

The Ripon Forum

June 2017
Volume 51, No. 3

**THE THREAT IS REAL:
Putin's soft-power assault
on western democracy**



Six Month Report Card:

A View from DUBUQUE

**“Even with GOP control of the White House and Congress,
they see little accomplished.”**

**Plus: Perspective from four other counties that supported Trump in 2016
after supporting Obama in 2012 and 2008.**

And: The “Great Expectations” facing Republicans this year.

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The Ripon Forum

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since 1965.”*

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Comments, opinion editorials and letters should be addressed to:

The Ripon Forum, 1155 15th Street, NW,
Suite 550, Washington, DC 20005

Or emailed to the Editor of The Ripon Forum at
louzickar@riponsociety.org.

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In this Edition

Earlier this year, I was having a conversation with two veteran GOP lobbyists, and, like so many other conversations in Washington these days, the topic turned to the political environment and the air of uncertainty that has descended upon this town.

“I would think that the challenge for you all when you return to your headquarters or home office,” I said to them, “is that the political tea leaves you have spent your careers reading are no longer applicable. The question is whether the tea leaves will return in one fashion or another, or if we are going to spend the next four years not knowing day to day what will happen next.”

The conversation took place before the 100-day mark of the Trump Administration. Now that we have reached the six-month mark, it is worth recalling because the uncertain atmosphere in Washington has only gotten worse. Legislation is stalled, positions are unfilled, and the great hope among Republicans that the party is finally in a position to enact its agenda is being tempered by an erratic President and a special counsel investigation that is not going away.

And yet despite this uncertainty, a sense of optimism remains. Republicans are optimistic because the party just won its fourth special election, overcoming not only the arguments of those in the media who said the GOP agenda was unpopular, but the millions of dollars spent by liberal special interest groups who claimed that was in fact the case. As for Americans, they’re hopeful, too. A recent CNBC survey found that 30% of people are optimistic about the economy both in the short and long term. This is the first time the percentage has been that high in two consecutive quarters during the survey’s 10-year history. Americans are also hopeful because – for one brief moment after the despicable shooting on June 14th – their elected leaders in Washington came together in a demonstration of national resolve. Moving forward, we all hope this sense of unity lasts.

To better assess what Americans think about the Trump Administration and Republican control of Congress halfway through 2017, *The Ripon Forum* reached out to leading political observers in counties that supported Donald Trump in 2016 after supporting Barack Obama in 2012 and 2008. There were 208 of these “Obama-Trump” counties in total, and they helped define last year’s campaign. They will also help define the Trump Presidency in the months and years ahead – for good and for bad. Indeed, as Muhlenberg College Professor Christopher Borick writes in his assessment from one of these counties, “If the Trump electoral coalition does begin to come apart, the canary in the coal mine is likely to be Northampton County, Pennsylvania.”

In addition to these six month report cards from these five key counties, the latest *Forum* also includes an analysis by veteran GOP strategists David Winston and Myra Miller looking at the “Great Expectations” that remain for Republicans as they begin the last half of this year. “Voters gave Republicans an across-the-board win,” the pair writes. “But to whom much is given, much is required. Now, voters expect the President and the GOP Congress to deliver the change they promised.”

To the extent that so much of the unease being felt in Washington these days stems from the fact that Russians interfered in our election last year, Jan Erik Surotchak of the International Republican Institute leaves no doubt that this interference actually occurred. “The Russian Federation is carrying out a sophisticated and opportunistic soft-power campaign to weaken democratic institutions in Europe,” he writes, adding that the campaign was expanded to target the U.S. election last year.

Another threat of a very different nature is the opioid epidemic sweeping across America. In an op-ed, West Virginia Congressman Evan Jenkins writes about the impact of opioid addiction on his hard-hit home state, and what Congress is doing to bring this crisis to an end. With Virginian’s going to the polls this November to choose a new Governor, political expert Brian Schoeneman shares his thoughts on the upcoming election and why it could be a bellwether to the 2018 campaign.

In our latest debate, defense experts Daniel Gouré and Doug Bandow square off in a discussion about the size of the U.S. military. And in our latest Ripon Profile, Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy discusses, among other topics, the priorities he would like achieve this year.

As always, we hope you find this latest edition of the *Forum* interesting, and welcome any comments or ideas you may have.

Lou Zickar
Editor of *The Ripon Forum*
louzickar@riponsociety.org

The American Military: *At the Tipping Point*

by DANIEL GOURÉ

The U.S. military is in a crisis. Decades of underfunding and continuous employment have taken their toll.

Just three of the U.S. Army's 50 combat brigades and only half the Air Force's fighters and bombers are fully ready for a major conflict with a serious adversary. The U.S. Navy is smaller than at any time since the end of World War II even as the areas it must patrol continue to grow. The Marine Corps has insufficient aircraft and helicopters to provide an adequate level of flying hours for its pilots.

Our strategic nuclear forces, the bedrock of a strategy to deter a nuclear conflict, are at the end of their life and must be replaced. New conflict arenas have emerged in outer space, the cyber domain and the information space. The consequences of these shortfalls for U.S. national security were stated starkly by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee:

"The U.S. military's competitive advantage against potential adversaries is eroding. Over the last decade, sustained operational commitments, budgetary instability, and advances by our adversaries have threatened our ability to project power and we have lost our advantage in key warfighting areas. . . . without sustained, sufficient, and predictable funding, I assess that within 5 years we will lose our ability to project power; the basis of how we defend the homeland, advance U.S. interests, and meet our alliance commitments."¹⁾

The reality is that the United States requires a

military that is large, well-equipped, highly trained, and technologically superior to prospective adversaries. For reasons historical, political, and even cultural, the kind of military we need is expensive.

The U.S. has critical national security interests in at least four major regions of the world – Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and North America. Today, there are serious threats to our interests and our friends and allies in three of these or from them to the U.S. homeland, itself. We require a military that is large, agile, and broadly capable in order to deter aggression and respond to crises simultaneously in multiple parts of the globe.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. brought most of its military home. Hence, it must always be capable of projecting military power overseas in order to address threats and deal with crises. Our lines of communications and supply stretch around the world multiple times. Retaining not only the combat forces, but also the transportation and logistics capabilities to support power

projection, is challenging and expensive.

The U.S. military has always sought technological/operational overmatch relative to potential, as well as current, adversaries. We don't want to fight on an even playing field. We wish to match quantity with quality. Therefore, our weapons systems and training must be better than those of prospective adversaries.

