

ASPPH *PRESENTS*
WEBINAR

2026 Midterm Election Results & Implications for Academic Public Health

Monday, November 16, 2026
1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

ASPPH ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

MODERATOR



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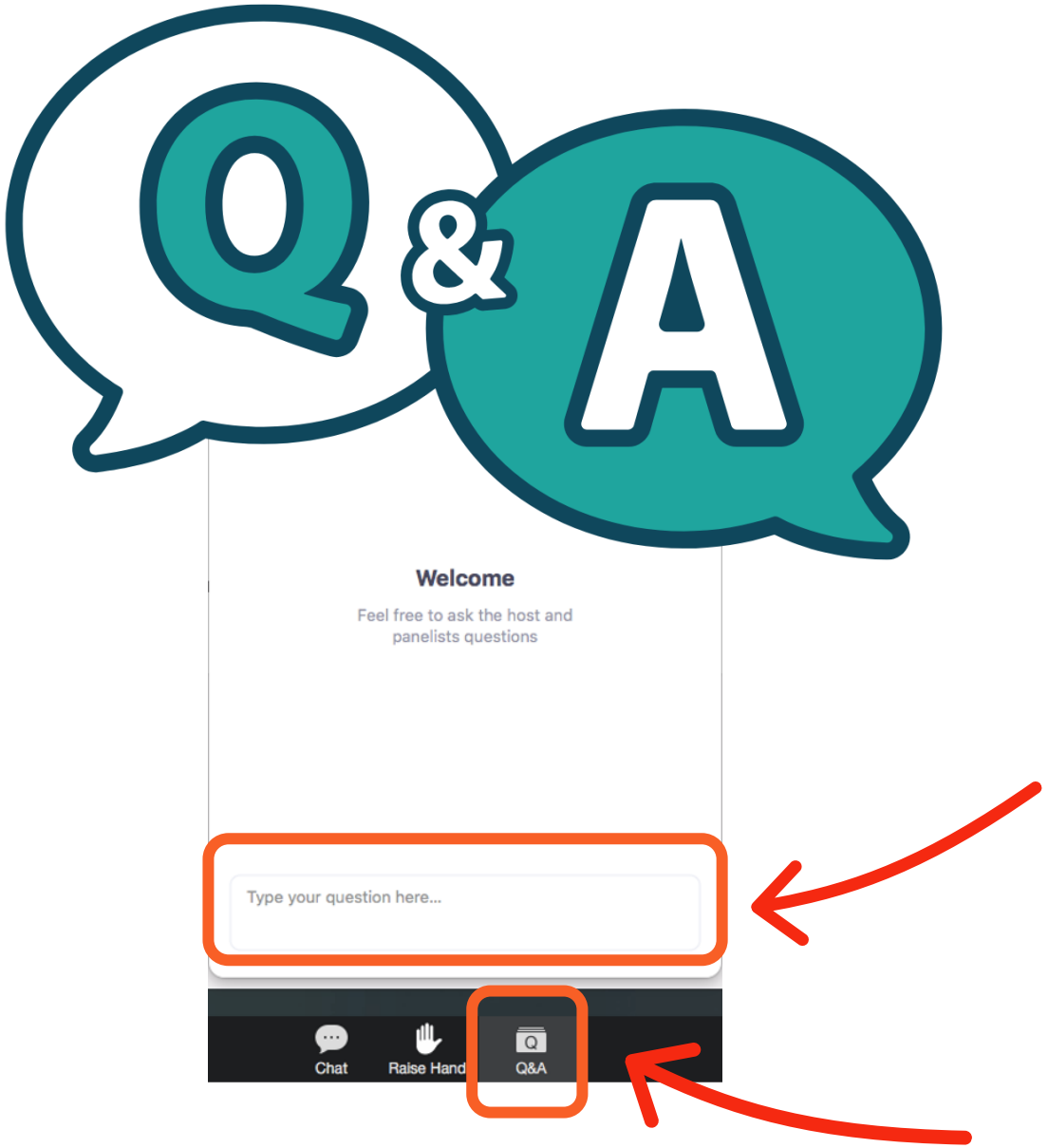


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2026 Election Analysis

November 2026

Historic Election Outcomes

- Democrats won sweeping victories across the ballot.
  - Secured their largest House majority since the early 1990s.
  - Reclaimed the Senate and are poised to flip nine seats, including seven in states Trump won by double digits in 2024.

