

The Washington Post

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Power Up



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JACQUELINE ALEMANY

with Brent D. Griffiths

Aloha, Power People — happy Thursday. Tips, comments, recipes? [Email me](#), forward this to your friends, [sign up](#). Thanks for waking up with us.



#TBT: In this Jan. 3, 2017 picture, then-House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis. administers the House oath of office to Rep. Bill Flores, R-Texas, during a mock swearing in ceremony on Capitol Hill. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

Outside the Beltway

THEN THERE WERE 16: Two more Republican congressmen just announced plans to step down at the end of their terms, bringing the total number of GOP House members who have said they won't be seeking reelection in 2020 to a whopping 16.

- **Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.)**, who has served in Congress for 40 years, last night became the highest-ranking Republican to [announce his retirement](#).
- **Rep. Bill Flores (R-Tex.)** [hours earlier](#) became the fifth Republican from Texas to do so.

Writing on the wall: The spate of retirements are a sign that enthusiasm is fading among Republicans about the prospects for taking back the House majority from Democrats next fall — and are less enthusiastic about the idea of spending another term in the minority.

- **“To the extent Democrats can pick up a few ‘insurance seats,’”** The Cook Political Report's Dave Wasserman told Power Up, **“it makes it a lot harder for Republicans to take control.”**
- While Flores and Sensenbrenner are in relatively safe districts for Republicans, Wasserman pointed to three Texas seats of exiting Republican Reps. Will Hurd, Kenny Marchant and Pete Olson that are in increasingly competitive districts that the GOP incumbents won by slim margins in 2018.
- **On the flip side:** Only four House Democrats are voluntarily heading for the exits in 2020. California Rep. Susan A. Davis, in a safely Democratic

district, was the latest to announce her departure last night.

Historic?: Analysts are closely watching the exit rate to see if 2020 might surpass last cycle's historic number of what [FiveThirtyEight's Nathaniel Rakich](#) tallied as 39 open Republican seats and "26 pure Republican retirements ... the fifth-biggest exodus of any party in any election going back to 1974."

- **Texodus:** "So far, 22 percent of Texas's Republicans are leaving and that number could rise before the December filing deadline," Wasserman tells us. "If that 'Texodus' percentage were applied to the whole country, we'd be on track for 43 Republican open seats, surpassing 2018's historic number."

The minority factor: The Texodus is largely made up of members who once held subcommittee chairmanships — and whose power has already been checked by being in the minority.

- **"In Texas, you had a lot of chairman who became ranking members — and even then there are term limits for how long they can serve,"** Dave Carney, a GOP strategist who has advised Texas pols for over 20 years, told Power Up. "And being a minority member is just you sitting on the backbench and it's not as entertaining and engaging and fun. So Texas is a victim of having so many subcommittee chairmen."
- That list of ex-panel leaders includes Rep. Michael Conaway, the former House Agriculture Committee chairman, and Flores, a former chair of the conservative Republican Study Committee. Hurd, as another example, chaired the House Oversight panel's Information Technology subcommittee.
- "Most House Republicans didn't have any idea what serving in the minority is like before 2019," Wasserman told Power Up. "Bill Flores, for example, came into the House in the GOP wave of 2010. So it's not surprising we're on pace for a lot of Republican retirements."

History, duh: It's a dynamic that history has seen before. "After Democrats

in 2006 won back the House majority for the first time in a dozen years, Republicans saw a high number of retirements in the following term. The departures helped Democrats pick up even more seats in the 2008 election,” [The Atlantic's Russell Berman reports](#).



Then there's the Trump factor: Hurd, the lone black Republican in the House, referenced Trump's racist tweets that said four congresswomen of color should "go back" to their ancestral countries in [his exit interview](#) with my colleague Bob Moore in August. "When you imply that because someone doesn't look like you, in telling them to go back to Africa or wherever, you're implying that they're not an American, and you're implying that they have less worth than you," Hurd said.

- **What this matters for the party:** "Hurd represents the exact kind of district Republicans need to hold on to or win to retake the majority in 2020. His border district is 70 percent Hispanic; it's a battleground district in a state that has the potential to become a battleground state," our colleague Amber Philips wrote [earlier this month](#).
- **There's also the daily Trump grind:** "Day after day, members walk to the U.S. House chamber to cast votes. And day after day, reporters swarm these members to answer for the latest Trump tweet or policy change," the Texas Tribune's [Abby Livingston reports](#). "**Marchant, Olson and Hurd, who were already in tough reelection races, have also faced exceedingly angry constituents**, eager political trackers following them around with video cameras to catch any misstep and opposition researchers digging into their backgrounds looking for anything that could be used against them."

More to come post-recess?: As our colleague [Paul Kane wrote at the end of July](#), there's an "unspoken fear among Republicans ... that more retirements could be on the way, particularly over this long recess as members of Congress spend time with their families, travel their district or make official overseas trips."

