

## What Happened November 6, 2018

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Presentation to [Gotham](#) NY Legal

With the votes all in, well most of them, we can look the picture painted so far. In this electronic age, we enjoy an ability to easily revise that portrait later on.

But this afternoon that portrait still appears rather complete.

First, we need to set some context.

This applies when we discuss elections and outcomes, especially ones involving legislative districts that represent parts of individual states.

Some structural – institutional – factors apply:  
gerrymandering,  
voting rules that might limit those eligible casting their votes, or  
learning their votes do not count, including former Democratic Congressman Pat Murphy in Florida, or Dodge City residents required to travel out of town to vote, or Native Americans in North Dakota.

When elections get close, these things matters. An entire discussion for another day.

But their existence matters  
as Democrats overcame a structural disadvantage to win back the House and enjoy a Senate result when they defended double the seats of the GOP  
– so for some this commentator included, part of the results disappointed in terms of dreams,  
but not reality.

Let's look how Democrats fared when they faced formidable structural disadvantages

\*only nine Republicans represented districts that tilted Democratic in the last two presidential elections

\*Compare that to the last midterm House flips – 24 such Republicans in 2006, and 67 Democrats in 2010.

\*In 2016 Democrats “enjoyed” fewer opportunities because of partisan gerrymandering.

\*Despite this House Dems managed to win more seats in heavily Republican districts than the Republicans managed to win in heavily Democratic districts in 2010.

\*Senate Democrats defended 10 seats carried by the president, including five he won by at least 18 points. That Democratic disadvantage in the Senate continues. State lines remain as, unlike House seats never subject to any redrawing, after all; we already know Hillary Clinton won just 19 states in 2016 while winning the national popular vote.

When all the votes get counted we may learn House Democrats enjoy close to a 30 seat margin – so far they gained 33 seats net – in the house, it may rise to 35-40 after all counting gets done and the Senate margin may compare to what existed when Trump took office. The Senate tally sits at 51-47 pending counting and recount in Florida and a runoff in Mississippi.

What happened?

The last gerrymanders occurred in 2012; some, as in Pennsylvania, courts reversed, and a fair map helped Dems pick up some seats.

In some cases a combination of good candidates, most often women, issues and messaging and a changing electorate, more youth, more black and brown, played a role.

An emphasis on health care and jobs helped win over right of center suburban (white) voters and blue-collar whites who supported Trump. Carville’s It’s the economy stupid – a reprise from 1992. I often called it Main Street over Wall Street in my own writings.

AND perhaps overshadowed, in my view, an unprecedented GOTV – GET OUT THE VOTE, volunteers and paid campaign worker going door to door. Direct voter contact works; it juices turnout and makes a big difference in close races.

As a result,

Dems made strides in statehouses – where they can reverse gerrymandering and introduce voting reforms:

\*Democrats seized control of seven legislative chambers, flipping State Senates in Colorado, Maine, and New York; the House in Minnesota; and both chambers in New Hampshire.

Connecticut's Senate, previously evenly split, is now held by Democrats.

\*Democrats also flipped seven governorships on Election Day

\* Democrats completely control all three statehouse branches in 13 states and Washington, D.C., compared to the seven statehouses where they held trifecta control before Election Day.

\*\*Democrats still face a lot of work to do.

The GOP still hold 56 percent of state legislative seats and control 65 chambers. I suspect investment of resources by the Democratic party, its major donors and PACs in this regard.

As to the Senate result, just as in the Electoral College, according to The New York Times, Democratic Senate candidates garnered 45 million votes, and Republicans just 33 million (57% to 42%). Yet, the Republicans retain an advantage there. Democracy? I think not.

Going Forward,

Democrats will need a policy and platform to target rural and often lesser educated voters:

\*Opioids.

\*Perhaps rural broadband akin to the old TVA during the depression.

\*Investment in plants, crops and animal waste to produce materials, fabrics, fiber and energy to help bring back local manufacturing.

Sometimes local ballot initiatives play a role.

I remain interested in North Dakota where Heidi Heitkamp lost about the role of pot.

I query whether the ballot measure there to legalize Marijuana, which failed, helped juice up a conservative vote as was the case with the 1993 Staten Island succession initiative that helped elected Rudy Giuliani NYC Mayor.

On the topic of ballot initiatives, the Floridians overwhelmingly passed a measure to allow former felons to vote. This will add a disproportionate number of voters of color that could tip Florida to the D column. I still want to know how this one passed overwhelmingly but the Governor and Senate races were so close and in recount phase. I just wonder....

In conclusion, I quote Cook Political Report National Editor Amy Walter's tweet from November 10, 2018:

Rs had a huge structural advantage going into 2018. The fact that Ds may net 40 seats is a rout. Period. This argument that it's not as bad as Obama's 63 seat loss in 2010 is laughable.

Thank you.