

# THE TIMES IN PLAIN ENGLISH

## How to Follow the U.S. Mid-Term Elections (Level 3-5)

October 26, 2014 Plain English Version



All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election in 2014. About one-third of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate are up for election in even-numbered years. Every state has two senators. Senate terms are for six years.

The Republican Party currently has the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. The Democrats have the majority in the Senate.

They are expected to keep control of the House of Representatives after the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014 elections. Things are different in the Senate. There are 36 Senate seats to be decided. Democrats have the majority of seats. Experts are saying the Republicans may take control after the election. The reason is that more races are taking place in “red” states. Red states favor Republicans. Blue states favor Democrats.

These are the key states to watch on election night:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alaska</li><li>• Arkansas</li><li>• Colorado</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Iowa</li><li>• Kansas</li><li>• Kentucky</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Louisiana</li><li>• North Carolina</li><li>• South Dakota</li></ul>
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What does it all mean? If the Senate and House have Republican majorities, President Obama will face opposition from both houses. However, if they pass legislation the president does not like, he can use his power to veto (reject) the bills. The bills then cannot become law unless two-thirds of the members of both houses pass them again. This is unlikely to happen.

What are some of the possibilities if the House and Senate have Republican majorities? Immigration law will not take place. The Affordable Care Act may be challenged. Changes in Medicare and Social Security will be discussed.

In 2016, there will be a campaign for the next president. The president is elected every four years. President Obama was elected in the 2012 elections. [Source: *The Christian Science Monitor* October 25, 2014. Edited by Chris Milson for ESOL classes.]

### QUESTIONS

1. How many seats are there in the House of Representatives? How many of these are being contested in this year’s elections?
2. How many seats are there in the Senate? Of these, how many are up for election in this election?
3. As of now, which party is in control of (a) the House of Representatives, and (b) The Senate.
4. If both houses are controlled by the Republican Party, does it mean that President Obama (a Democrat) will be forced to accept all laws as passed by Congress?
5. The Affordable Care Act (also known as “Obamacare”) is currently the law in the U.S. Is its future assured in the next Congress?
6. We tend to use colors to denote the two major parties. Which is Red? And which is Blue?
7. Will we be electing a new president in this election? If not, when will that take place?
8. How does the election process in the United States compare with the process in your country?