- "**That time away helps lawmakers recharge and come back to Washington ready for the fall and winter legislative slog — or realize how much they enjoyed their time away from the Capitol, prompting them to prepare their retirement announcements,**" P.K. added.
- **Silver linings?**: Some strategists argue, however, that the loss of some older and less diverse members could present an opportunity for House

Republicans to recruit new and perhaps more exciting talent.

- **“I think fresh blood with new ideas and fresh energy is not in and of itself a bad thing,” Carney told us.** “Sometimes these guys were mailing it in ... You take things for granted when you’re not a challenger.”

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President Donald Trump holds a chart as he talks with reporters after receiving a briefing on Hurricane Dorian in the Oval Office on Wednesday. (Evan Vucci/AP)

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At The White House

TRUMP DISPLAYS DOCTORED DORIAN CHART: “On Wednesday, it appears the White House attempted to retroactively justify a tweet that President Trump issued over the weekend in which he warned, erroneously, that Alabama would be affected by Hurricane Dorian,” [our colleagues Matthew Cappucci and Andrew Freedman report](#).

- **What happened:** “In a [White House video](#) released Wednesday, Trump displays a modified National Hurricane Center 'cone of uncertainty' forecast, dated from 11 a.m. on Aug. 29, indicating Alabama would in fact be affected,” Matthew and Andrew write. “The graphic appears to have been altered with a Sharpie to indicate a risk the storm would move into Alabama from Florida.” A White House official later confirmed a drawing was made using a black Sharpie.
- **Breaking the law?:** “Altering official government weather forecasts isn’t just a cause for concern — it’s [illegal](#).”



President Donald Trump and Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson. (Erin Schaff/The New York Times/Pool)

TRUMP BACKS JOHNSON AMID BREXIT CHAOS: "Trump stuck by embattled British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday, offering encouragement for the fight to take Britain out of the European Union as the political turmoil in Great Britain complicated a week of European diplomacy for Vice President Pence," [our colleagues Anne Gearan and Robert Costa report](#).

- **'Boris knows how to win':** "He's a friend of mine, and he's going at it, there's no question about it," Trump said, noting that he had watched Johnson on television earlier in the day. 'Boris knows how to win. Don't worry about him."
- **The same boat:** "If Johnson is unable to deliver Brexit on time, or at all, or if he is ousted as prime minister, his rise and fall will be tied to Trump. The president has been willing to look past [policy disagreements](#) with Johnson on Iran, climate change and trade protectionism chiefly because of Johnson's Trump-like rhetoric about the importance of shedding E.U. control, analysts said," Anne and Bob write.



Global Power

BORIS IS HAVING A ‘VERY, VERY BAD WEEK’: "Johnson has lost his majority in Parliament just weeks into his term, and British lawmakers are in revolt over Johnson's 'do or die' plan to effect Brexit by the end of next month," as Anne and Bob note. "His government in chaos, Johnson failed Wednesday in his effort to call a new election on Oct. 15."

So Power Up got a fill straight from our London bureau. Here's what our colleague Kevin Sullivan says about what some analysts are calling the “shortest political honeymoon in British history.”

- **Brexit has always been dramatic but Johnson has added a new wrinkle:** "By now we're used to all the Brexit arguments — either the sky is falling, or the sky will never be a more beautiful blue, depending on your tribe. But introducing Boris Johnson into the mix has given it all a new

flavor. The man long dubbed 'Blond Ambition' has been prime minister for six weeks, but he hasn't really had to deal with Parliament until members returned from summer break this week. And what a homecoming it was," Kevin tells us.

- **Johnson's decision to suspend Parliament before Oct. 31 only added fuel to the fire:** "It was a 'coup,' and 'assault on democracy' or any number of nasty things — which everyone agreed was Vintage Boris, and not anything Theresa May would have thought of in her wildest dreams, if she has those. So we have protesters in the street dressed in Boris masks, swarming 10 Downing Street wrapped in E.U. flags and carrying [expletive-filled signs about] Boris. It's Brexit, but it just as much Boris, that has brought the marchers to the streets."
- **No one knows where it goes from here:** "Some are thrilled, some are despondent, some just wish the whole thing would stop taking up every blessed second of airtime on every TV news show. The weather has been sunny all week, but it's been nothing but storms on the airwaves. It's too soon to know how this all plays out for Boris, let alone Brexit."
- **This makes Trump the bright spot:** "One steadfast friend is sticking by Boris on his Very, Very, Bad Week," Kevin notes.



