

Trump Has Two Years to Push Through Sweeping Change Before Likely Roadblock

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President [Donald Trump](#) entered the White House promising drastic and major reform of the way America is governed. To achieve even a portion of that, Trump needs to act rapidly. He may only have two years—at best—to drive it through.

Trump has [Republican](#) majorities in the House and [Senate](#) and secured a conservative majority in the [Supreme Court](#). He is also swapping out swathes of neutral federal roles for political appointments and plans to put his executive powers to full use.

All this will grease the wheels of the Trump train as it attempts to push through contentious policies such as ending birthright citizenship, deporting millions of undocumented migrants, sweeping import tariffs, drilling on federal lands, and more.

Whilst some of these can be undertaken through executive actions, Trump may eventually hit the bumpers in [Congress](#). Trump's elevated approval numbers are low by relative standards, and he faces bitter political and legal fights in the months ahead.

Come the 2026 midterm elections, history suggests it is doubtful that Trump will carry with him higher support than he does now, opening the way to a Democratic majority in the House at least—and a congressional blockade of what's left of his agenda.

Newsweek has emailed the White House press office for comment.

So how likely is this scenario? Does Trump realistically have two years to get far-reaching change done? *Newsweek* asked experts on U.S. politics for their insights. Here's what they told us.

William Galston: Trump Will Never Be Stronger Than Right Now

This is one of several reasons why the Trump administration will make an all-out push to carry out its agenda during its first two years.

Another is that after 2026, [Republicans'](#) attention will turn toward their presidential nominating contest, and the president's power will wane. Yet another is that Trump's early moves are not all consistent with maintaining his popularity or that of his party.

For example, strong majorities of Americans reject eliminating birthright citizenship and withdrawing from the Paris climate accords. As the dust settles from the blitzkrieg of the first few days, public awareness of these and other unpopular measures will increase.

William Galston is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and Ezra K. Zilkha Chair of its Governance Studies program. He served as deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Bill Clinton.

Costas Panagopoulos: Trump Must Straddle Fine Line Before 2026 Midterms

If history is any guide, [Democrats](#) will have an advantage in the 2026 midterms.

Given the razor-thin Republican majority, there's a good chance Democrats will regain control of at least one chamber, if not both. That's no guarantee, and much can happen between now and then, but it's likely.

Presidents also find Congress is most supportive during the so-called honeymoon periods of the first 100 days of their administrations, but there is also a risk that Republicans will overstep and go too far, which would jeopardize their chances even further in 2026.

Trump will need to straddle the fine line between delivering on his many, wide-ranging and radical proposals and not going beyond what voters, particularly independents and moderates, find too extreme.

Costas Panagopoulos is a distinguished professor of political science at Northeastern University. He is an expert on campaigns and elections, voting behavior, and political psychology, and has been part of the Decision Desk team at NBC News since 2006.



President Donald Trump is enjoying a higher approval rating than he ever has. But he is going to drive through a number of contentious policies that lack broad support, opening the door to trouble for him in the 2026 midterm elections. **Photo Illustration by Newsweek/Getty Images**

Larry Sabato: House Is Democrats' Best Hope—But Power Is Limited

Of course Trump has to act fast. Honeymoons don't last all that long. But as for 2026... Here's the flaw—or one of them—in that argument.

Republicans are very likely to keep the Senate, unless there is a rare tsunami against Trump and his party. Democrats aren't even competitive in most of the states with Senate seats up.

As for the House, if Democrats can't win the closely divided House in 2026, maybe they should consider dissolving. (I'm exaggerating for effect, in case you think I'm serious.)

Yet control of the House only gives you the power to stop things from happening; the Senate or Trump's veto pen (if necessary) will end most House initiatives.

Larry Sabato is the founder and director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, and heads up Sabato's Crystal Ball.

Thomas Gift: Trump May Have One Big Opportunity for Major Reform

Trump has, at most, two years (and more like 100 days) to get through any landmark pieces of legislation. If history is any guide, it's likely that the party in power, Republicans, will lose seats—and its majority—in Congress come the midterms.

Looking back, presidents typically have one big opportunity to pass major policy reform.

