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STORY 2 OF 5 · MOTIVE · 2D · MIDTERMS 2026

THE RECEIPT

Voters handed the president an itemised bill: tariffs, Iran, prices, enforcement. The news covered the items in a different order from the one voters ranked them in.

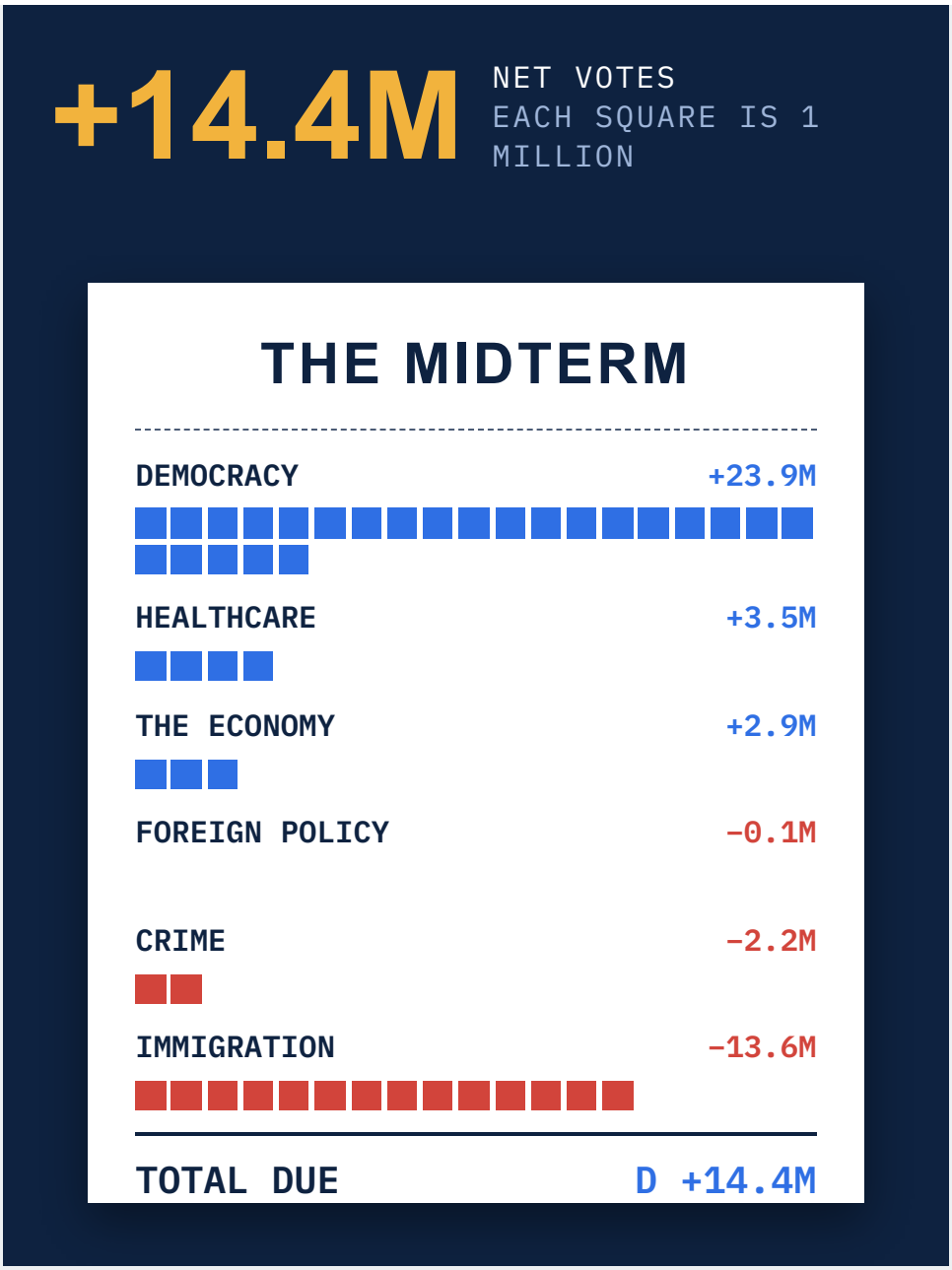
By the politic.design data desk · 5 Nov 2026, updated 6 Nov 2026 · Preliminary counts

OPEN DATA PDF Markdown JSON

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AI-generated image (Google Gemini) for illustration. Not a photograph of a real event or of any real person.



The story in one picture. Every unit is a real thing; the caption under each scene says what.