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Kamala Harris (Calif.). (Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images)

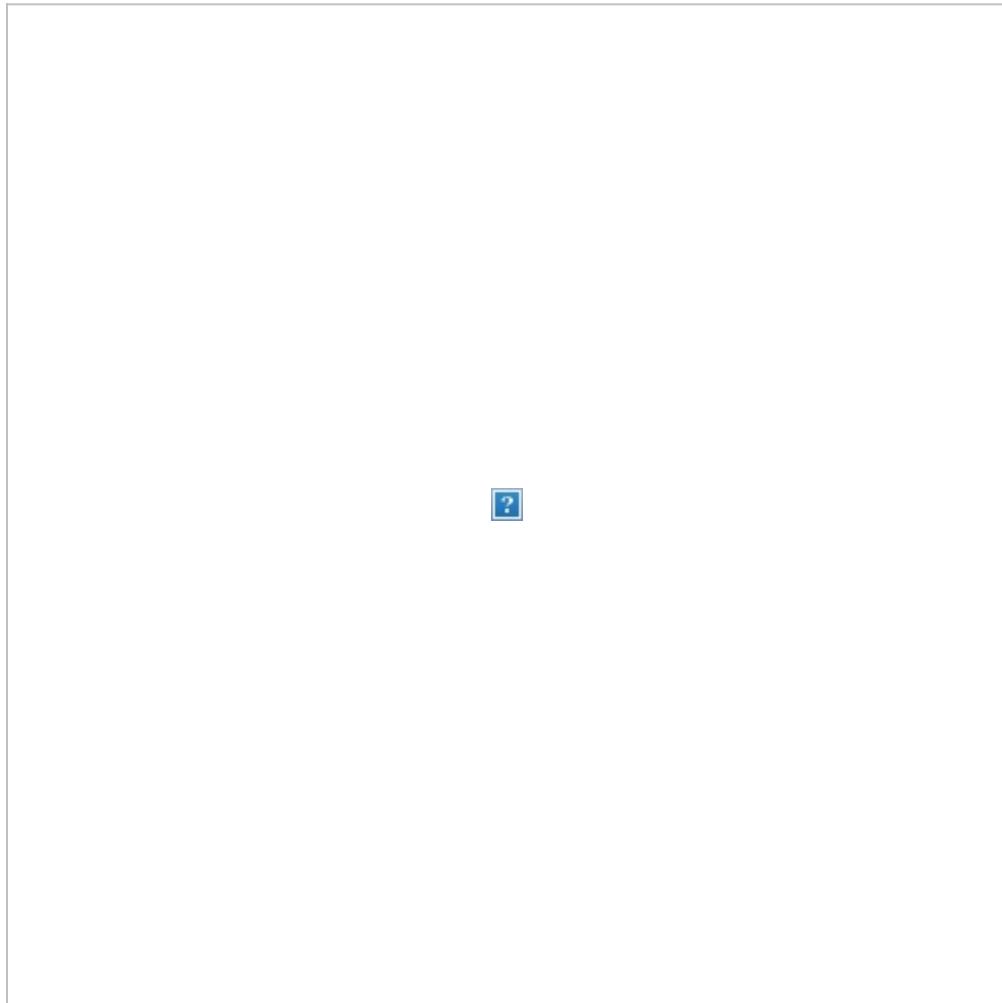
The Campaign

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CNN'S CLIMATE TOWN HALL: "It wasn't the debate that climate activists wanted," [Politico's David Siders and Zack Colman report](#). "But one marathon stretch of climate forums on Wednesday nevertheless marked a sharp turn in the 2020 presidential contest. In seven hours on CNN, the leading Democratic candidates showed the first signs of weaponizing climate change in the primary campaign."

- **Harris came out in favor of blowing up the filibuster for the Green New Deal:** "Sen. Kamala D. Harris followed the release on Wednesday of

her \$10 trillion climate change plan that aims for a carbon-neutral economy by 2045 with a pledge to end the Senate's filibuster if needed to pass a 'Green New Deal,'" [our colleagues Chelsea Janes and Colby Itkowitz report](#).

- **Biden was pressed on a number of topics:** "Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden was hit with what was probably the toughest question of the night: How can he be trusted to stand up to fossil fuel companies when he has plans to attend a fund-raiser tomorrow hosted by Andrew Goldman, a co-founder of Western LNG, a liquefied natural gas production company," [the New York Times's Lisa Friedman reports](#).
- **Warren urged people not to be distracted by smaller debates:**



In the Media

COMING UP: Glamour's annual Women of the Year Awards is fast approaching. While we don't yet have the scoop on just what amazing eight women will be honored in the magazine this time around (last year, the list included Kamala Harris and March for Our Lives activists), we do have the deets on [the magazine's two-day Women of the Year summit in New York](#).

- It will feature New York Times reporter Megan Twohey; author and advice columnist E. Jean Carroll; actor Beanie Feldstein; CEO of Rent the Runway Jenn Hyman; actors Jameela Jamil, Olivia Wilde, Gabrielle Union, and more.
- Hosted by comedian and actor Nasim Pedrad, **the “Go Big” summit on November 10 and 11 will feature women with “something to say,” according to Glamour’s editor in chief Samantha Barry.**

Barry told Power Up that this year is “all about taking up more space and having your voice being amplified and heard louder,” from the #MeToo movement to fertility, politics and finance. “And it’s about women taking up more room in the room and making sure their voices are heard,” Barry said.

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