- Democrats also gained governorships, flipped state legislative chambers, and dismantled Republican supermajorities nationwide.

KEY MESSAGING: WHAT CUT THROUGH

Common Denominator: Affordability

An estimated $920 million was spent on ads addressing the economy, outpacing any other issue this cycle.

Affordability became the message that broke through this cycle. Cost-of-living concerns, particularly in the context of the Iran War, along with broader concerns on the state of the economy became issues which voters and candidates alike focused on the most.

WHAT RESONATED

Cost-of-living and economic security facing Americans in their everyday lives.

Healthcare Remains a Top Issue for Voters

While part of the overall affordability concern, healthcare affordability remained a top focus, just not as dominant as the 2018 midterms.

Democrats attributed rising costs and affordability challenges with Republican-led healthcare reforms, while Republicans defended an anti-fraud agenda, warning Democrats could considerably increase healthcare spending.

WHAT RESONATED

Lowering healthcare costs remains priority for Americans.

Data Centers Are a Non-Partisan Issue

The message shifted from whether to build to how growth should be handled.

Data centers have become a proxy fight for affordability and AI policy, while lawmakers determine how to regulate. The winning message in both parties is to support innovation while ensuring communities have a voice in infrastructure development.

WHAT RESONATED

Community impact and local accountability

Cornerstone Public Affairs View: Affordability, accountability and tangible community impact dominated campaigns. Candidates looked beyond traditional party issues and focused on what policies could improve everyday lives.

LAME DUCK: WHAT'S COVERED AND THE FOCUS

Note: *Agenda items are expected, not confirmed; leadership sets the lame-duck schedule after the election.*

What We Expect on the Table

1. **Government Funding**
   The stopgap expires Dec. 11: a full-year deal, another CR or a shutdown. Defense spending will be priority for Administration, expect some to call for use of reconciliation.

2. **Defense Authorization (NDAA)**
   Stalled in the Senate in July; leaders expect a deal after the election.

3. **Expiring Authorities**
   Surface transportation and flood insurance lapse Dec. 11; health extenders Dec. 31.

4. **Farm Bill**
   Expired Sept. 30; without action, programs revert to permanent law at year-end.

5. **Nominations and Permitting**
   Confirmations continue; a bipartisan permitting bill is queued for an early vote.

Focus of the Lame Duck

- The outgoing majority controls the floor until the new Congress is sworn in; we expect leaders in both parties to focus on locking in policy wins and trying to clear the decks before the new Congress.
- Retiring and defeated members are unconstrained, so watch for interesting vote coalitions, bipartisan deals and potential impact of attendance issues given narrow majorities in both chambers.

Reconvenes: Nov. 9

What to Watch

KEY DATES AHEAD

Note: *Dates reflect enacted law and published calendars as of Nov. 5, 2026 and may change.*

NOV 9

Congress returns for the lame duck. The session is expected to run until December 18, with a Thanksgiving break, though the chambers could be forced to remain in Washington into the Christmas break to finish the lame duck.

NOV 10

Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats and House Republicans hold leadership elections.

NOV 18–19

House Democrats elect their leaders, spilling into Nov. 20 if needed. Contested chair and ranking member races likely follow in December.

DEC 11

Stopgap funding expires. The flood insurance program, surface transportation programs and VA authorities lapse the same day; a funding gap would begin Dec. 12.

DEC 31

About 20 health extenders expire, including the Medicare physician payment bump and community health center funding. Farm bill programs revert to permanent law without action.

JAN 3

The 120th Congress is sworn in and the House elects its Speaker. New majorities and committee gavels take effect. Committees should be set by the third or fourth week of January (Jan. 18–29).

FEB 2027

The President's budget request is due Feb. 1. The debt limit could be reached as soon as February (estimate).

Navy cards mark hard deadlines.

RELATIONSHIP IMPACT ON THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

	Pressure Points	What Changes	What It Means
1	**Oversight & Investigations**	Rep. Robert Garcia (D-CA) at Oversight and Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) at Judiciary will take the lead on high profile issues but expect every committee to conduct robust oversight.	Companies and organizations should prepare for letters, subpoenas and requests to testify in both chambers.
2	**Power of the Purse**	Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), incoming chairs of the Appropriations Committees, will attempt to reestablish more parity between defense and non-defense discretionary funding.	Democrats will have more leverage in negotiating topline spending levels and establishing guardrails to combat the Administration's impoundment efforts.
3	**Confirmations Slow**	Senate Democrats control the floor and committees, so executive and judicial nominees, including Supreme Court nominees, will need Democratic support once the new Congress is seated on Jan. 3.	Expect more acting officials and longer vacancies at agencies, vacancies in the judicial branch, plus more executive orders and litigation in the courts.
4	**Trade & Emergency Powers**	Both chambers can pass legislation to constrain the President's trade and tariff policy, forcing the President to veto them.	Overrides are unlikely, but the votes show where members stand. Expect Democrats and Republicans to see divides within their caucuses.