We have an all-volunteer military and must provide the salary and benefits this system entails. Moreover, some 70 percent of our service personnel today are married, many with children. This adds housing, child care/education and medical costs to the personnel system. Retaining skilled personnel in such areas as



Daniel Gouré

**Today's military is too small
to adequately address all
the missions it is required
to perform.**

1) <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20170612/106090/HHRG-115-AS00-Wstate-DunfordJ-20170612.pdf>

(cont'd on p. 6)

The American Military: *It is not too small. Rather, its responsibilities are too many.*

by DOUG BANDOW

Republicans typically argue that government is too big. But not when it comes to the military.

Many in the GOP seem to believe that the armed services can never be large enough. So they constantly beat the drums for a military build-up. In fact, one of the few issues today which unite President Donald Trump and Sen. John McCain is increasing military spending.

Unfortunately, when Washington debates the military, it usually is in budget terms. But it makes no sense to vote more or less money for the armed services without considering what it is expected to do. In effect, the Pentagon budget is the price of American foreign policy.

U.S. military outlays and foreign policy are out of balance today. Military hawks argue that America devotes too little to the armed services. But they are wrong to believe that Washington must continue doing everything it has been doing around the world -- indeed, that it must do more, ever more.

America remains the unipower, defending rich industrialized nations, rebuilding failed Third World states, and doing most everything in between. These are largely duties of choice rather than necessity. They are also choices the U.S. no longer can afford.

Coming out of World War II, Washington was forced to act as guardian of the free world, if not quite the universe. Western Europe and Japan had been ravaged by war; the Soviet Union had turned into an aggressive superpower with an Eastern European empire; a radical Communist revolution had transformed China.

In response, America established a globe-spanning presence involving alliances, bases, and deployments.

But that world disappeared long ago. Both sides of the equation changed.

America’s allies recovered in both Asia and Europe. Real Communism evaporated: the Soviet Union dissolved along with the Soviet Empire, and the “People’s Republic” of China joined the capitalist world. Today, Europe possesses a larger economy and population than America and vastly larger than Russia. South Korea has about 40 times the GDP and twice the population of North Korea. After China’s rise, Japan still enjoys the third largest economy on Earth.

Rather than permanently treat allied states as helpless dependents, the U.S. should shift responsibility for their defense to them. This is not burden-sharing, the unproductive argument over whether, for instance, European military outlays are hitting some arbitrary percentage of GDP. Instead, it is burden-shedding. Populous and prosperous states should take over their own defense. Rolling back defense commitments in Asia and Europe would allow the U.S. to downsize its force structure.

The U.S. also should drop its propensity for nation-building and regime change. Of America’s recent interventions — Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan — only the latter advanced America’s security interests, and only the initial overthrow of the Taliban. Nearly 16 years of nation-building have consumed American lives and wealth for no good



Doug Bandow

Military hawks argue that America devotes too little to the Armed Services. But they are wrong to believe that Washington must continue doing everything it has been doing around the world.

(cont'd on p. 6)

(Bandow, cont'd from p. 5)

purpose. The other wars did far more to spread chaos, weapons, and terrorism than encourage peace and stability. Washington should set a far higher bar for miscellaneous meddling, which would allow reliance on a smaller military more narrowly focused on the few essential tasks which only the U.S. can perform.

An ancillary benefit of military restraint would be making fewer enemies and creating fewer terrorists. The causes of terrorism are complex, but it usually acts as war by other means. The more the U.S. bombs, invades, and occupies other nations, the more it encourages attacks on Americans and the American homeland. Washington must continue to kill or incapacitate those who mean America ill. But the U.S. also should act to create fewer enemies. Doing so would further reduce the need for military force structure and outlays.

Military retrenchment is not popular in the Republican Party. But America's coming financial infirmity may allow no other course. Absent a new sense of fiscal responsibility

Military retrenchment is not popular in the Republican Party. But America's coming financial infirmity may allow no other course.

on Capitol Hill — don't laugh, miracles do happen! — annual federal deficits will hit a trillion dollars in just six years. The accumulated deficit over the coming decade will be \$9.4 trillion.

And that's the good news. The red ink becomes a tsunami in the following years. Federal debt as a percentage of GDP currently runs about 77 percent, the highest since the early post- World War II years. But the CBO warns that this percentage will double by 2047, higher than the levels in Greece before the latter's fiscal crisis.

The U.S. no longer can do it all overseas. It's time for Washington to shift to a foreign policy of restraint. Doing so would allow America to field a smaller military and spend less on the armed forces. **RF**

Doug Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan. He is the author of Foreign Follies: America's New Global Empire.

"AMERICA'S MILITARY: BIG ENOUGH?"

(Gouré, cont'd from p. 4)

information technologies and cyber security in a highly competitive labor market is difficult.

There are functions in our military unlike those in many others, particularly those of potential and current adversaries. For example, there are more lawyers in the U.S. military than most of our NATO allies have infantrymen.

Every Administration since the end of the Cold War has found that they like the kind of military the nation has and each has found ample cause to employ it extensively in conflicts, humanitarian missions, and peacekeeping efforts. None has chosen to redesign our military based on deterring fewer threats, supporting fewer allies, a renunciation of military technological superiority, or ending the all-volunteer military. If this is the military we want and we deploy it continuously, we must pay for it.

Today's military is too small to adequately address all the missions it is required to perform. In addition,

for over a decade we have underfunded the military by more than \$50 billion a year. There is at present on the order of a \$600 billion backlog of deferred maintenance, training, sustainment, and modernization. In addition, our prospective adversaries have improved their military capabilities substantially over the same time period.

The United States requires a military that is large, well-equipped, highly trained, and technologically superior to prospective adversaries.

In order to build and sustain the military we require and desire, we need to spend on the order of \$100 billion a year more than we do currently (which is \$575 billion). This is exclusive of proposed contingency fund spending of \$65 billion. I would point out that even at this higher level, the defense budget would amount to only 5% of U.S. GDP and about 15% of total federal spending. **RF**

Dr. Daniel Gouré is a Vice President with the Lexington Institute, a nonprofit public-policy research organization headquartered in Arlington, Virginia.

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Suitcases Full of Propaganda for the Digital Age

The Russian Soft-Power Campaign to Undermine the Transatlantic Democratic Community

by JAN ERIK SUROTCHAK

In the days of the old Soviet Union, there was an often-repeated joke about the ‘mainstream media’ of the time, where the two major papers were called *Pravda* (‘Truth’) and *Izvestiya* (‘The News’). There was, so the joke went, no ‘news’ in ‘Truth,’ and no ‘truth’ in ‘The News.’

Today, the Russian Federation under President Vladimir Putin has updated this approach for a new, more tech-savvy era and taken it global as part of its attempt to undermine the democratic institutions of the transatlantic community – an effort that began long before news broke of Russian involvement in the 2016 US presidential elections.

