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Politics: #NoSafeSeats -- A Plan To Win In 2018

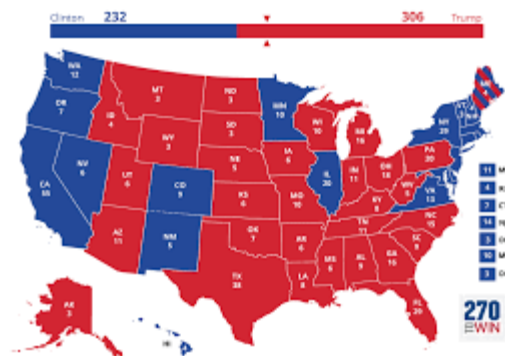
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The New York Times posted a story yesterday in which Montana Democrats are pushing the party to compete for an open seat in their red state. Why not? Dems almost won in Kansas and damn near avoided even a runoff in an Atlanta district that's redder than red. But choosing where and when to fight is wrong. Basketball was revolutionized by the full court press and that's exactly what Democrats need to do in politics.

Here's a new rallying cry: #NoSafeSeats.

The goal should *not* be to choose wisely and well, to target resources and make sure you achieve incremental gains in special elections and then 2018, on the way to victory in 2020 or maybe 2022 or perhaps 2024. No. It should be an inspiring, JFK's "We will go to the moon" challenge to ourselves to win back the House...and most governor's mansions...AND the Senate. Not in 2020 or 2022 or 2024. But in 2018.

That's a foolhardy goal, which will squander money and time and energy and invariably leave people feeling disappointed, just as they're disappointed Jon Ossoff didn't win outright (though of course people should be thrilled at how close he came and make sure he wins the even-harder runoff). Besides, it literally can't be done. The Democrats can win back the Senate on paper, sure. But in the real world, we know Democrats don't turn out for midterm elections like Republicans, that there's only so much money to go around and if you try to do everything you'll almost certainly fall short of what you can actually do. Grow up.



Or....

Dream big. Shoot for the moon. Inspire people. Because Democrats can't possibly win back the House and the Senate and the majority of governor's mansions in 2018.

Except they can. And they must.

First, the numbers. The Democrats need some 24 seats to regain control of the House of Representatives in 2018. In a mid-term election, the opposing party can very reasonably hope to gain that many seats. Of course, the more seats you gain, the more power you have.

At the state level, 38 governorships are up for grabs this year and next. And 27 of them are Republicans. (It's the opposite of the uphill climb the Democrats face in the US Senate.) The President is hugely unpopular, any Republican who backs away from him will pay a price with primary voters and Democrats can capitalize. And governors around the country are a very effective bulwark against any radical state legislatures below them and any reckless Presidents above them. Democrats need to net 10 seats to have 26 governor mansions be blue. In other words, they only have to win one-third of the races to indicate a sea change in our country. A special election in a rich Atlanta suburb sends a message? Imagine a map of the country showing governors turning blue and what kind of message that would send.

In the US Senate, the opposite story is true. Among Senators, 31 are up for reelection by 2018 but most of them are Democrats. In fact, 23 of the Senators facing voters are Democrats and many of them are in Republican friendly areas. The Democrats only need to net three or four seats to gain a majority of the Senate. That seems almost impossible given a realistic look at the battleground they face. But so did World War II when Hitler was rolling through our allies like a hot knife through butter and pounding the hell out of England, the last one standing in Western Europe. Oh and Japan was plowing through China and the rest of Asia.

What's possible when the fate of your country is at stake? Is that hyperbole or do you actually believe watching one branch of the government hold another branch hostage and the mounting evidence that many, many people around nominee and now-President Trump have been in contact with an enemy of the US that attacked us to influence our election actually constitute a Constitutional crisis? The Senate is the most difficult goal by far but it's also the most crucial. ONLY the Senate can block Trump's next Supreme Court nominee. And only the Senate can impeach the President. No party in power has ever impeached their own President. Now how important is it to try?

