

Part 3: Campaign Review, Role of Congress and What's Next

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This part of our series will be hard to condense. Too many things have happened since 11/3 - Election Day (ED) - it is difficult to quantify here. So I created an outline which I hope will serve as a guide for our discussion on 1/20.

Campaign Review

Election Day:

Joe Biden: 306 Electoral Votes (EVs)

Donald Trump: 232 EVs

Threshold for victory is 270 EVs.

Key takeaways from the election:

Joe Biden flipped states Trump won in '16: Georgia, Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. This was somewhat a natural extension of the democratic gains we saw in 2018. Suburban voters - led by women - fleeing Trump and an uptick in African American (AA) turnout. The final results reflected the metrics BOTH campaigns were seeing in their polling BEFORE ED. The Trump camp relied heavily on recreating 2016 - which of course was quite different. In 2016, there was a disliked candidate on the left, no botched response to a global pandemic, no shaky economy and 4 full years of Trump stepping on his own message.

Joe Biden stayed focused on building out the coalitions that emerged in 2018 among suburban voters and made sure AAs turned out in cities in key states like Milwaukee, WI and Philadelphia, PA. Why are Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania so important to democrats? Because Barack Obama won them in '08 and '12 and Clinton lost them in '16. Biden's messaging was principled and simple. Some even complained that it was boring, which I would argue worked in his favor. After 4 years of Trump chaos, the reprieve was welcomed, especially among college educated whites.

Georgia. It was tight, however; the Democratic turnout apparatus was much more fine-tuned and professional. One of the reasons why the Republican elected state officials were so confident re their elections' processes is b/c the Governor was the former Sec of State and Chief of Elections before Brad Raffensperger, the current Secretary of State. They both knew the state had been trending blue. Georgia has also been on the radar for national observers of elections. It is in transition, much like Virginia was in the early 00s. When John Kerry ran for president against George Bush in 2004, Virginia had 2 Republican US Senators (Allen and

Warner) and a Republican controlled state legislature. Mark Warner (D) was Governor. Now Virginia has 2 Democrat US Senators (Warner and Kaine) a Democrat as Governor (Northam) and a democrat controlled state legislature.

This of course happens on the right as well. Missouri comes to mind. It has transitioned and is now as “red” as Alabama. Missouri is represented by Sen Josh Hawley.

Why did Trump seem to be so fixated on Georgia? Because it was the only state (Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arizona) that had both a Republican Governor and a Republican Secretary of State. He felt like he could exert control.

Congress

House of Representatives

222 Democrats
211 Republicans

Democrats kept control of the House but lost seats while Republicans gained seats.

Senate

50 Democrats
50 Republicans

Kamala Harris as Vice President will cast the tie breaking vote. Democrats control the Senate. Democrats picked up seats in Colorado, Arizona and Georgia while losing a seat in Alabama.

Having the Party of an incumbent President lose the White House and not experience significant losses in Congress is unusual. The explanation could be two fold. 1) A direct rebuke of Trump specifically and not the Party as a whole or their policies and 2) Lingering doubts or concerns about a radical Democratic “socialalist” agenda whereas Republicans in Congress are meant to temper.

The Georgia runoff was also very unusual. Rarely do you have both senate seats up in the same cycle in one state, much less both of them going to runoff. Remember, Senator Kelly Loeffler was appointed to the Senate seat by Governor Brian Kemp when Senator Johnny Isakson retired for health reasons in 2019. When a Senator is appointed during an existing term, they must be elected to that office the next election cycle. Not all states have runoff elections. Traditionally, Republicans are favored in runoff elections based on turn out alone. This cycle was unique because of the unprecedented way the Republicans running were stifled at best and outright blocked at worst from winning by the President of the United States, a member of their own Party. There is much to say about this.

Thoughts on “voter fraud” and COVID

We have already covered that states control their elections. As COVID emerged and states took action to mitigate the impact of the virus on their elections it was state legislatures who managed that change. Many of these state legislatures - specifically the ones we have heard so much about recently - are controlled by Republicans. In other words, for the congressional Republicans complaining about unfair mail in or absentee voting practices in certain states, they should confer with their colleagues in these conservative states.

Also, for decades “state’s rights” has been a benchmark of the Republican platform. You may have noticed some congressional Republicans who disagreed with those who challenged the EVs mention this as a reason not to. Simply because it is not the “conservative way”; for the federal government to unilaterally usurp the power of states at any given time.

Attempting to “federalize” elections has been tried and has failed miserably more than once over the years.

What’s next?

I believe the biggest difference - in Congress and the Executive Branch -will be a return to a more professional, more traditional and more principled style of governing. So much so that you will notice.

The challenges are immense for Biden. But his biggest challenge will be vaccine distribution. I think you will also see another stimulus relating to COVID.

I believe you will also see a Congress willing to work with Biden. Republican leader Mitch McConnell knows all too well the reason Republicans lost the 2 senate seats in GA. He is desperate to turn the page from the Trump era. He is also in his last term. So you will see Republicans work with Biden on things like infrastructure, mitigating/eliminating college debt and other things of that stripe. This is much more about preserving the reputation and building back trust in Congress (Republicans specifically) and not about propping up Biden. Biden does have an excellent relationship with Sen McConnell though.

Biden will NOT take up matters such as expanding the Supreme Court. Not sure what he will do regarding prosecuting Trump. I do believe now - if it ever was a plausible scenario - he will not be able to pardon Trump.

The events of January 6th have accelerated the need for DC Statehood which is another way Trump debilitated Republicans in Congress. The disjointed and confusing response to the insurrection has given congressional Republicans all the cover they need to vote in favor of DC statehood. DC congressional seats will be reliably Democrat. Former Obama AG Eric Holder has already expressed interest in running for a DC Senate seat.