In Europe, the post-Cold war strategic goal of the United States was crystalized by George H. W. Bush in Mainz, West Germany in May 1989: to build and maintain a Europe “whole and free.” At that time, the field for democracy advocates – both European and American – was wide open. The people of the newly freed, former Warsaw Pact countries were hungry for assistance; those in the field felt the full support of the United States government; and Russian interference was declining dramatically following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Over two decades later, the strategic situation has changed radically, and in some ways has reversed. Today, it is *Moscow’s* goal that is quite clear: to destroy the institutions of the post-war transatlantic consensus, most importantly the European Union and NATO. Completely apart from the well-known military intervention and annexation tactics in Georgia and Ukraine, the Kremlin has deployed a multi-faceted campaign to achieve this objective.

Moscow effectively uses its control of energy supplies

to blackmail its neighbors; regularly practices military gamesmanship in areas such as the Baltic Sea to demonstrate strength and encourage hesitation on the part of the West; and has been the power behind covert operations designed to bring down democratic governments, which we most recently saw in Montenegro last year.

Parallel to these applications of hard power, the Russian Federation is also carrying out a sophisticated and opportunistic soft-power campaign to weaken democratic institutions in Europe. This effort stands on five key pillars of engagement employed by the Kremlin to achieve its strategic goals.

The first of these five pillars is direct financial and/or political support of parties that support Russian Federation positions on the national and/or at the European Union level. The most extensively-documented example of this practice is the combined 11 million Euros funneled to Marine Le Pen’s *Front National* in France in 2014.

But there are many more examples. In Germany, the increasingly deep ties between the right-wing, anti-establishment *Alternative für*

Deutschland (AfD) party and Putin’s United Russia party in Moscow have raised red flags. In Hungary, the extreme right-wing *Jobbik* party has been under investigation for allegedly receiving funding from the Russian government. And this is not merely a problem with the far-right. Italy’s regionalist Northern League and the far-right New Force from Italy and Greece’s left-wing *Syriza* and right-wing Golden Dawn have also come under scrutiny as a result of their support for Moscow.

The second pillar of Moscow’s effort to undermine



Today, Moscow’s goal is quite clear: to destroy the institutions of the post-war transatlantic consensus, most importantly the European Union and NATO.

Europe is its execution of sophisticated disinformation campaigns against governments, parties and individuals that do not toe the Kremlin's line.

This year already has seen a number of major elections in Europe – in the Netherlands in March and in the UK and France just last week – and national elections are still to come in Germany in September. Knowing that any other possible coalition government not under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel will not maintain the European consensus on the sanctions regime imposed on Moscow for its aggression in Ukraine, Moscow is directing its full disinformation fury on Merkel and her Christian Democratic Union.

Taking the long view, this is nothing new. After the Russian Revolution, Adolph Joffe, the first Bolshevik ambassador to Germany, was caught carrying suitcases stuffed with anti-German propaganda into Berlin. Of course, today the internet has made the transmission of propaganda far more sophisticated and dangerous.

Evidence collected by the International Republican Institute's Beacon Project, which is designed to push back against Moscow's disinformation and soft-power meddling, suggests that the campaign against the Merkel government rests on three core narratives, some of which have also been adapted to other European countries.

First, that Merkel's immigration and refugee policies have left the country at the mercy of Muslim criminals. The infamous "Lisa Case" of early 2016 (and recent follow-on "Lisa 2.0 Case"), in which migrants were falsely accused of raping a young, ethnically Russian girl in Germany, is the clearest example of this narrative.

Second, that Merkel's Germany alternatively is the source of violence. This was the main thread in last month's fake news regarding an alleged rape by German soldiers deployed by NATO in Lithuania.

And *third*, that Merkel's policies have weakened the economy by driving hard-working ethnic Germans out of the country.

These narratives illustrate the way in which the Kremlin exploits legitimate policy debates surrounding Germany's open-door migrant policy and exacerbates tensions through fake news. With the German Bundestag

already having been hacked, the country's leaders are very aware of the threat posed to their democratic process. We can surely expect much more Russian engagement in that country in the run-up to elections on September 24, 2017.

The third pillar of Russia's effort is to seize upon areas of domestic tension to sow divisions that play to its advantage. Perhaps the clearest example of this tactic could be seen in the campaign leading up to the April 6, 2016, referendum in the Netherlands organized by an anti-EU NGO, asking whether or not the public would support the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine.

Here, anti-Ukrainian Russian narratives were picked almost verbatim by the Right and the Left in their respective "No" campaigns in the Dutch referendum, where flyers contending that Ukraine suffers from "armed fascist militias" roaming the streets were taken directly from

Russian propaganda outlets. On the Left, the Socialist Party in the Netherlands condemned the Association Agreement as "partially responsible" for "a bloody civil war with nearly 10,000 deaths and more than a million people in flight" from or within Ukraine.

As such, Dutch voters were asked to believe that having Ukraine in the EU would antagonize Russia and risk war on Europe's doorstep. Faced with this sophisticated campaign of scaremongering, 61 percent of the Dutch electorate voted "No."

The fourth pillar of the Russian effort is the use of fake "democracy support" organizations. Just as Russia has become one of the world's leading sources of "fake news," the Russian Federation has established so-called "democracy support"

organizations that actually exist to discredit elections that do not deliver Moscow-friendly governments, and legitimize elections that deliver the desired results.

As recently as last month, the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region held a so-called "constitutional referendum" that was "observed" by fake election monitors from far-right parties allied with Putin's United Russia party, including representatives of the German AfD and Austrian FPÖ. These efforts are built upon the same extreme-right and extreme-left political personalities in Western and Central Europe that carry Moscow's water in domestic debates against the EU and NATO.



Jan Erik Surotchak

The Russian Federation is carrying out a sophisticated and opportunistic soft-power campaign to weaken democratic institutions in Europe.

The fifth pillar of the Russian effort is funding for think tanks and other NGOs inside the European Union. A number of large, Russian “government-organized non-governmental organizations,” or GONGOs, support think tanks across Europe in an attempt to influence foreign policy and break the sanctions regime imposed on Moscow by the EU.

These five pillars constitute a significant commitment by Putin’s Russian Federation to weaken what it views as a threat – the successful alliance of modern, liberal democracies on its doorstep, the kind of alliance that could someday include a democratic Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia.

To counter the Russian effort, policy makers in the United States and Europe at the national and European Union level must help develop a stronger transatlantic response to Russian influence. In Europe, this means working with parties and NGOs to restrict foreign funding for political

parties. It also means working closely with members of the European Parliament to press for full funding of the European External Action Service’s East StratCom counter-disinformation effort.

To counter the Russian effort, policy makers in the United States and Europe at the national and European Union level must help develop a stronger transatlantic response to Russian influence.

The United States is uniquely positioned to take the lead on what may be one of the defining geopolitical challenges of our time. It is in our national security and economic interest to do so. Twenty-eight years after George H.W. Bush’s speech in Mainz in 1989, we are undoubtedly further along in building a Europe

whole and free and at peace.