Bottom line: With Democrats running both chambers, the Administration loses its legislative path and easy confirmations. Expect governing by executive action and veto, while Congress drives oversight, funding terms and nominations.

Thank you for your time.
Questions?



THE SOUTH, LIBERTY & THE COMMONWEAL

What the 2026 blue wave may mean for public health in the southeast

Sten H. Vermund, MD, PhD
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A blue wave does not mean a blue South

2026

Democrats won both chambers of Congress and governorships including Texas and Ohio.

State legislative gains reached well beyond coastal strongholds.

But the most defensible reading is not ideological conversion.

- Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, Florida, and much of the rest of the South remain culturally and electorally conservative.
- Affordability, dissatisfaction with the administration, and demands for competence drove much of the swing.
- Voters can reject specific candidates without abandoning conservative views on taxes, guns, religion, regulation, or government reach.

Implication: public health should read 2026 as an opening, not a mandate.

Public health is now entangled with a deeper argument about liberty



Traditional conservative skepticism

Self-reliance • local control • restraint on distant bureaucracy

Radical libertarian interpretation

“My body, my child, my choice” becomes a claim that collective intervention is presumptively illegitimate.

Core question

How much autonomy should be surrendered to secure a common good individuals cannot efficiently produce alone?

Vaccination and fluoridation are proxy battles over the common good

Vaccination

One person's susceptibility and infectiousness can impose risk on infants, immunocompromised people, and the community.

Fluoridation

A population-level benefit is organized even when every individual has not affirmatively chosen it.

The same personal liberty - commonweal tension extends across P.H.:

- Outbreak control
- Tobacco & vaping
- Maternal and child health
- Firearm and other injury
- Environmental protection
- Food & drug safety
- Surveillance
- Agency legitimacy

The legitimacy of public-health institutions is ultimately at stake.

The electoral opportunity lies in the conservative middle



The promising constituency is not newly progressive.

It is temperamentally conservative, yet increasingly uncomfortable when anti-government ideology impairs government competence.

“Liberty depends on functioning civic institutions.”

Clean water • safe food • safe and effective medicines/vaccines • functioning sewers • protected schools

The commonweal is infrastructure for liberty.

Public health already has a powerful economic constituency

55%

of ACA Marketplace enrollees live in Republican-held congressional districts

20%+

of residents are enrolled in Medicaid in half of Republican districts

19.2M

people were enrolled in ACA Marketplace coverage in February 2026

A political contradiction

Voters may favor smaller government in the abstract while relying heavily on publicly organized health protections in practice.

Congressional leverage, presidential constraint

Control of Congress increases leverage over Medicaid, the ACA, biomedical research, vaccination policy, and HHS oversight, but veto power limits enactment.

The opening requires humility, competence, and a renewed social compact

Do not mistake 2026 for vindication.

- Acknowledge COVID-era reputational damage, including inconsistent communication and poorly explained changes.
- Distinguish scientific evidence from policy judgment, and explain uncertainty without surrendering authority.
- Defend collective action where individual decisions impose substantial risks or costs on others.

Freedom where effects are primarily individual.
Collective action where harms spill over to others.

healthy skepticism of government ≠ dismantling the institutions that make communal life possible

Ethics, spirituality, religion justifications

- My argument:

Biblical freedom is not radical individualism. The individual has dignity and moral agency, but that agency is constrained by an equally serious obligation to protect, love, and serve one's neighbor, especially the vulnerable.

Leviticus 19:18: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Mark 12:31: "Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

- Their argument:

Biblical morality also places profound value on individual freedom and moral agency. Human beings are called to act according to faith and conscience, not merely to submit to external authority. Coercion therefore has moral limits, even when exercised in the name of collective welfare.

Galatians 5:1: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Galatians 5:13: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free."

Galatians 5:18: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Thank you for inviting me onto this panel

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This webinar has been recorded and will be available on the webinar event page on the ASPPH website soon.



Contact: externalrelations@aspph.org

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