

guardian.co.uk

Democratic party braced for midterm beating

Barack Obama's party likely to lose heavily in November elections, polls suggest

Mark Tran

guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 1 September 2010 13.55 BST

A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Barack Obama used last night's Oval Office address to refocus his efforts on fixing the economy. However, disenchantment is growing with his party. Photograph: Pool/Getty Images
The Democratic party is staring at heavy losses in Congress and at the state level in the November midterm elections, according to several public opinion polls.

The latest weekly survey from Gallup gives the Republicans a 10-point advantage – 51% to 41% – among registered voters. The lead is the Republican party's largest so far this year and its widest margin in 68 years.

The national poll, released this week, also found Republicans twice as likely to say they are "very" excited about voting in November, amid widespread dissatisfaction with the economy, where the unemployment rate is near double digits.

In a rare Oval Office address last night, when Barack Obama formally brought an end to US combat operations in Iraq, the US president also emphasised that he sees his primary job as addressing the weak economy and other domestic issues.

But with two months to go to the midterms, many polls point to increasing disenchantment with Obama and the Democrats. Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball survey tomorrow will forecast sweeping reverses on Capitol Hill and among state governorships on 2 November. A University of Buffalo paper has predicted a 51-gain seat for the Republicans in the House of Representatives, where the Democrats currently enjoy a 39-seat majority.

Historically, a sitting US president's party loses seats in midterm elections in his first term. Even the White House has warned that Democrats may lose control of the House of Representatives. All 435 seats in the house and 37 of the 100 in the Senate are in play, as well as state legislatures and key governorships in such left-leaning states such as Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Gallup said the Republican advantage "suggests the potential for a major 'wave' election in which the Republicans gain a large number of seats from the Democrats and in the process take back control of the House".

Congress experienced such "waves" in 1994, when the Republicans took control of the House, and in 2006, when Democrats wrested back control.

But the pollsters point out that the Democrats had held the lead in their generic ballot poll for several weeks earlier in the summer, "showing that change is possible between now and election day".

The other caveat is that national polls, though often good at predicting general electoral trends, are less accurate in forecasting US elections, which are held district by district and state by state.

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2010