But threats we thought had been vanquished have returned in full force, and partnership with our European allies is as important as ever.

RF

Jan Erik Surotchak serves as Director, Europe, for the International Republican Institute.



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A National Crisis Needs a National Response

by EVAN JENKINS

Every day, we see another headline about a deadly overdose, a family ripped apart by addiction, or an officer exposed to drugs during an arrest. The drug epidemic is gripping our nation, with my home state of West Virginia one of the hardest-hit places in the country. But no community is immune — addiction doesn't discriminate based on geography, income, education level, or occupation.

A national crisis needs a national response, and that's what I've been working on in Congress. West Virginia has more deaths per capita from opioid overdoses than any other state, but we are also making strides in innovative drug treatment and responses. I pushed legislation through the West Virginia Legislature to outlaw synthetic cocaine and marijuana and strengthen prescription monitoring to stop illegal pill mills.

In particular, I've been working to respond to a heartbreaking crisis that hasn't received as much attention — babies born exposed to drugs during pregnancy.

This is called neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), and it's affecting more newborns across West Virginia and the nation than ever before. Every 25 minutes, a baby is born in this country with NAS. Until you see a baby suffering from NAS, you cannot truly understand just how painful this condition is. These babies begin going through withdrawal as soon as the umbilical cord is cut. They are sensitive to light, noise, and even touch. Their tiny bodies shake with tremors, and they scream in pain. It is difficult even just to comfort them; they are suffering too deeply.

Before coming to Congress, I worked closely with health care and community leaders in my hometown of Huntington, West Virginia, to start Lily's Place. This center provides specialized care for NAS newborns in a nurturing environment, while also offering support, education, and counseling services to families and caregivers.

Last year, Congress came together to pass the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* (CARA), which is making a real difference in our fight to stop the drug epidemic and help break the cycle of addiction.

This law includes my legislation, the *Nurturing and Supporting Healthy Babies Act*, which focuses on NAS babies and will improve our understanding of how to treat these babies and help them get the healthy start in life that all newborns deserve.

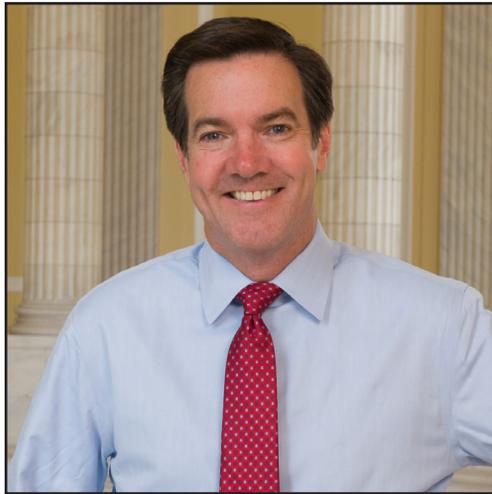
Money authorized by CARA and appropriated by Congress is already flowing into our communities to support treatment, rehabilitation, education, and law enforcement. As we begin work in the House Appropriations Committee on the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bills, I will make sure that we are spending responsibly while also providing our states with the resources they need to combat this crisis in their communities.

Now is also an opportunity for us to build on the good work CARA will do in our states by looking ahead to future legislation. I worked together with Congressman Mike Turner of Ohio to introduce the *Caring Recovery for Infants and Babies (CRIB) Act* in May. The CRIB Act

would build on the best practices of Lily's Place in Huntington for treating babies born exposed to heroin, opioids, and other drugs. It would also make it easier for similar centers to open across the country by cutting regulatory red tape.

I'm committed to providing West Virginia — and all of our states — with the resources they need to address the drug crisis, provide treatment, and stop drug trafficking. To get our communities back on track, it will take all of us working together. **RF**

Evan Jenkins represents the 3rd District of West Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives.



No community is immune — addiction doesn't discriminate based on geography, income, education level, or occupation.

The Virginia Bellwether

by BRIAN W. SCHOENEMAN

Virginia is for lovers, or so the signs say when you enter the Commonwealth. Those involved in the political side of things in Virginia like to rephrase this slightly to “Virginia is for lovers...of elections.” Why? Because we have them every single year.

Unlike most states, Virginia has adopted an odd-numbered year election cycle for state and local offices. As a result, the inaugural year for any new Presidency is also a gubernatorial election year in the Old Dominion. 2017 will be treated by observers as a bellwether for President Trump’s agenda and foreshadowing for next year’s mid-term Congressional elections.

On June 13, Virginians went to the polls to choose the nominees for their respective parties’ statewide candidates - Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General. The election was one of the most bitter and caustic in recent memory, and the outcome, while unsurprising, did not conform to most pundit’s expectations.

On the Republican side, former Bush administration official and 2014 Senate nominee Ed Gillespie triumphed in a squeaker of a three-way race against former Trump Virginia Co-Chair Corey Stewart and State Senator Frank Wagner. On the Democratic side, sitting Lt. Governor Ralph Northam overcame an insurgent campaign from former one-term Congressman Tom Perriello. Most pundits expected these outcomes, but the closeness of the race on the Republican side and the blowout on the Democratic side were surprising. Pundits throughout Virginia predicted the exact opposite – blowouts for the GOP and a neck and neck race for the Democrats.

When all was told, Gillespie garnered 160,255 votes (43.76%) to Corey Stewart’s 155,646 (42.50%)

and Frank Wagner’s 50,347 (13.75%). The 366,248 votes cast in the primary represent a significant drop-off from the over 1 million votes cast by Republicans in the 2016 presidential primary. With no party registration in Virginia, using the total number of votes in the presidential primary as the total Republican electorate in Virginia, the 2017 primary saw 36% GOP turnout.

On the Democratic side, Ralph Northam collected 303,407 votes (55.91%) to Tom Perriello’s 239,225 (44.09%). The Democratic turnout of 542,632 dwarfed the GOP turnout by almost 200,000 votes. Using the 2016 Democratic primary turnout number, 785,041, Democrats managed to turn out a whopping 69% of their base in this contest.

Both the GOP and Democratic primaries were viewed as proxy wars for the various wings of both parties. Gillespie stood for the GOP establishment, Stewart, the anti-establishment Trump voters. Northam had the backing of the Clinton machine, including sitting Governor Terry McAuliffe, while Perriello was a vocal Sanders supporter.

Gillespie focused on traditionally safe Republican issues, primarily on jobs and the economy, and largely didn’t engage Stewart. Stewart ran an aggressive anti-establishment campaign, fed his supporters a daily mash of toxic stew about Gillespie, and got national attention for his defense of Confederate monuments. Perriello and Northam engaged in a contest to see who could be the most faithful to far-left progressivism. This forced Northam, a more moderate Democrat who supported Bush in 2000 and 2004 and flirted with switching parties in 2009, to take positions that will be uncomfortable in the general election.



