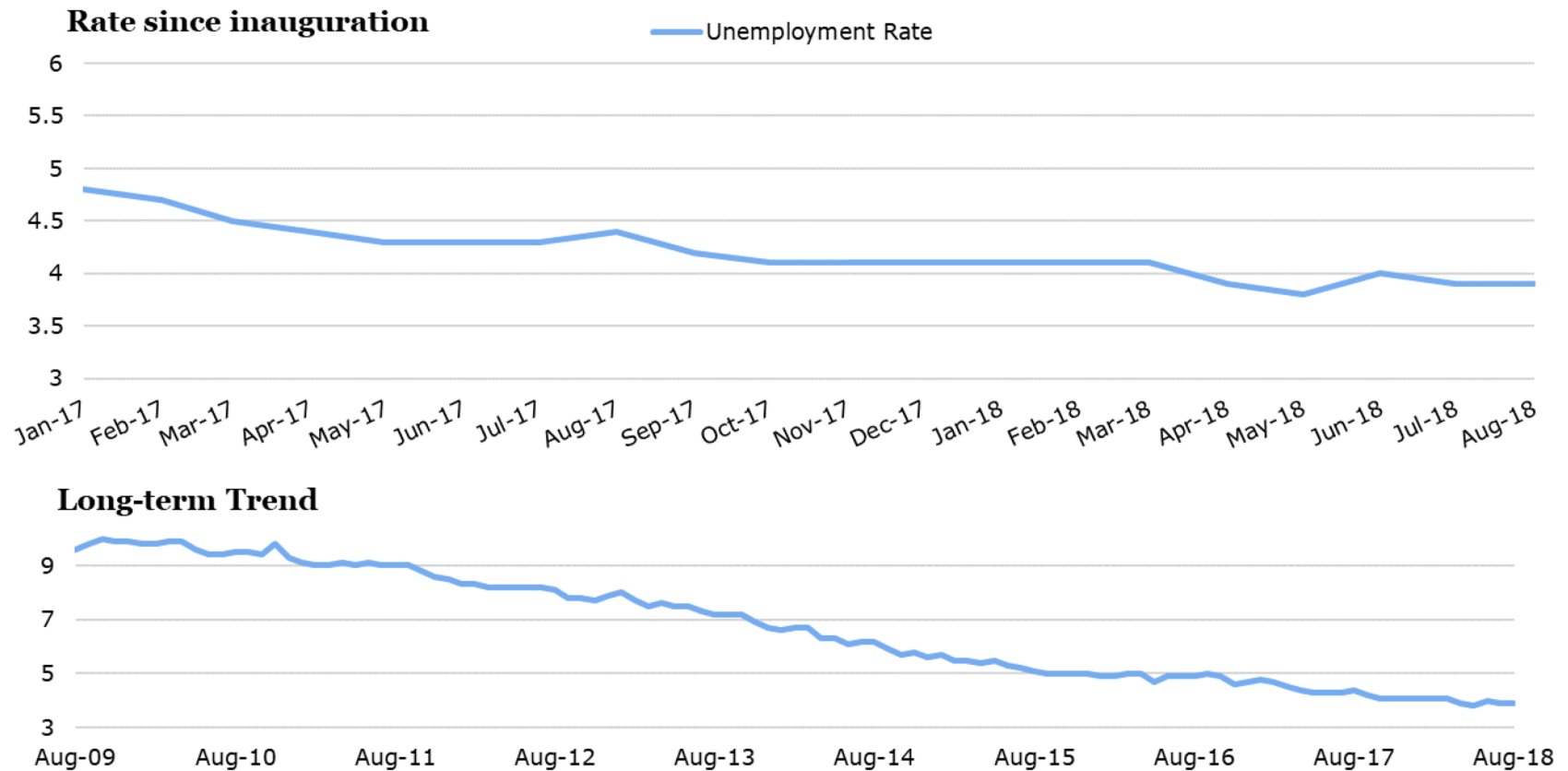
Sources: Conference Board, 2018; University of Michigan Surveys of Consumers, 2018.



# The unemployment rate is at an almost historic low of 4%

## Monthly civilian unemployment rate

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL LABOR FORCE; SEASONALLY ADJUSTED