Exit polls read like a receipt. Two-thirds of voters said tariffs hurt the economy, and they voted Democratic 81–18. Nearly two-thirds called military action against Iran the wrong decision (83–15). Four in ten said their family was worse off than two years ago (75–23). Only 37% approved of the president.

The second half of the story is Brantopic's. We ran its news collector over 90 days of US coverage (GDELT, 5 August to 4 November) for each item on the bill, and its anomaly gate, the same one that tells a client when coverage of

their brand is unusual, flagged the days each issue broke out. That puts newsroom attention beside voter priority. The test: did coverage track what voters say decided their vote, or what campaigns paid to put on air?

The kerb chart covers the persuadable middle: the groups still within six points of even. In a 13-point national win, the close groups were men, people over 45, Catholics, voters with some college, and voters whose finances hadn't changed. These are the groups 2028 will be fought over.

DATA

NBC News/SSRS exit poll; AP Voter Poll; GDELT DOC 2.0 through Brantopic's collector and quasi-Poisson detector.

KEY FINDING

"Voters who said tariffs hurt the economy, two in three of the electorate, backed Democrats 81–18."

THE BILL

IN SHORT What each issue cost or earned Republicans, in votes. Voters named their top issue; each line is that issue's share of voters times how lopsidedly they voted. Issues that cost Republicans are charges, issues that won them votes are credits, and the total is the Democrats' winning margin.

THE MIDTERM

3 Nov 2026 · Register: NBC News/SSRS exit poll
122.7M ballots · priced in net votes

ITEM · VOTERS' TOP ISSUE	QTY	NET VOTES
CHARGES · COST REPUBLICANS VOTES		
STATE OF DEMOCRACY	33%	23.9M
33% named it top issue · they voted D 79 / R 20		
HEALTHCARE	8%	3.5M
8% named it top issue · they voted D 67 / R 31		
THE ECONOMY	39%	2.9M
39% named it top issue · they voted D 52 / R 46		
CREDITS · WON REPUBLICANS VOTES		
IMMIGRATION	14%	−13.6M CR