Brian W. Schoeneman

The Democratic turnout of 542,632 in the June 13th primary dwarfed the GOP turnout by almost 200,000 votes.

The wild card, as always, is the national political environment. The President's unpopularity is likely to lead Northam to run an anti-Trump campaign. If Northam convinces Trump supporters that the 2017 race is a referendum on Trump, that could be the only thing that gets them to the polls for Gillespie this November. At the same time, Gillespie cannot afford to embrace Trump too closely, or else he risks alienating the large numbers of traditional GOP voters and moderate independents in urban and suburban areas who did not support Trump in 2016, which led to Hillary Clinton's 200,000 vote victory in Virginia.

The GOP will have an uphill battle to victory in November. While Gillespie enters the general election campaign with over \$2 million cash-on-hand and over 85% name ID, he is unlikely to get Stewart's enthusiastic support, which means the GOP in Virginia will remain fractured. Northam enters with half the

cash and a name ID closer to 65%, but Perriello has already endorsed Northam and urged his supporters to unify for victory. Northam also has the McAuliffe (and thus, the Clinton) fundraising machine behind him and is a sitting incumbent.

Given Virginia's performance statewide over the last eight years, the edge likely goes slightly towards Northam, but this race is wide open right now.

Given Virginia's performance statewide over the last eight years, the edge likely goes slightly towards Northam, but this race is wide open right now. The GOP, if it can overcome its internal differences, has a chance to win back control of the Governor's mansion. The Democrats, on the other hand, will get a chance to test run all their anti-Trump arguments leading up to the 2018 mid-term elections.

It's anybody's ball game at this point, and that's why election lovers from across the country will have their eyes on Virginia this November. **RF**

Brian W. Schoeneman is Editor-in-Chief of BearingDrift.com and General Counsel for Virginia Line Media, LLC.

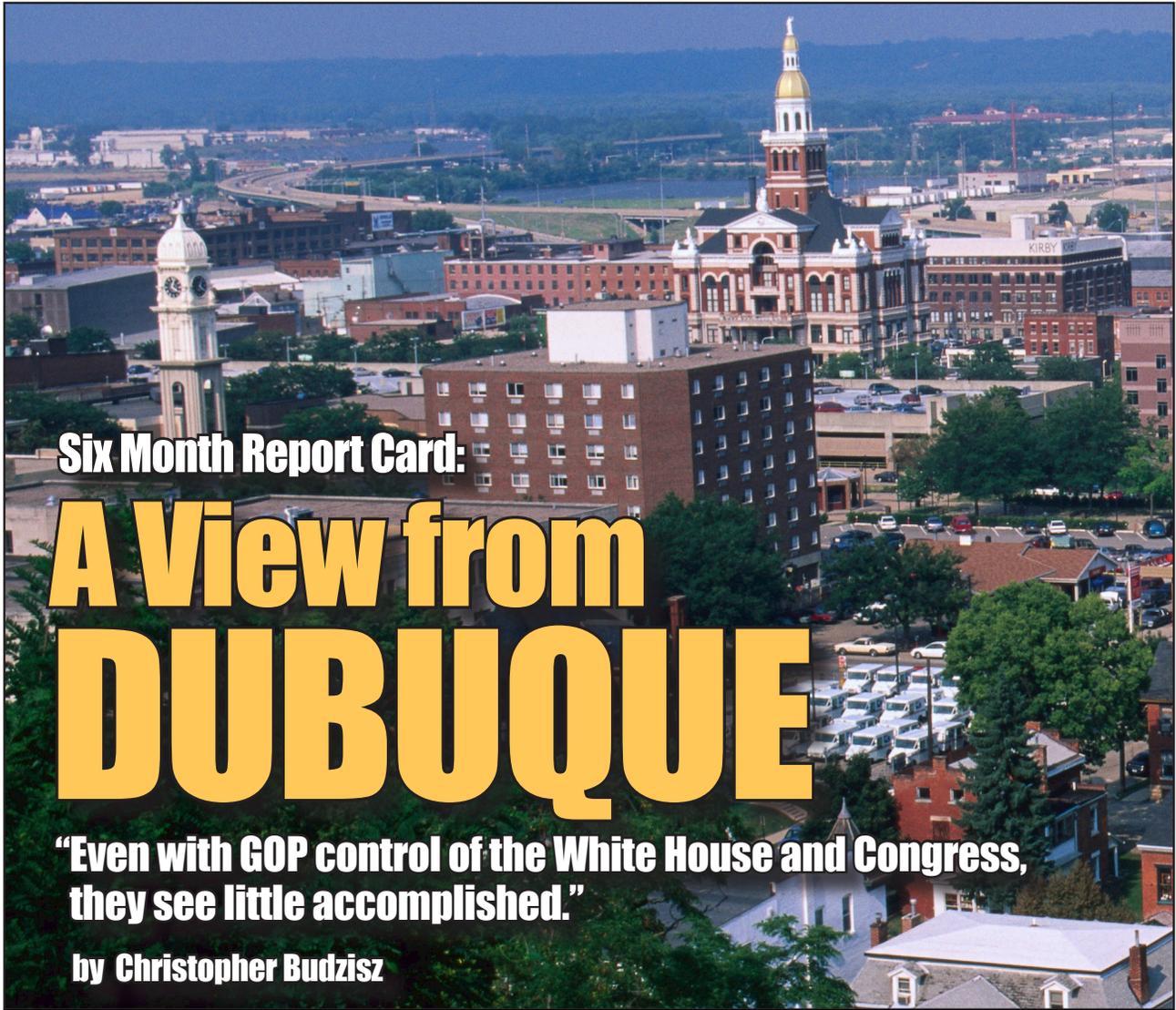


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Six Month Report Card:

A View from DUBUQUE

“Even with GOP control of the White House and Congress, they see little accomplished.”

by Christopher Budzisz

Dubuque County does not neatly fit into the standard media picture of Trump Country.

In a county with fewer than 70,000 total registered voters, Democrats hold a roughly 10,000 voter edge over Republicans in terms of registration. Over the past two-plus decades, the County has diversified its economy and experienced significant development of a once-run down industrial core.

With an enviable unemployment rate, and education and income levels at or near national medians, Dubuque County does not display the economic and social factors commonly pointed to as Trump’s recipe for electoral success. But, like many other parts of the country, there was, and remains, a strong sense of frustration and dissatisfaction at the prevailing political and social climate.