For [George W. Bush](#), that was No Child Left Behind. For [Barack Obama](#), that was the Affordable Care Act. For Trump's first term, that was major tax cuts. And for Biden, that was the pandemic response bill.

What we're seeing right now is peak Trump in terms of both his electoral mandate and his power in Washington. In two years from now, if not earlier, we might be in a very different situation politically.

Thomas Gift is associate professor of political science and director of the Centre on US Politics (CUSP) at University College London (UCL).

Tali Mendelberg: Only Question Is How Heavy Trump's Republican Loss Will Be

Typically the incumbent party loses seats in the midterm elections, and I expect that again in 2026.

Trump's electoral support rests on occasional and new voters more than the typical Republican presidential candidate, and his base will not turn out in midterms nearly as heavily as they did when Trump was on the ballot.

His party's midterm losses would be greater as a result. His party's margins in both Senate and House are already slim. His congressional majority will almost surely disappear.

The only question is how heavy the Republican loss will be. And that will be partly shaped by turnout of Democratic and independent voters.

Tali Mendelberg is the John Work Garrett Professor of Politics at Princeton University, co-director of the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics, and director of the Program on Inequality at the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice.

Robert Shapiro: Two Years Is Enough for Trump to Do a Lot

Since there is a good chance the incumbent party will lose seats and in this case control of the House, Trump has a two-year window. It is simple as that. Two years is enough time to do a lot with control of the House and Senate.

Robert Y. Shapiro is Wallace S. Sayre Professor of Government in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. He specializes in American politics, including public opinion, policymaking, political leadership, and the mass media.



U.S. President Donald Trump holds up a signed executive order in the Oval Office of the White House on January 23, 2025 in Washington, DC. **Anna MoneyMaker/Getty Images**

Frances E. Lee: Bet Against Republicans Bucking 'Midterm Law' Under Trump

The midterm penalty for the president's party in Congress is one of the most reliable patterns in American politics. With only a five seat margin of control in the 119th Congress (when there are no vacancies), the Republican margin is historically narrow.

Since 1934, the president's party has lost an average of 28 House seats and 3.6 Senate seats in midterm elections. It would be a historic triumph for Republicans to hold onto a House majority of any size in the 2026 elections.

If President Trump continues with his first-term pattern of continually making divisive statements and taking controversial actions, one would certainly bet against Republicans bucking the "midterm law."

Of course, a major crisis or other disruption to normal politics could occur, but nevertheless it's reasonable to expect that unified Republican government will last just two years in this case.

Frances E. Lee is professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton University. She works on American politics, with a special focus on congressional politics, national policymaking, party politics, and representation.

Udi Ofer: Trump's Divisive Policies Risk Significant Backlash in Midterms

Several of President Trump's policy objectives not only raise serious constitutional concerns but also face considerable opposition from the American public.

For example, President Trump's unilateral attempt to end birthright citizenship as we know it not only contravenes more than 125 years of Supreme Court precedent and the plain text of the constitution, but it is also deeply unpopular, with only 28 percent of Americans supporting ending birthright citizenship according to a recent AP-NORC poll.

President Trump won a clear victory in 2024, but it also wasn't a wide victory, winning the popular vote by a margin that was considerably narrower than President Biden's popular vote victory in 2020. This suggests limited room for pursuing polarizing policies.

Should President Trump persist in advancing policy proposals that conflict with well-established constitutional principles and that are opposed by the majority of Americans, he risks significant backlash.

The likelihood of an electoral backlash in the 2026 midterm elections grows the further the administration overreaches.

Udi Ofer is the John L. Weinberg/Goldman Sachs and Co. Visiting Professor and Lecturer of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, and the founding director of its Policy Advocacy Clinic.

Michael S. Lewis-Beck: Almost Inevitable Republicans Will Lose at Least One Chamber in Midterms

"The president's party will have a net loss of Congressional seats at Midterm," sums up one of the few 'Iron Laws' of American politics. Since the Civil War, this axiom has been avoided only a handful of times.

Given the narrow margins by which the Republicans now (2025) hold the House and Senate, the loss of one, not to say both, of these chambers would appear almost inevitable.

Michael S. Lewis-Beck is F. Wendell Miller Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Iowa where his focuses include comparative elections, election forecasting, and political economy.