14% named it top issue · they voted D 10 / R 89

CRIME 3% **−2.2M CR**

3% named it top issue · they voted D 19 / R 79

FOREIGN POLICY 4% **−0.1M CR**

4% named it top issue · they voted D 47 / R 50

Subtotal charges **30.3M**

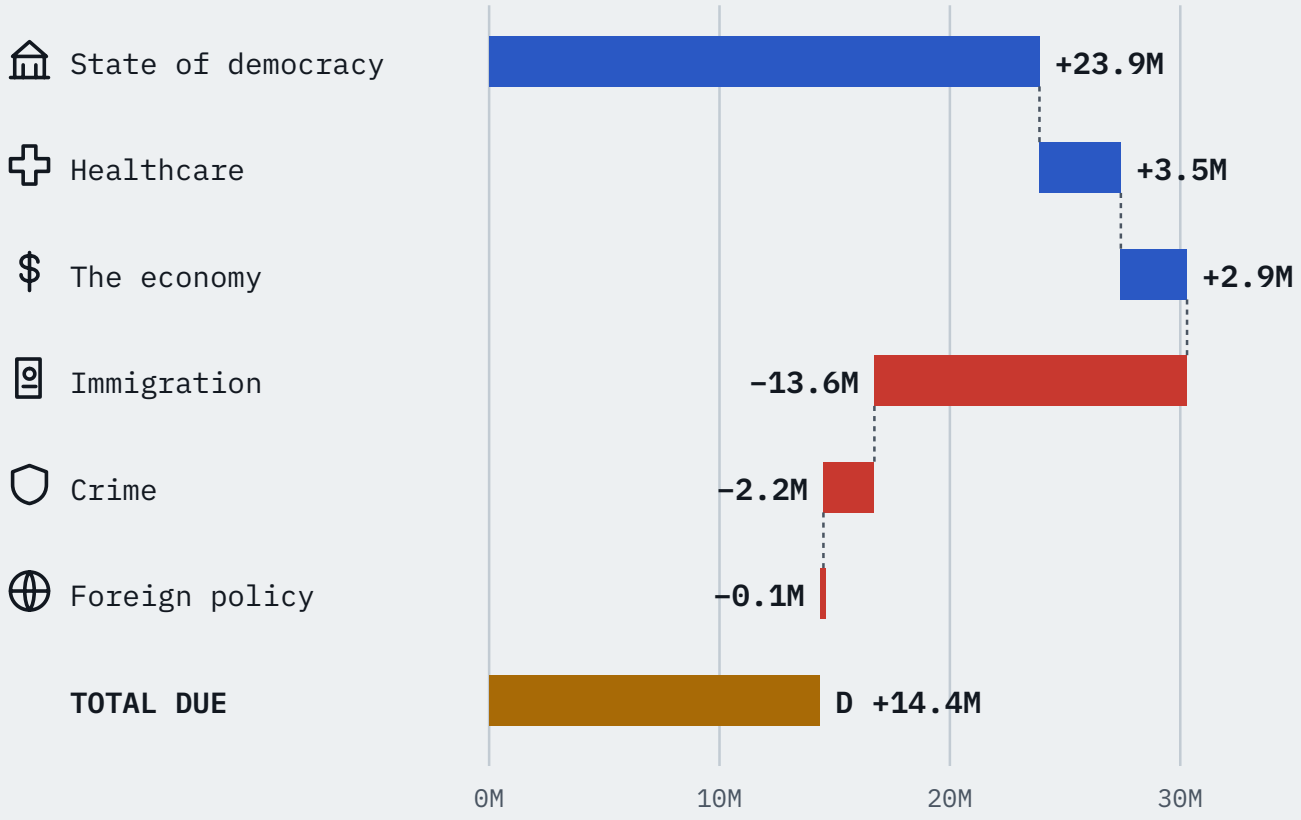
Credits **−15.9M**

Total due **D +14.4M**

= a 11.7-point Democratic margin in the exit poll

Thank you for voting
No refunds until 2028

RUNNING TOTAL, ISSUE BY ISSUE



ALSO ON THE TAB · NOT ADDED UP, VOTERS COULD TICK SEVERAL



Corruption a crucial or major factor

Cost of living a crucial or major factor

Economy "not so good" or "poor"
they voted D 70 / R 28

66%
Tariffs hurt the economy
they voted D 81 / R 18

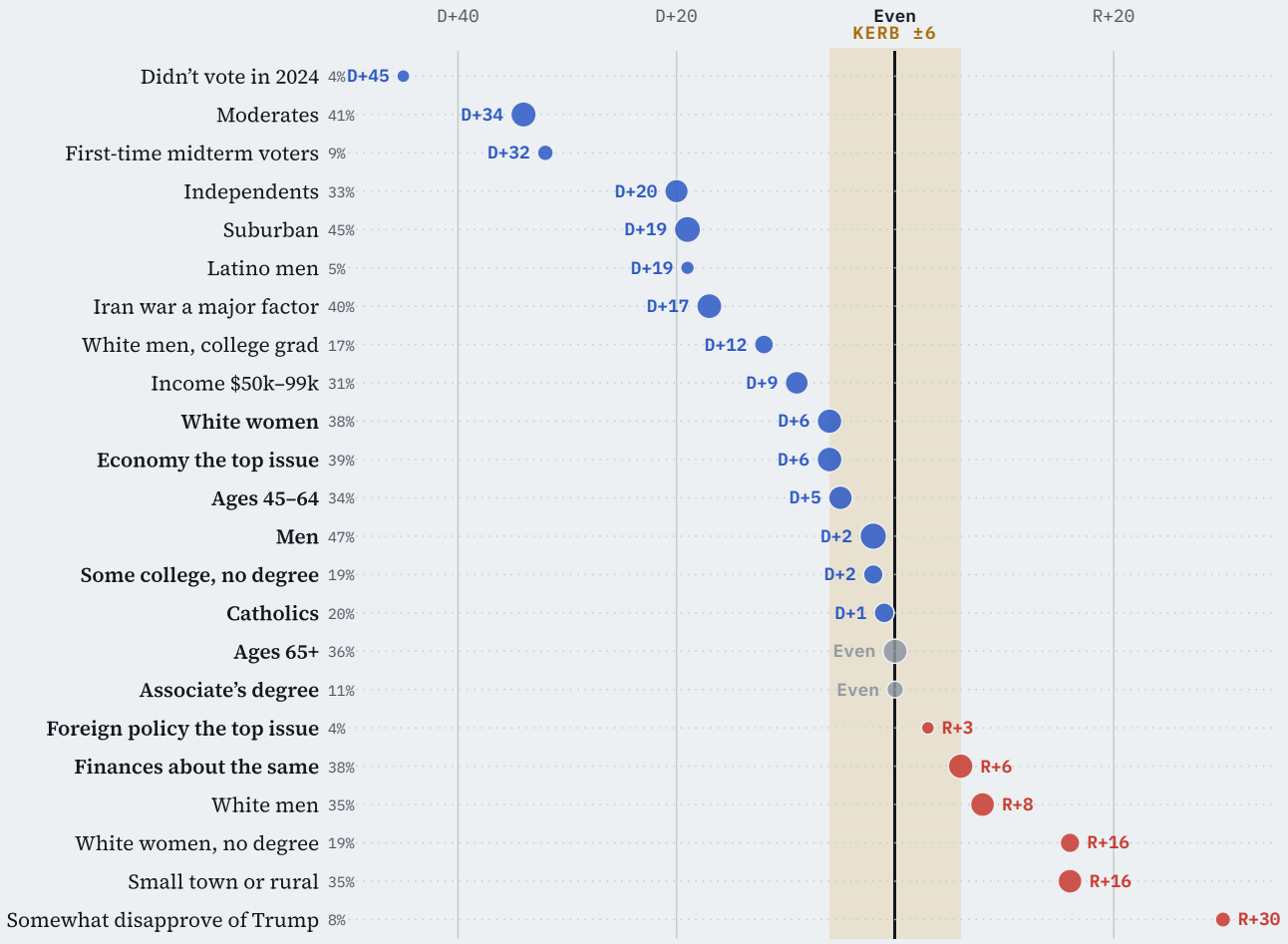
63%
Iran strikes: the wrong decision
they voted D 83 / R 15

