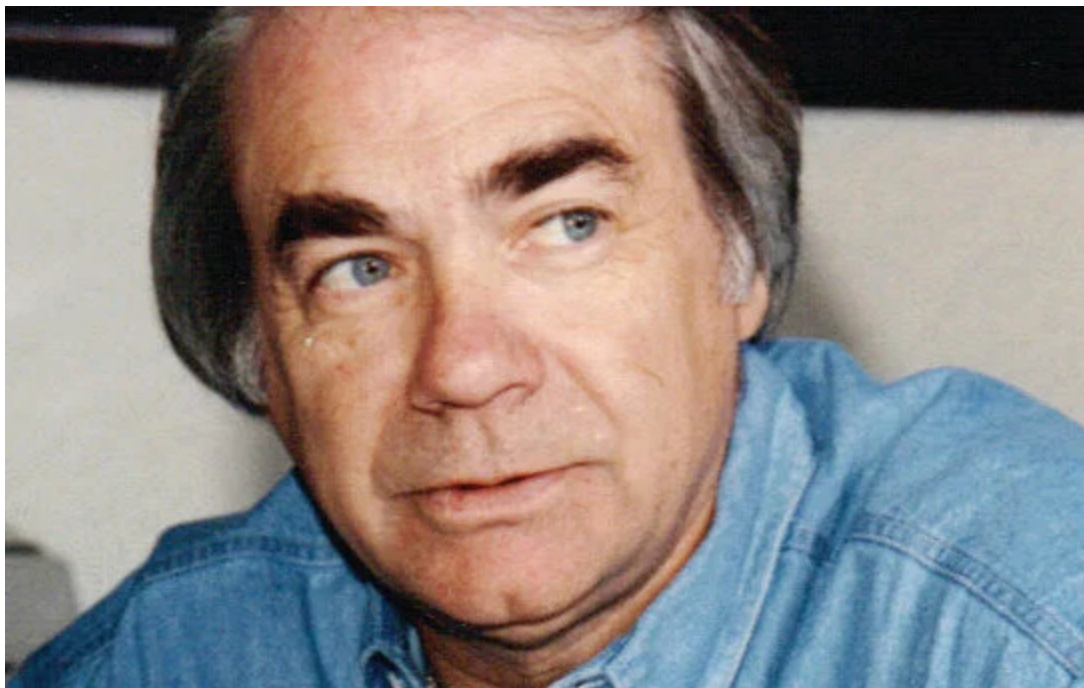


# Carl Golden: Two members of Congress will dominate the next election

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By Carl Golden

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Republicans are within a mere six seats of winning control of the House of Representatives, well within striking distance heading into the 2022 mid-term election.

It is a disquieting sign of the depths to which discourse in national government has sunk that Democrats will seek to increase their majority by convincing voters that controversial Georgia Congresswoman Marjory Taylor Greene represents her party's governing philosophy. Republicans will use a similar tactic to warn that equally controversial New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a glimpse into the country's future under Democratic rule.

Greene's comments and actions range from the truly offensive (racist tropes, violent rhetoric and promoting QAnon conspiracy theories) to otherworldly lunacy (laser beams from outer space igniting California wildfires). Ocasio-Cortez and her like-minded colleagues were scolded publicly and held responsible for the loss of more than a dozen House seats through their out of mainstream demands – defund the police, abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement, close prisons, among other things – while appearing to side with violent protestors in city after city.

House Democrats, in a rare interference in the internal affairs of the opposition party, voted to remove Greene from her assignments on the Education and Labor Committee and Budget Committee.

There is no real significance to revoking her committee membership, nor will her absence have any impact on policy issues before either committee. A minority member of an opposition-controlled committee exerts minimal impact on policy. Her loss of membership was designed solely for political influence and partisan advantage, despite being supported by 11 Republicans, by focusing on her incendiary comments as indicative of her party's beliefs.

The Democrats' loss of 15 House seats in 2020 was seized upon by Republicans as proof their party had been co-opted by far left socialists like Ocasio-Cortez, whose governing principles are anathema to most Americans. Even a few outspoken Democrats shared that view.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's campaign strategy – campaign exclusively as the anti-Trump – was badly flawed and her pre-election insistence that Democrats would gain seats embarrassed the party and exaggerated Republican characterizations as a band of wild-eyed socialists.

Pelosi, though, denied reality, pronounced the election and her party's losses as a victory and claimed President Biden had received a mandate from the American people.

While House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy was pressured to unilaterally remove Greene from her committee assignments, he chose to permit the Republican caucus to decide, based on his belief that permitting Democrats to dictate Republican committee assignments constituted a surrender of party prerogatives.

Greene's apology for her actions – some of which occurred prior to her election to Congress – and disavowal of the more egregious conspiracy theories she once espoused came across as more obligatory than genuine.

Ocasio-Cortez has established a pattern of conduct centered on an obsession with weighing in – largely on social media – on every issue every day. She relishes Twitter combat with anyone from House colleagues to Senators to corporate and business leaders.

The prominence of Greene and Ocasio-Cortez will provide their respective parties with a weapon utilized with great effect by former President Trump in his relations with the media – single out the most outrageous and obnoxious personality and identify him or her as representative of the whole.

Republicans believe voters will dismiss Greene as an aberration, an individual of narrow-minded, loathsome views who embraced logic-defying notions of events. They hope that the vision for the country as espoused by Ocasio-Cortez will be seen as a dangerous first step toward democracy's downfall.

Historically, the party of the incumbent president loses House seats in the first mid-term election – a lesson that provides optimism for one side and concern for the other.

For Republicans, the striking distance for control of Congress is tantalizingly narrow and for Democrats, it's ripe for expansion.

That a freshman Congresswoman and a two-term member may hold the balance of power in their hands is extraordinary.

*Carl Golden is a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University in New Jersey. You can reach him at [[email protected](#)].*

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