While Senator Ted Cruz won the statewide Republican

caucus vote in Iowa, President Trump did eke out a close victory over Senator Marco Rubio in Dubuque County during the Caucuses. In the general election, Trump carried both the heavily Democratic-leaning City of Dubuque as well as the

rural areas of Dubuque County. Trump swamped Hillary Clinton in the rural areas of the county easily outpacing Mitt Romney’s results in 2012. Clinton underperformed compared to President Obama in the city’s downtown working class precincts (which also are home to the bulk of the county’s minority

There is anxiety and frustration that issues such as health care, the economy, and jobs are not being tackled and are instead being obscured.

population).

To get a better sense of what voters in Dubuque are thinking about the early months of the Trump Administration, and to see what might be on the horizon for the 2018 midterm election and beyond, I spoke with a number of voters from across the political spectrum in Dubuque County.

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The issues that come up time and again in discussions with voters are not the various palace intrigues regarding the inner workings of the White House, or even the high profile issues such as the various investigations into Russian interference in the election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign. Many Dubuquers follow these issues, to be sure. But in conversations, the policy areas most pressing to voters here are things such as health care, the economy and jobs, security, fiscal policy, and social welfare programs. There is anxiety and frustration that such issues are not being tackled and are instead being obscured.

For many Republicans, the frustration is that now, even with GOP control of the White House and Congress, they see little accomplished. Many note a decided lack of unity among Republicans in Washington. For many Dubuque Democrats, the election loss remains a bitter pill, and this is compounded in their eyes by the policies being pursued by Trump and the GOP Congress, including the dismantling of policies on health care and the environment. For others, the frustration with politics is less rooted in party and more with how the system doesn't adequately reflect the wishes and needs of the electorate. It is not uncommon to hear criticism from voters across the political spectrum of government as elite, out-of-touch, or part of a system divorced from the needs and experience of the people and too beholden to special interests.

A common theme among many voters is a desire for policy results, and for a government which sees the challenges facing the country and which addresses them constructively and effectively. Some see political divisions expanding and forming an obstacle to effective governance.

Such sentiment comes from all sides. As one Republican Trump supporter put it to me, "we have lost the ability to negotiate with each other to address the needs of the people." Independents often echo this desire most strongly.

While many approve of President Trump 'shaking things up,' others here, including some Republicans, worry that not much will change and that the rocky start to the new White House makes Washington's focusing on issues and policy more difficult. Many Republicans place the blame for the rocky start on the media or on political opponents of the president who seek their own gain by sowing division. Others admit that part of the problem rests with the administration. As one voter remarked, "I support

the President's policies of a common sense travel ban and the wall, but I just wish that they would take his Twitter account away from him."

The President's outspokenness is both a strength and liability to many here. For his critics, the concern is often that his demeanor and approach are ill-suited for the presidency. For his staunchest supporters it is only by being outspoken and

unrestrained that President Trump can change the political and economic status quo. Others see his actions as simply counter-productive.

Failing to heed the expectation and desire of many Dubuque voters for a more results-oriented politics may be a recipe for electoral defeat here in this pivotal county in Northeast Iowa in 2018 and beyond. Without results, high levels of frustration and anxiety will only continue. **RF**

Christopher B. Budzisz is Associate Professor of Politics at Loras College and the Director of the Loras College Poll.

"I support the President's policies of a common sense travel ban and the wall, but I just wish that they would take his Twitter account away from him."

Dubuque County voter

COUNTY FACTS & FIGURES

Dubuque County, Iowa		U.S. Averages
Population	97,003	323,127,513
Median Household Income	\$54,605	\$53,889
% of Population in Poverty	12.20%	15.50%
% of Population With Only a High School Diploma or Equivalent	35.40%	27.80%
Unemployment Rate (Nov. 2016)	2.70%	4.60%
Net Unemployment Rate Change (Nov. 2008 -Nov. 2016)	-1.60%	-2.20%
% of Foreign Born Population	2.50%	13.20%
Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Citizens (2015)	37.11	16.3
% of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance	4.70%	10.50%

This data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder database, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map & Database, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER online database (Most recent available).

A View from Northampton County, Pennsylvania

*“There is a growing weariness with Trump’s
penchant to shoot himself in the foot.”*

by CHRISTOPHER P. BORICK

At first glance, Northampton County, Pennsylvania might not seem like “Trump Country.” Despite some remnants of the steel industry that once dominated the local economy, there are few obvious indicators of the Rust Belt settings that were at the heart of Donald Trump’s electoral triumph in 2016.

At the time of the election last November, the unemployment rate in the county was 4.7%, well below the state rate of 5.4%, and the median family income in the county was about \$8,000 above the national level. The local economy displays many of the staples of a flourishing contemporary economy with “eds and meds” prominently represented. Finally, Northampton County hadn’t gone Republican in a presidential election since 1984, with Barack Obama winning by 12 points in 2008 and 5 points in 2012.

While not a prototypical Trump area, Northampton County nevertheless was one of only three counties in Pennsylvania that Trump carried and Mitt Romney did not. Trump’s 4 point win in this county at the eastern tip of Pennsylvania was crucial in his narrow victory over Hillary Clinton, helping him secure the Keystone State’s 20 electoral votes. But over a half year removed from Trump’s victory in Northampton County, his standing among the voters that helped place him in the White House shows signs of wear as the president’s embattled administration tries to find its footing.

As with most of the country, Trump voters in Northampton county seem to have generally stood by the President through his tumultuous first few months in office. Discussions with the area’s Trump voters usually demonstrate a willingness to give the president time to achieve policy success. When pushed regarding the president’s struggles during the early stages of his administration, Trump’s Northampton County voters tend to emphasize the challenges and obstacles that he

faces. They point to a hostile mainstream media and leaks from federal employees as primary causes of President Trump’s inability to move faster and more successfully on his agenda.

But while Trump’s supporters lay a majority of the President’s struggles on a combination of a biased and blood thirsty media, an entrenched bureaucratic state, and an ineffective Congress, there are signs of disappointment and frustration with elements of Trump’s performance in the White House. The most common

**There are signs of fatigue
with the president’s
lack of focus on issues
such as tax reform and
infrastructure investment
and his seeming addiction
to social media.**

criticism of the president is his tendency to do damage to himself. There is a growing weariness with Trump’s penchant to “shoot himself in the foot” with unsubstantiated claims and bombastic attacks. Among his voters in Northampton County, there are signs of fatigue with the president’s lack of focus on issues such as tax reform and infrastructure investment and

his seeming addiction to social media.

One Trump supporter captured this frustration when he said, “I just want the President to talk less and do more.” This frustration seems to be most significant among the substantial number of voters that gave Trump their vote last November in spite of his personal flaws with the hope that he might be able to get things done in Washington in areas that they care about.