58%
Immigration enforcement gone too far
they voted D 90 / R 8

44%
Finances worse than two years ago
they voted D 75 / R 23

THE KERB: WHO WAS STILL CLOSE

IN SHORT Each dot is a group of voters; the further left, the more Democratic. Groups inside the shaded strip were within six points of a tie, so they're still up for grabs in 2028. Bigger dots are bigger groups.



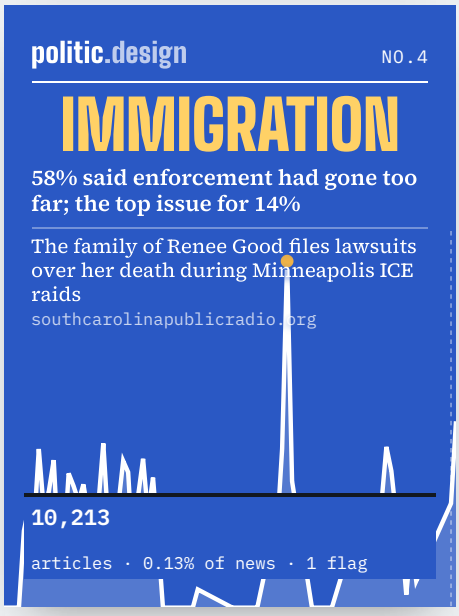
WHAT THE NEWS COVERED, FROM BRANTOPIC

IN SHORT One cover per issue; hover a cover for a preview, or click or tap it to open the chart large. The line behind each cover is how much of the US news mentioned it each day from August to election day; amber dots are days Brantopic flagged as unusually busy. The line under the title is how much voters said the issue mattered.

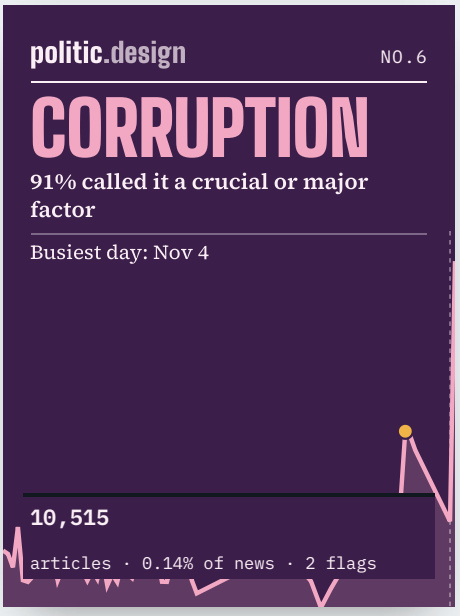




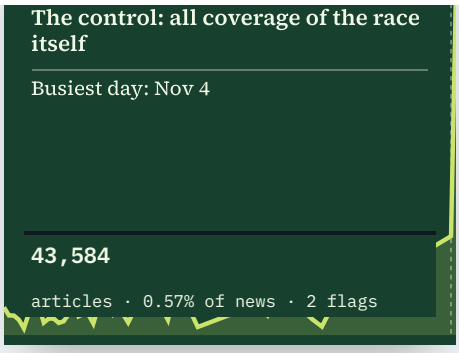












Coverage from GDELT DOC 2.0 (US sources, English), collected by Brantopic on 5–6 Nov 2026. The line is each day's share of all articles; amber dots are days past Brantopic's quasi-Poisson bound (0.1% false-alarm rate, normalised by daily volume); the thin vertical line is election day. Cover lines are top headlines from each issue's busiest day. Every series carries a content-hash receipt.

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