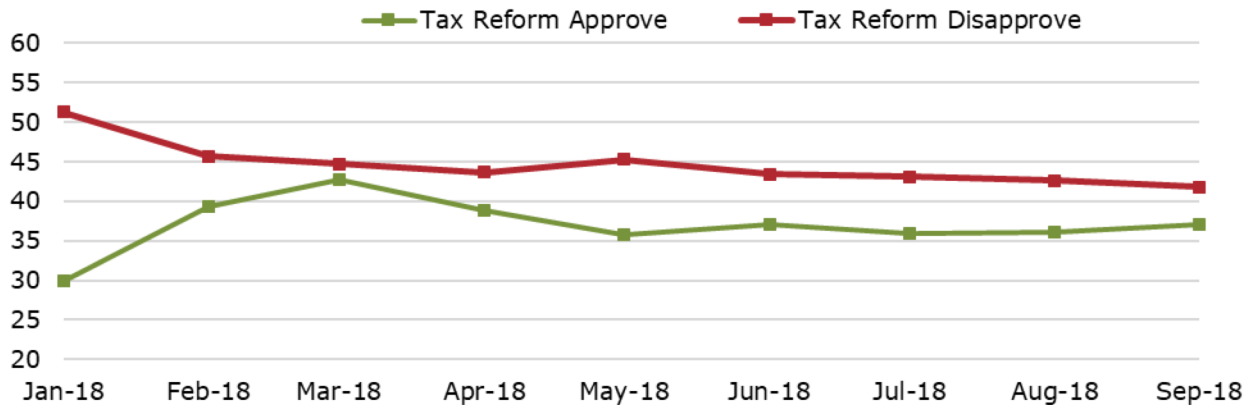


Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018.

# The Affordable Care Act outperforms the Tax Cuts & Jobs Act in opinion polls

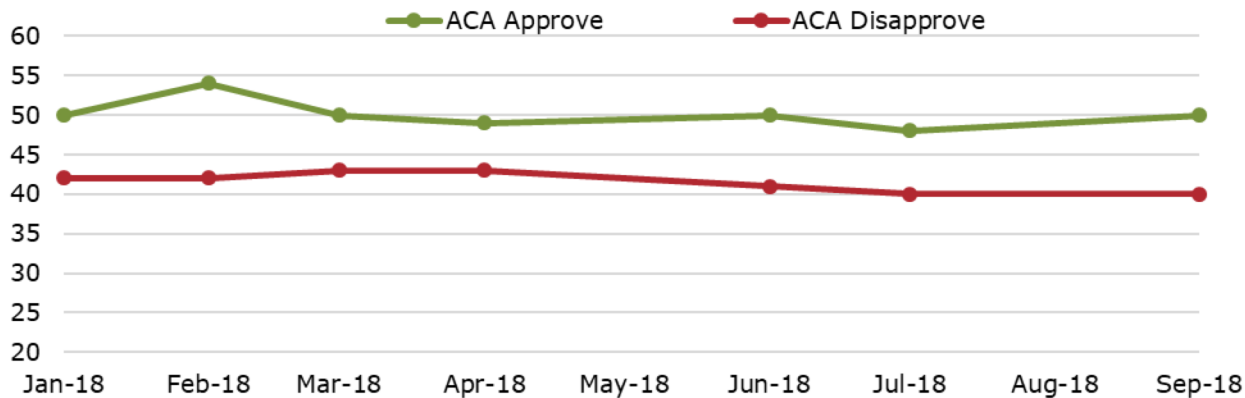
Do you approve or disapprove of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act/Affordable Care Act?

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES



**-4.8%**

RealClearPolitics average  
Most recent: Aug. 21, 2018




**+10.0%**

Kaiser Family Foundation  
Most recent poll: Sept. 5, 2018

Sources: RealClearPolitics.com, 2018; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2018.

# Roadmap

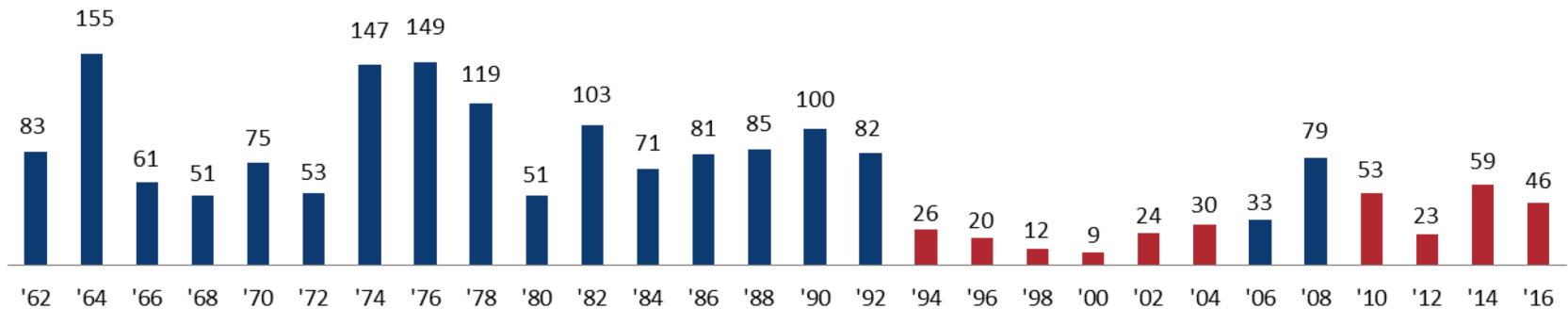
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# Historical partisan control of Congress after elections