And wait a second! What did we just say?

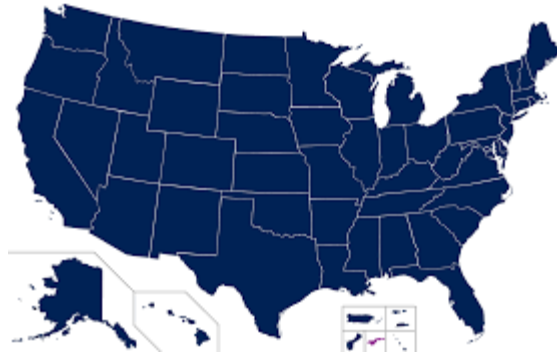
It's VERY possible the Democrats will regain control of the House. That's exciting!

It's VERY reasonable to believe that a majority of governors in the country could be Democrats by 2018. That's thrilling!

And it's POSSIBLE to even regain control of the Senate. That's...heart-stopping.

Imagine a country where people pushing back against Trump's agenda were in charge of the House and most states *and* the Senate. No Supreme Court nominee who wasn't a moderate acceptable to all. Full and independent investigations of the Russia scandal. People sleeping easy at night because their governor and friends and neighbors have their back.

So dream big.



Now and forever, Democrats should pledge #NoSafeSeats. It's vital to run competent, passionate people for every seat available in every election in every district in every city in every state of this country. (That applies to offices at the state and local level as well.) If every Democrat voted and Republicans became disheartened by bad poll numbers or just weren't excited by their candidate and stayed home, Democrats could win in even the reddest of states. Numbers don't lie.

Republicans took power by focusing on school boards and city councils and state legislatures and working their way up. Those are the farm systems that produce the leaders of the future. But it also matters because it matters. Important work gets done at every level of government.

And fielding candidates absolutely everywhere is important. When incumbents of either party run unopposed in primaries or general elections it's bad for everyone. Just running for office is a transformative experience for the people involved. And candidates should be forced to debate the issues and explain why they're voting the way they're voting.

We should be embarrassed NOT to field a good candidate for every seat. When you don't even bother to field a candidate or take an election seriously, you're telling those voters you just don't care. Even if you *know* the incumbent is going to win (and you never really know), field the best candidate you can and support them.

Let's talk about a \$15 minimum wage pegged to inflation.

Let's talk about a single payer health care system. The Republican incumbent doesn't like the current system? Fine, what about Medicare for all?

Let's talk about the lead levels in our drinking water — that's a much bigger problem than Flint, Michigan. In

fact, EPA figures show high levels of lead in every state in the country — which means YOUR state, no matter where you live. Thousands of water systems supplying some 18 million Americans didn't meet standards in 2015. Almost four million Americans have been exposed to dangerously high levels of lead in their drinking water in 2015.

Let's talk about the insanity of solar energy falling back in Florida while it jumps ahead in China and overcast Germany. Especially when Miami floods all the time now thanks to global warming and the amount of real estate in Florida threatened by global warming is so vast (\$400 billion and counting) that when the market collapses because of rising waters, it's going to make the Great Recession look like a cake walk.

Let's pledge to have transparent candidates who will support laws guaranteeing anyone holding office will release full financial information and dissolve their business holdings and put them in a genuine blind trust. Ossoff's slogan Make Trump Furious is clever; he should stick with it. A strong positive agenda that most Americans already support is even better.

Paul Ryan should not run unopposed. Neither should Nancy Pelosi. Not in their primaries and not in the general election. (Yes, I want to see Dianne Feinstein debate the issues, explaining to her voters why she refuses to work for a single payer health care system. I want to hear Cory Booker defend being in the pocket of Big Pharma, one of his main funders. I want to watch Bernie Sanders refuse again to release most of his financial information, just like Trump.)