For example, Northampton County is just the type of place where a major infrastructure bill has broad appeal. The area’s location just east of New York City and north of Philadelphia has helped turn it into a major transportation and logistical center with warehouses and terminals for major companies like Amazon and FedEx dotting the landscape. The increased truck and rail traffic has strained the county’s aging transportation system, and the state and local governments who are weighed down by fiscal pressures have struggled to finance the infrastructure repairs and improvements

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needed. It is interesting to imagine what may have been if Trump's first major initiative in office was to put forth the infrastructure initiative that he called for on the campaign trail and seems to be inching towards six months into his presidency. In Northampton County, it certainly would have been a great fit -- not only among his strongest supporters, but also among some of the voters who took a chance on him last November and now may be harboring doubts about their decision.

Notably, most of Northampton County is represented in Congress by the emerging face of moderate Republicanism – Congressman Charlie Dent. Over the course of the 2016 election season and through the first months of Trump's presidency, Dent has been a vocal critic of Trump on many issues and a “no” vote on the White House backed American Health Care Act. Dent won by 17 points in the Northampton County portion of his district in 2016, and in many ways seems to be a more natural fit in style and substance for the voters of the area than his fellow Republican at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. It will be interesting to see if

Northampton County Republicans can support both Trump and Dent, or if it has in essence become a zero-sum game in which one's success will imply failure for the other.

If the Trump electoral coalition does begin to come apart, the canary in the coal mine is likely to be Northampton County, Pennsylvania. An election map of Pennsylvania shows Northampton County to be surrounded by counties that Hillary Clinton carried, leaving Northampton an island of Trump electoral strength. But as waves develop in politics, as in oceans, islands are often the places that feel the changes first and most directly. Thus, if Trump cannot maintain support in this area of Pennsylvania, it will be hard to see how he will have enough public backing nationally to maintain leverage in Congress to get key elements of his policy agenda passed into law. **RF**



Bethlehem, PA

If the Trump electoral coalition does begin to come apart, the canary in the coal mine is likely to be Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

Christopher P. Borick, Ph.D., is a Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion.

COUNTY FACTS & FIGURES

Northampton County, Pennsylvania		U.S. Averages
Population	302,294	323,127,513
Median Household Income	\$60,972	\$53,889
% of Population in Poverty	9.40%	15.50%
% of Population With Only a High School Diploma or Equivalent	35.30%	27.80%
Unemployment Rate (Nov. 2016)	4.70%	4.60%
Net Unemployment Rate Change (Nov. 2008 -Nov. 2016)	-1.10%	-2.20%
% of Foreign Born Population	7.00%	13.20%
% Increase of Drug Overdose Deaths (2008-2015)	231.46%	35.95%
% of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance	6.90%	10.50%

This data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder database, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map & Database, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER online database (Most recent available).

A View from Trumbull County, Ohio

“There is nothing to indicate the Trump train is being derailed.”

by ADAM L. FULLER

Trumbull County is very much a working class microcosm of Ohio. To that end, perhaps the most important thing to know about presidential politics in the Buckeye State is that Ohioans always sell their 18 electoral votes to the highest bidder.

Ideological beliefs, economic paradigms, and perspectives on what is good for the national interest are less relevant factors in this state. What Ohioans want to know from candidates is what they will do for Ohio. Will the candidate bring jobs to the state? Will there be greater or lesser federal investment in the Rust Belt? Will Ohio industries be strengthened or weakened if that candidate wins?

In 2016 it was simple. Donald Trump was the candidate Ohioans believed cared about them and was better for their state’s interests. In 2008 and 2012, it was Barack Obama. In those years, the Republican candidates failed to convince Ohioans that they and their policies were good for them. But in 2016, Mr. Trump hit all the right chords.

Rust belt voters were angry in 2016. They were angry that the ruling elites of their country were constantly asking them to make sacrifices without giving them back very much in return. They were tired of being told that they have a moral obligation to save the rest of the world, to have their jobs taken by immigrants, and to have their local industries compete with companies overseas. They were angry about endless wars in the Middle East and free trade agreements that to them only seemed to benefit America’s competitors and America’s wealthy captains of industry.

In 2008 and 2012, neither John McCain nor Mitt Romney told these voters what they wanted to hear. In the case of McCain, he advocated more of the same pro-immigration and democracy-exporting, nation-building global agenda of the Bush era. The anti-corruption platform of the McCain/Palin ticket also failed to resonate with people who are not necessarily opposed to corruption as long as it serves their own local interests. The colorful and crooked Congressman James Traficant, after all, represented Trumbull County for almost two decades. A region that thrives on federal investments

is not likely to champion an end to pork barrel spending. Similarly, Romney failed to realize that these voters are not exactly kept awake at night by the \$20 trillion national debt.

In 2000, a Republican was able to win Ohio by promoting a more modest foreign policy agenda. George W. Bush spoke about lessening America’s entanglements in foreign conflicts and did not make advancing human rights an emphasis in his campaign. While on foreign affairs and homeland security his presidency took a very different turn after 9/11, Bush still promoted policies that these voters liked. What particularly resonated with Trumbull County was Bush’s “Stand Up For Steel” plan in 2002, which imposed a tariff on steel imports.

Two years later, this measure would help him win the county a second time.

On the Democratic side, both Bill Clinton and Obama spoke directly to white working class voters in their respective campaigns. They especially highlighted the Rust Belt region as vital centers of America’s economic growth. In 2008, Obama focused on this region’s

potential in a new “green energy” sector. Obama also made sure to mention the city of Youngstown in his 2013 State of the Union address, citing it as home to the first manufacturing innovation institute.

Unlike Mrs. Clinton, President Obama tried to appeal to Trumbull and Mahoning County voters by convincing them that their region is an ideal center of tech production. When Mrs. Clinton spoke in Youngstown, she made no effort to highlight her predecessor’s specific focus on this region. She spoke in general terms about job creation and unions, but she did not tailor her remarks to the Youngstown area. She spoke of infrastructural updates that are irrelevant to these landlocked counties, such as “tunnels and ports and water systems.”

And while education and job re-training may be issues that resonate across the country, in the Youngstown-Warren area, they mostly only symbolize the break-up of families. No one in these counties wants their children to learn skills that could only be used if they left the area. Unless candidates present specific plans to voters that will create jobs in these counties and economically revitalize their communities, there

While education and job re-training may be issues that resonate across the country, in the Youngstown-Warren area, they mostly only symbolize the break-up of families.

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is no chance of those candidates winning their votes.

When then-candidate Trump spoke in March 2016 at a well-attended rally at the Youngstown-Warren Airport, he promised specific improvements for the region, including a 35% tariff. The abandoned steel mills, he said, will be running again when he is president.