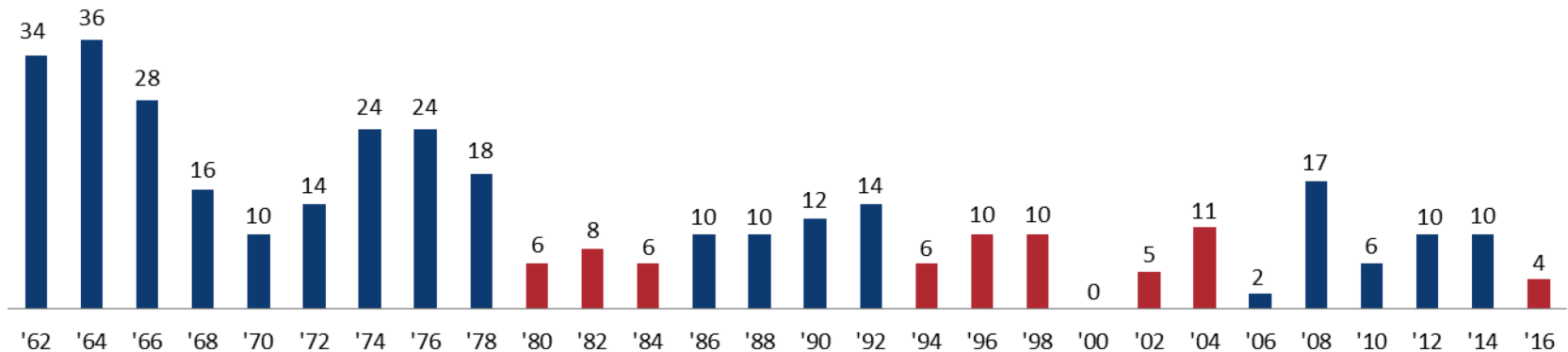
## House of Representatives

88<sup>TH</sup>-115<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS



## Senate

88<sup>TH</sup>-115<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS



Source: Senate.gov, 2017; Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, 2017.

## Recent midterm wave elections



### 1994 elections

President: Bill Clinton (D)

Republican gains:

**54 seats** in the House

**8 seats** in the Senate



### 2006 elections

President: George W. Bush (R)

Democratic gains:

**31 seats** in the House

**6 seats** in the Senate



### 2010 elections

President: Barack Obama (D)

Republican gains:

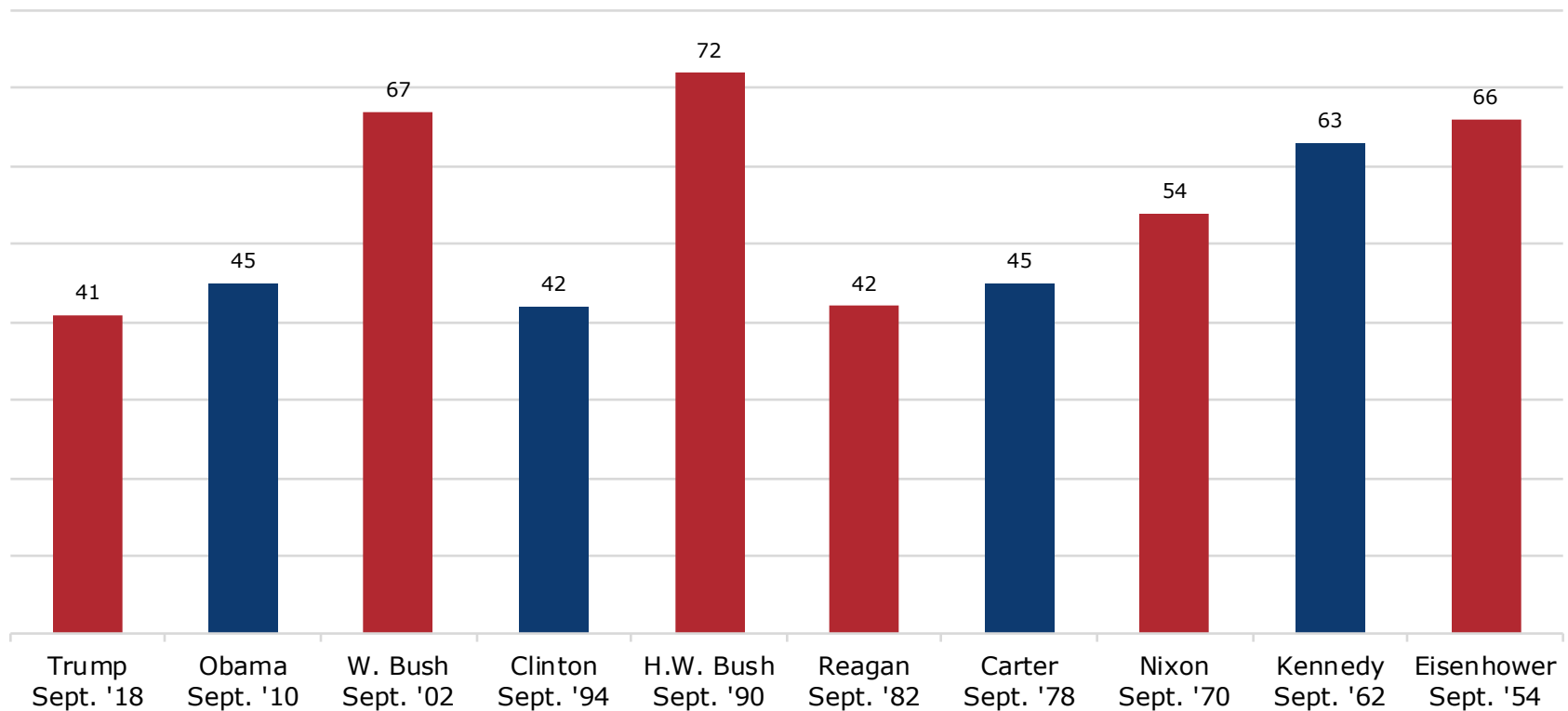
**63 seats** in the House

**6 seats** in the Senate

# Trump's approval numbers are near or slightly below recent presidents who experienced a wave election

## Gallup comparative presidential approval ratings

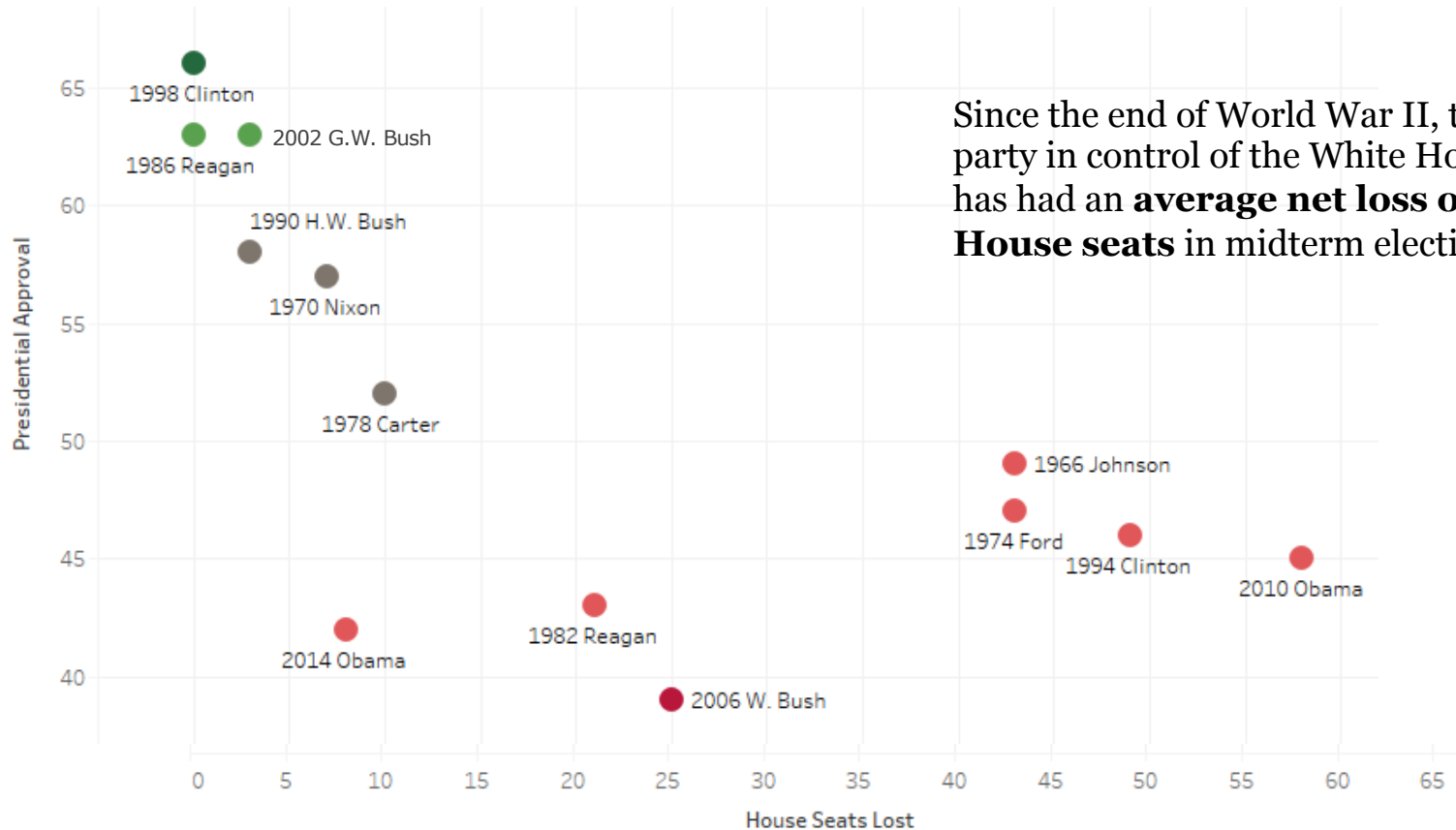
IN SEPTEMBER OF EACH PRESIDENT'S SECOND YEAR



Source: Gallup, 2018.

