



Democrats win House, promise new direction

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- **NEW:** Democratic pick-ups projected to be 29 seats
- Democrats sweep to power in House
- Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-California, set to become first female House speaker
- Ex-House Majority Leader DeLay: "We took a whipping last night"

(CNN) -- Democrats promised Wednesday to lead the country in a new direction after winning control of the House for the first time in 12 years in midterm elections.

By early Wednesday, Democrats had picked up at least 29 seats; they needed 15 to capture a majority in the House. Two Democratic seats in Georgia that were targeted by Republicans remained too close to call.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-California, is now poised to become the first female speaker of the House. She viewed the Democrat's success as a rebuke to President Bush for the war on Iraq. ([Watch Nancy Pelosi promise change -- 4:35](#))

"Nowhere did the American people make it more clear that we need a new direction than in the war in Iraq," the Californian told supporters in Washington.

"'Stay the course' has not made our country safer, has not honored our commitment to our troops and has not made the region more stable," she said. "We cannot continue down this catastrophic path, and so we say to the president, 'Mister President, we need a new direction in Iraq.'"

Pelosi promised to lead the nation in a new direction "in partnership, not in partisanship."

Bush wasted no time Wednesday reaching out to the Democrats via Pelosi. ([Watch the winners and losers in Tuesday's election -- 6:06](#))

But first, the president spoke to outgoing House Speaker Dennis Hastert, thanking him for his hard work and leadership, deputy White House press secretary Dana Perino said .

"While we came up short, we're committed to working with Democrats to get things done for the country," Perino quoted Bush as saying.

In his call to Pelosi, Bush congratulated the congresswoman and the two pledged to work together in the final two years of the president's administration, Perino said.

Bush also called current Minority Whip Rep. Steny Hoyer as well as other members of the Democratic and Republican leadership in the House.

Throughout all the calls, Perino said, there was "a strong spirit of goodwill in the conversations."

The deputy press secretary said Bush and the new leadership "will start strategizing about how they will get things done in the next Congress." ([Watch Democrats celebrate House victory -- 2:03](#))

Hoyer and Pelosi were invited to have lunch with the president Thursday, Perino said.

"He is not the first president to see a Congress change and he won't be the last," Perino said. "While Congress has changed, the issues have not. We have plenty of time to get a lot done but not enough time to waste a single day."

With Democrats making gains across the board in the midterm elections, House Majority Leader John Boehner said Republicans were "deeply disappointed in the outcome."

"Our challenge as Republicans is to regain our confidence, our courage and our energy to address the big issues that matter," Boehner said in a statement. "If Republicans stand together and united behind solutions and ideas that move us closer to our common vision of a freer, more prosperous America, I'm confident the American people will return us to the majority in two years."

Former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay suggested Republicans were largely at fault for their losses.

"We took a whipping last night, and we understand that," DeLay told CNN's "American Morning." "The Democrats didn't win, the Republicans lost."

This is the second midterm election for Bush. The White House historically loses congressional seats in the middle of each president's second term.

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