Let's have Registration Rallies all over the country — a different one every month or every two weeks or every week when the election gets closer. Let's get Barack Obama and Michelle Obama and Jon Stewart and Oprah and anyone else who can draw a crowd to urge people to register and then vote. Starting now. Let's get a massive push to tell people it's not just a possibility to run for office...it's a duty. If you can, you should. And if you think you can't (Me? A school teacher run for Congress?), why then you *really* should.

Mr. Smith may not go to Washington but he can run for office and change his life and maybe push a candidate to a better position on an issue important to everyone. Don't just hold rallies in big liberal states, of course; hold them in the heartland and fire people up. Let them know they're not alone.

The pledge of #NoSafeSeats is not just good politics, good strategy, a good way to build the leaders and networks and campaign veterans of tomorrow for Democrats. It's also good citizenship. Running for office means talking to people, all sorts of people. And not just candidate to voter. But campaign workers talking and listening block by block. Stranger to stranger. Friend to friend. Coworker to coworker. It means starting a dialogue and finding common ground. It's good in a Capra-esque, bringing the community together sort of way. Hey, we've got a lot in common! You're worried about how your kids can afford college? I'm worried about how *my* kids can afford community college!

And talking also means listening. You're shocked at how high school friends on Facebook talk about politics? You had no idea that goofy classmate was so liberal? Well, you weren't listening. You can't believe a female

coworker you liked voted for Trump? You didn't ask or you asked and started talking and never stopped. Because in a very basic way, fielding candidates for every single seat in every single district in the country means paying attention to every single person in every single district in the country.

Listening is the first step in knitting the country back together. Fascists can rise to power when they discover a group that has been ignored and dismissed by the powers that be, a group that believes no one is listening to them. So yes, your policies have always supported rural people and raising their minimum wage and funding efforts for job training and supporting Planned Parenthood, which is often the health care provider communities have in rural areas. It's not enough to be right. You also have to talk. And listen.

So #NoSafeSeats. Let's make our goal winning back the House and the Governors' mansions AND the Senate.

It can be done.

Let's pledge to run candidates for every seat everywhere.

It will be done.

Let's show people in every rural, red corner of the country that we care about the same bread and butter issues that they do.

It must be done.

Let's show our neighbors we can do more than make Trump jokes. We can develop a plan to rebuild roads and bridges that will cost a lot less than Trump's way. (Just ask at a debate, "Who likes toll roads and toll bridges?" and when no one raises their hand, say "Me neither.") And guess what? Those seats that can't be won? Scandals, private reasons, life, better opportunities — for a host of reasons, candidates drop out of races at unexpected moments, just like Rep. Jason Chaffetz, who thinks he can just skip the bother of running for reelection and slide into the governor's mansion of Utah in 2020. (It's of course impossible that his seat turns blue. And you can bet it won't if no one runs.) Yes, poll numbers drop and drop for incumbents and the more people realize a challenger CAN win the more they want them to win and support for the incumbent falls. No one likes a loser.



#NoSafeSeats shouldn't be a political strategy for 2018. It should be a promise. No seat should be safe for an incumbent. More importantly, no voters should be ignored or taken for granted. Town halls with politicians are great. But debates during elections are even better because someone else is on stage with them, speaking a lot more reasonably and pledging to do what the people in their district want. It's a lot harder to avoid taking a stand on Medicare for All when your opponent is standing there saying, "I'm for it! It's cheaper, it's better and that's the way it's done in most countries around the world. What have we got to lose...except huge deductibles?"

#NoSafeSeats.

Running good candidates for every single seat in the country.

Winning back the House.

And the governor's mansion in most states.

And the Senate.

Let's dream big. It's a lot more inspiring than dreaming bigly.

REGISTER TO VOTE!!

It's easy, it's fun, it's empowering.

Here's a nonpartisan site that will allow you to easily access your state's voter registration site.

Are you in New York? You can register online right here.

If you don't register and vote, you don't get to complain.

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