# History suggests that the president's party will lose seats in midterm elections

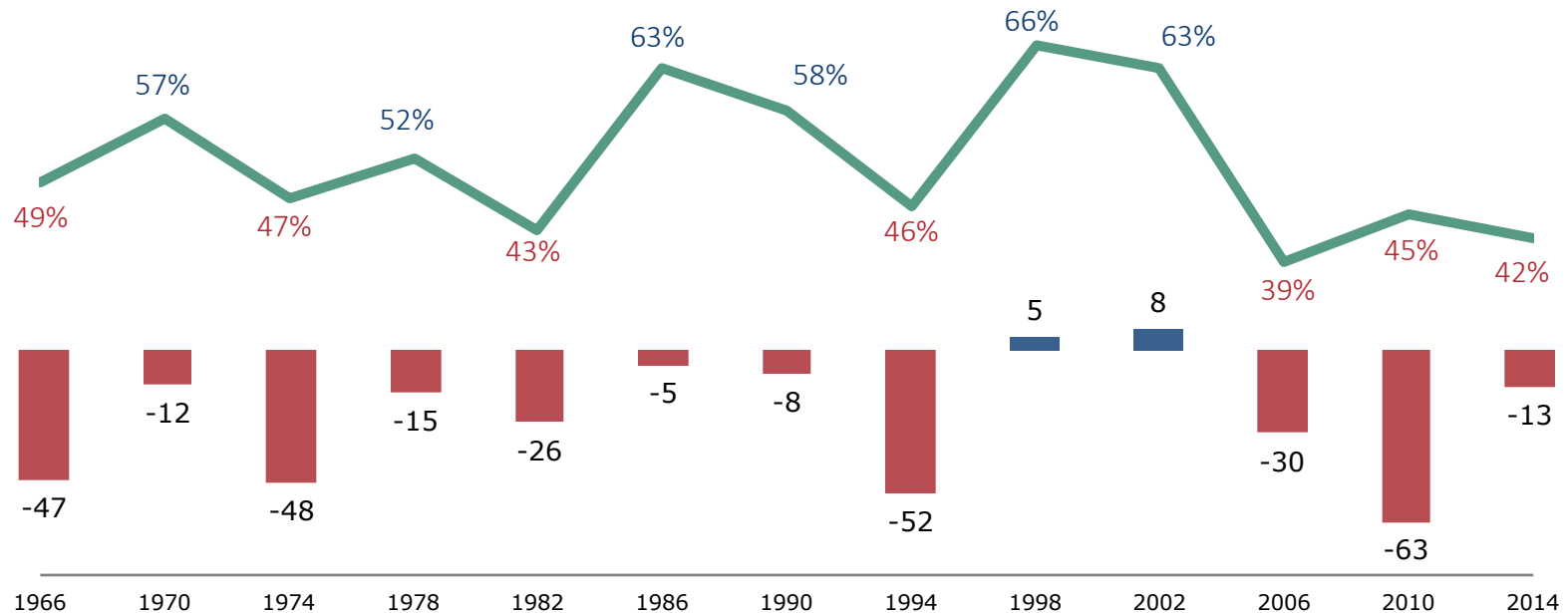
## Presidential approval ratings vs. House seats lost, 1966-2014



Sources: Ally Flinn, David Wasserman, "Follow 2018 with us," The Cook Political Report, April 10, 2018.

# Presidents with a sub-50% approval rating lose an average of 40 seats in the midterms

## Presidential job approval vs. midterm results since 1966



Trump Job Approval  
**40.9%**  
 RCP Average: Sept. 16, 2018

Job Approval	Average Change
Over 60%	+3 seats
50%-60%	-12 seats
Under 50%	-40 seats

Sources: Gallup, The Cook Political Report, National Journal, RealClearPolitics.com, 2018.

