

OPRAH BEATS TRUMP!

Among the factors that helped John Fetterman to pull off a win over Mehmet Oz was a late endorsement from Oprah Winfrey. The endorsement mattered not just because of who she is, but because Oz came to national attention on her show. Which means that in the highest profile Senate race of the night, Oprah's endorsement proved more valuable than Trump's.

That was, remarkably, even true of Liz Cheney. Both Democrats she endorsed – Abigail Spanberger and Elissa Slotkin – are projected to win reelection in swing districts. Cheney endorsed far fewer people than Trump, but both endorsees won.

Trump's record was more mixed – but only JD Vance has yet won a high profile race, beating Tim Ryan in Ohio. Reportedly, Vance did not mention Trump in his victory speech. Ouch.

We won't know who will win the Senate until at least the results of the Nevada race. The state changed its mail deadline this year, so it's unclear how many votes will come in from Clark County; on update, Catherine Cortez Masto is behind Adam Laxalt but may make that up in mail-in votes. If CCM does not win, it'll come down to a December run-off in Georgia.

And as of now, a number of outlets won't call the House until more races come in. As of 12PM IST, the GOP has 199 seats to Dems' 178. It's even still possible Dems will retain control. Even Lauren Boebert's seat is still too close to call, but it looks increasingly likely Adam Frisch will unseat her.

Except for perhaps Pennsylvania, Democrats had their best results in Michigan. Along with Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson all winning reelection, it appears Dems have flipped both houses of the legislature. And in addition to Slotkin, Hillary Scholten, a former DOJ immigration lawyer, beat John Gibbs in my own

district, MI-3. Dems were helped mightily by the abortion referendum on the ballot, which handily won. This result was also made possible by a neutral redistricting measure passed in 2018. What has happened in MI in recent years may be a model for democratic renewal. And it certainly positions “Big Gretch” well going into 2024.

Florida and New York have been (thus far) the bright spots for Republicans, with Ron DeSantis and Mario Rubio winning by comfortable margins and Republicans flipping Dem seats in a New York after Dems totally botched redistricting.

There were other key Trump candidates who also lost, including (if AZ results hold), all the election-denying Secretary of State candidates in swing states.

So where does that leave us? A 50-50 Senate and House. If Dems win one or both, their superior discipline and the advantage of the Presidency will make it possible to get things done. If Republicans win the House, I expect endless chaos. No Republican – and certainly not Kevin McCarthy – has the leadership to manage a virtually tied House. (Mitch McConnell could undoubtedly make the most of a 51-49 Senate, however.

The more important factor is within the Republican Party. Republicans may finally have to face what an electoral disaster Trump is for them. He has never won a majority, and under his leadership, the Republicans have lost the House, the Senate, the Presidency, and a mid-term election in which they should have flooded Dems. The GOP lost this time by running a bunch of MAGA candidates who were far easier for Democrats to defeat. And DeSantis’ strong win will set up a natural conflict between the two men in Florida.

The tension between those two – as well as the tension between Trump and McCarthy or McConnell (Trump has, perhaps cynically, endorsed both continuing on as leaders) – may shift the internecine war from one that pits Trumpist

Republicans against the country to one that pits Trumpist Republicans against those who would like to move on. It is *possible* that by setting up a war (or wars) within the GOP, this result will have the effect of suffocating the MAGA flame.

It's never a good idea to rule Trump out. But this election gives the Republicans an opportunity to rip the bandaid of Trumpism off. DeSantis is no better as a person (he's the competent authoritarian everyone has warned about, but he is nowhere nearly as charismatic as Trump). But tensions between the two of them may serve to give Democrats time to maneuver.

This post was updated at 12:00 IT/7AM ET.