

Senators, Old & New

November 10, 2026

The make-up of the next U.S. Senate is taking shape. New committee chairs, for instance. While Senate Democrats do not have a rigid seniority system for choosing committee chairs, seniority is one factor considered and, realistically, the longer a congressman is on a committee the more likely he or she is to ascend to a position of leadership.

Plus, the Democrats don't have term limits for committee chairs.

Which leads to an average age, so far, of not-quite-Seventy!

Well, that's what ChatGPT projects. "Using January 3, 2027 — the scheduled opening day of the 120th Congress — as the common reference date, the 18-person working roster of projected Democratic committee and select-committee chairs has an average age of 69.8 years."

And boy, does the AI present a revealing chart, a few senators just popping out:

- Patty Murray (Washington) for Appropriations, 76
- Ron Wyden (Oregon) for Finance, 77
- Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts) for Banking, Housing, and Urban (not Indian) Affairs, 77

The youngest on the chair list is 53; the oldest — Bernie Sanders! — is 88.

Now these positions aren't set in stone. They are in the process of development. These are merely projected names, the most likely names based on august Washington tradition — and the long list of oldsters still in power.

But, in contrast, we do know for certain the average age of the eight Democratic U.S. Senators who won critical races in Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. It's 50 years old.

Nearly two decades younger than the average age of those running the committees.

Seniority may be a good way to run a gerontocracy.

Term limits are a good way to change it.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

Committee	Projected chair	State	Age	Status / note
Appropriations	Patty Murray	WA	76	Projected
Finance	Ron Wyden	OR	77	Projected
Budget	Tim Kaine	VA	68	Projected
Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs	Elizabeth Warren	MA	77	Projected; Sherrod Brown mentioned as possible challenger
Commerce, Science & Transportation	Maria Cantwell	WA	68	Projected
Energy & Natural Resources	Martin Heinrich	NM	55	Projected
Environment & Public Works	Jeff Merkley	OR	70	Projected
Armed Services	Jack Reed	RI	77	Projected
Judiciary	Sheldon Whitehouse	RI	71	Projected
Foreign Relations	Chris Coons	DE	63	Projected
Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs	Maggie Hassan	NH	68	Projected
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions	Bernie Sanders	VT	85	Projected; Independent who caucuses with Democrats
Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry	Michael Bennet	CO	62	Projected; Sherrod Brown is an alternative
Rules & Administration	Alex Padilla	CA	53	Working projection
Small Business & Entrepreneurship	Ed Markey	MA	80	Working projection
Veterans' Affairs	Richard Blumenthal	CT	80	Working projection
Select Committee on Intelligence	Mark Warner	VA	72	Working projection
Select Committee on Indian Affairs	Brian Schatz	HI	54	Working projection

State	Senator	Age	Status
Georgia	Jon Ossoff	39	Reelected incumbent
Iowa	Josh Turek	47	Newly elected
Kansas	Adam Hamilton	62	Newly elected
Maine	Troy Jackson	58	Newly elected
Michigan	Abdul El-Sayed	42	Newly elected
South Carolina	Annie Andrews	46	Newly elected
Texas	James Talarico	37	Newly elected
North Carolina	Roy Cooper	69	Newly elected

Group	Number of people	Average age
Projected committee / select-committee chairs	18	69.8 years
Eight senators in the state comparison	8	50.0 years
Difference	—	19.8 years

On this set of projections, the chair roster is about 19.8 years older on average than the eight-senator comparison group.

The difference is descriptive; it does not by itself measure experience, effectiveness, or the age profile of the entire Democratic Senate caucus.