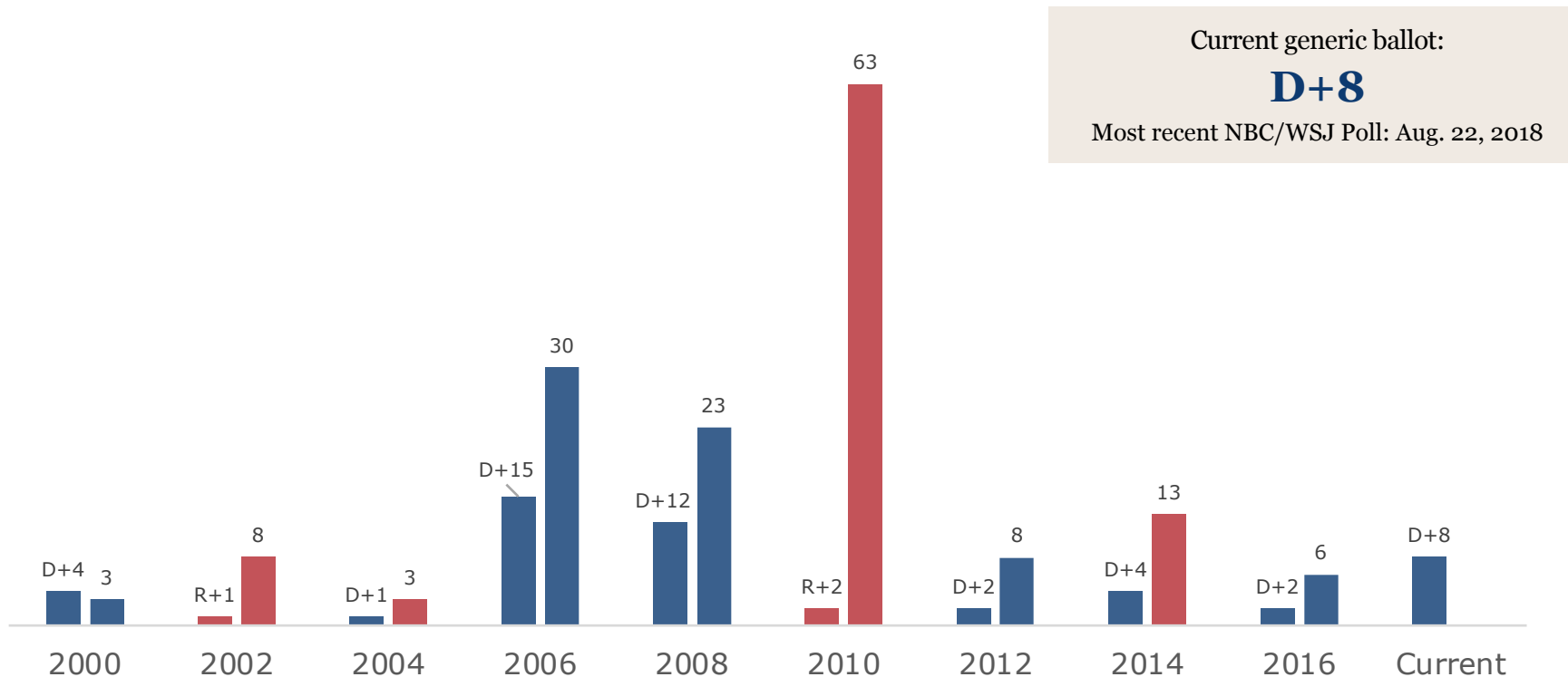


# Historic polling of generic ballots suggests Democrats will gain seats in 2018, but will it be enough to flip the House?

## Comparison between generic ballot polling and House outcomes

NBC/WSJ POLL

■ Democratic seat gain ■ Republican seat gain

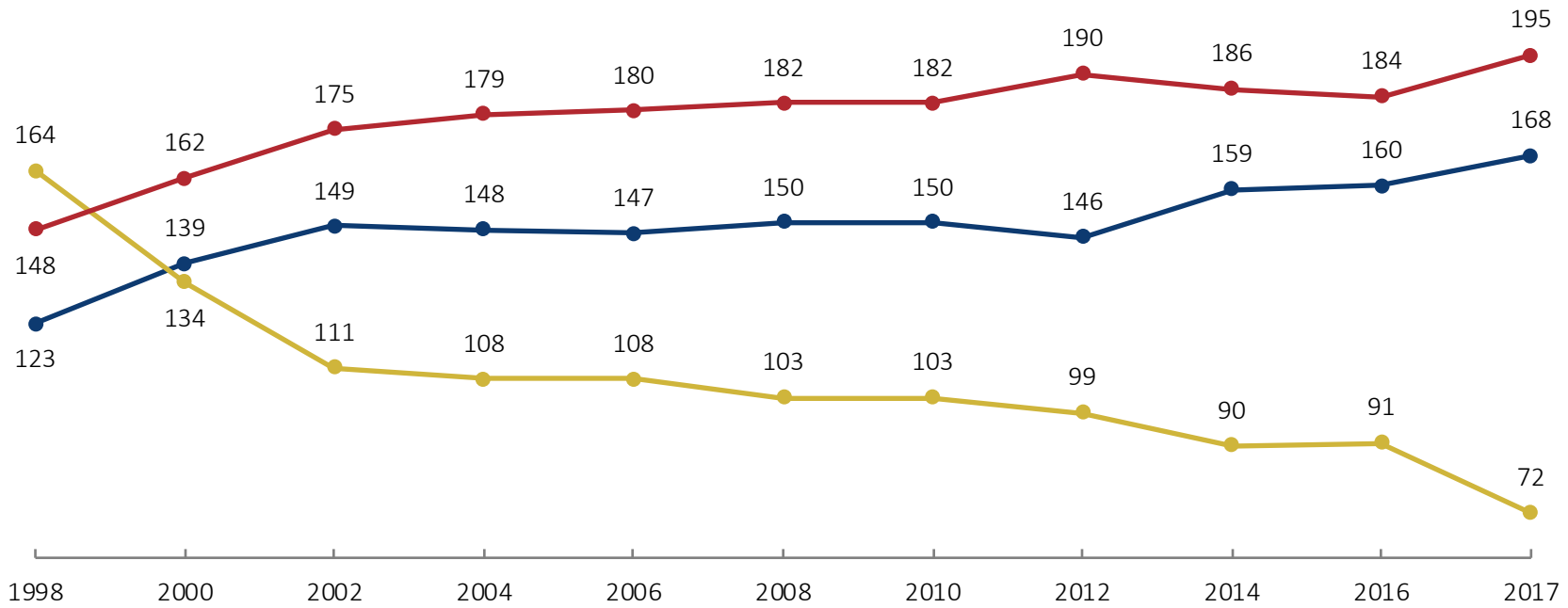


Sources: NBC/WSJ survey, 2018.

# House districts have become increasingly partisan with only one-sixth considered “swing” districts

## Cook Political Report Partisan Voter Index

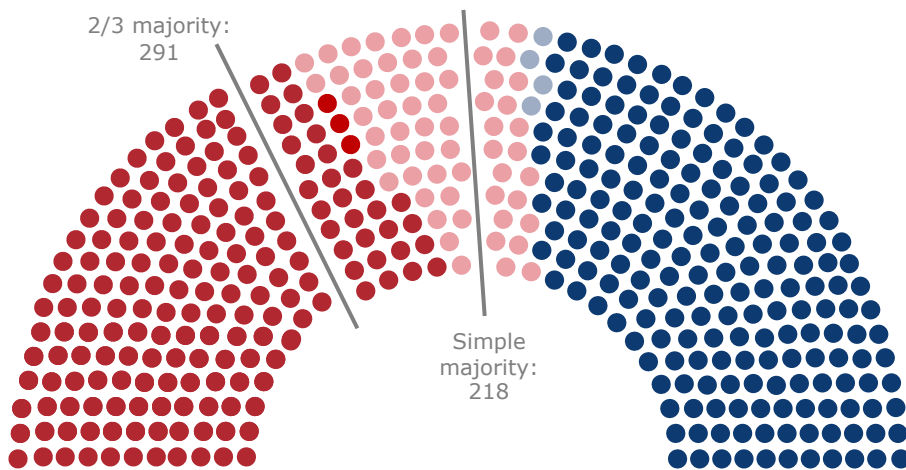
■ Democratic seat (D+5 or greater) ■ Republican seat (R+5 or greater) ■ Swing seat (D+5 to R+5)



Source: Cook Political Report, 2017.

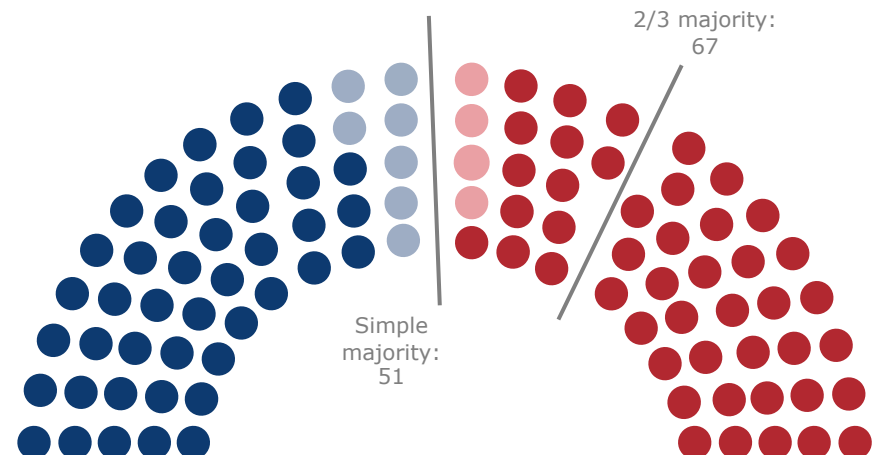
# Democrats have no chance of picking up enough seats to remove Trump from office without Republican votes

## House of Representatives



Safe Republican seats	●	176
Safe Democratic seats	●	193
Toss Up or Lean R/D	● ●	66

## Senate



Safe Republican seats	●	47
Safe Dem./Ind. seats	●	42
Toss Up or Lean R/D	● ●	11

### Impeachment process

- Simple majority vote in House to indict president for “treason, bribery, or other high crimes & misdemeanors”
- 2/3 vote in the Senate to convict president and remove from office

### 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment process

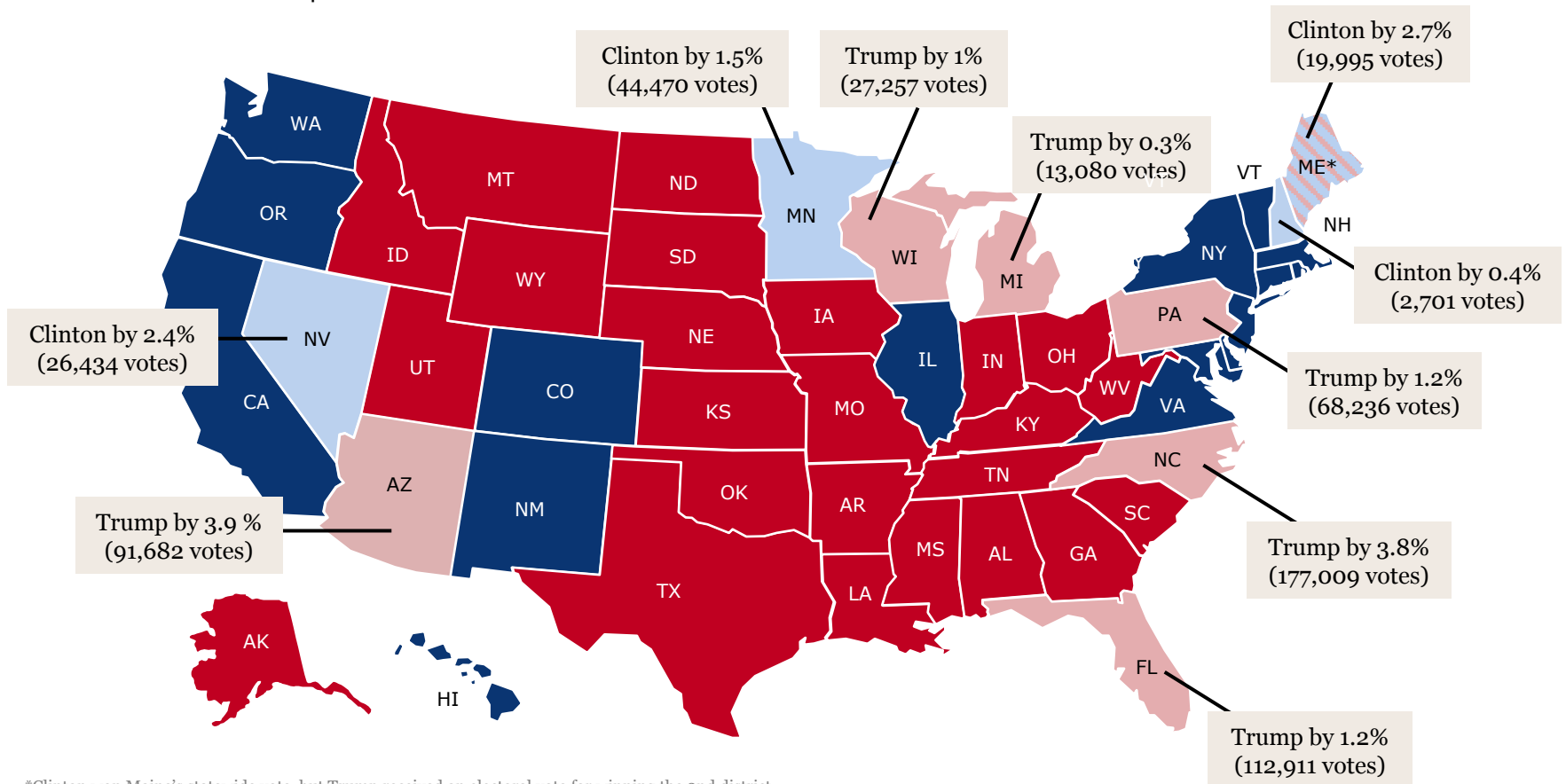
- VP and a majority of the cabinet tell Congress the president is “unable to discharge the powers & duties of his office”
- If the president appeals, 2/3 vote in both House and Senate removes president from office

Sources: Charlie Savage, “How the Impeachment Process Works,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2017; Rating from Cook Political Report, 2018.

# Trump's narrow victories in key states leave him vulnerable to even a small swing in 2020

10 states were decided by less than 5%

■ Clinton win ■ Trump win



\*Clinton won Maine's statewide vote, but Trump received an electoral vote for winning the 2nd district  
Source: National Journal research, 2018.