In his August 2016 speech at Youngstown State University, he blamed global terrorism on the previous two administrations. His campaign established him as a change agent who will do things differently than what the last 16 years had brought, convincing these voters that electing his opponent would just constitute more of the same. Although he was the Republican Party nominee, he stood for a new independent brand. Like Ronald Reagan before him, he made longtime Democratic Party voters comfortable enough to vote for a Republican, and even excited to do it. He was the businessman, not a politician, who would go to Washington and make their lives great again.

Six months into the presidency, the people of Trumbull County apparently still have steadfast faith in him. While national polling puts him into low favorability in national

public opinion, the people in the Youngstown area seem to believe that he is working diligently for all the right ends. While there is no local polling, the pro-Trump rallies being held almost weekly on Highway 224, the enthusiasm for him on local talk radio, the Trump signs and bumper stickers that still decorate Trumbull County neighborhoods and cars, and simply the talk of the town in local pubs and pool halls, all indicate that local excitement for Trump has not waned.

His legislative failures in his first six months have not made any difference to them whatsoever. They believe that he is fighting for heartland America against a ruling elite in both parties, the courts, the national media, and the bureaucracies, which they believe are all set out to undermine his presidency. Time will tell if his support diminishes in this region, but for the time being, there is nothing to indicate that the Trump train is being

RF



Trumbull County, OH

The pro-Trump rallies being held almost weekly on Highway 224 and the enthusiasm for him on local talk radio all indicate that local excitement for Trump has not waned.

derailed.

Adam L. Fuller, Ph.D, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Politics & International Relations at Youngstown State University.

COUNTY FACTS & FIGURES

Trumbull County, Ohio		U.S. Averages
Population	201,825	323,127,513
Median Household Income	\$43,073	\$53,889
% of Population in Poverty	17.30%	15.50%
% of Population With Only a High School Diploma or Equivalent	45.20%	27.80%
Unemployment Rate (Nov. 2016)	5.90%	4.60%
Net Unemployment Rate Change (Nov. 2008 -Nov. 2016)	-2.10%	-2.20%
% of Foreign Born Population	1.60%	13.20%
% Increase of Drug Overdose Deaths (2008-2015)	289.39%	35.95%
% of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance	8.40%	10.50%

This data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder database, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map & Database, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER online database (Most recent available).

A View from Macomb County, Michigan

“These voters like Trump now for the same reasons they voted for him in the first place: he is not a politician.”

by DAVID A. DULIO & JOHN S. KLEMANSKI

Macomb County has an interesting and important history in American politics. Located northeast of Wayne County, home of Detroit, Macomb was a destination beginning in the 1970s for many white blue-collar workers who were tied to the automobile industry.

A large number of white ethnics who had lived largely on the east side of Detroit – of Italian and Polish heritage especially – moved north into Macomb County communities during this time. Many had left Detroit as racial tensions rose in the late 1960s, which culminated in the 1967 riot in the city. According to the 1970 census, the population of the county was roughly 200,000; by 1980 it was nearly 700,000.

During that time, each of the Big 3 – General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler – built or expanded manufacturing plants in Macomb County. Those who moved to Macomb County were lured by the American Dream. Originally, they found it. Jobs were plentiful, median household income was higher than the national average, the housing market was booming, and recreational areas were bountiful (many residents were hunters and fishermen and had access to hunting land and waterways close by). However, this would change with dynamics including the oil shortage in the 1970s, and a recession that lasted into the early 1980s. This would help pave the way for an historic development in Macomb County.

Macomb County may be best known as the birthplace of the “Reagan Democrat.” Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg coined the term after his research there in 1985 and reported his findings in his book *Middle Class Dreams*. Greenberg

conceptualized Reagan Democrats as voters who had traditionally voted for Democratic presidential candidates but felt abandoned by their party, so voted for Ronald Reagan even though they still considered themselves Democrats. Greenberg found that Macomb voters liked Reagan because he was honest, a strong advocate for American interests internationally, was willing to make – and stand by – tough decisions, and was for “the little guy.”



Sterling Heights, MI

Much of Trump’s success in Macomb was due to his positions on the economy, which were not aligned with GOP orthodoxy and were more tied to Democratic positions.

In 1980, Reagan carried Michigan with just under 49% of the vote, but he got nearly 53% in Macomb; in that same election, majorities of Macomb voters voted for Democrats running for U.S. Senate, Michigan attorney general, state board of education, and most other offices. In 1984, Reagan again over-performed in Macomb compared to the rest of the state, as he won 66% of the vote in the county but less than 60% statewide.

In 2016, Reagan Democrats again helped put a Republican candidate over the top in Michigan. Democratic voters in Macomb felt as abandoned by their party as county voters did more than 30 years before. In Donald Trump, they also saw someone who was honest and a strong advocate for American interests. After all the votes were counted, Trump won Michigan’s 16 electoral votes by less than 11,000 (47.25% to 47.03%). He won Macomb, however, by roughly 50,000 votes (53.6% to 42%). Michigan had not voted for a GOP presidential candidate since 1988. However, in 2016, Trump garnered roughly 35,000 more votes than Mitt Romney did in *Macomb County alone* and Hillary Clinton received roughly 35,000 fewer votes than Barack Obama did in 2012. While this does not indicate that 35,000 residents in Macomb

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voted for Obama and switched to Trump, there certainly were thousands who did. Much of Trump’s success in Macomb was due to his positions on the economy, which were not aligned with GOP orthodoxy and were more tied to Democratic positions. He was an ardent opponent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Hence, the attraction for voters who had been used to supporting Democratic candidates and the connection back to the original Reagan Democrats. In addition, Trump’s populist anti-illegal immigration position resonated with voters who felt that both the economy and public policy had left them behind or had forgotten about them. Many believe that they were hurt by free trade agreements in the past and responded well to Trump’s calls to renegotiate or pull out of them all together.

In 2017, Macomb-based Trump supporters seem in favor of some of the early efforts of the Trump administration. The president’s January 23 memorandum pulling the U.S. out of TPP fulfilled a campaign promise that is certainly popular in Macomb. It is worth noting that the agreement had not yet taken effect since Congress had not approved it. The rhetorical victory, however, remains, as Trump can claim credit for taking action on trade policy. On May 18, Trump’s U.S. trade representative sent official notice to Congress that the administration planned to renegotiate NAFTA. This is also likely a welcome development for many in Macomb County. Even though the notice to Congress did not contain many details and changes policy less than when he had promised to “rip up” NAFTA, Trump supporters can feel he is making enough progress on the issue of trade.

National polling shows that Trump’s supporters largely remain in his corner. In Macomb County, this is also likely still the case. A recent article in the *Detroit Free Press* quoted the chairman of the Macomb County Republican Party, John

Wolfsberger, saying this about Trump’s backing: “The support (among Republicans) is rock solid.” In March 2017, Stan Greenberg and his colleague, Nancy Zdunkewicz, returned to Macomb County to conduct more research. In general, their conclusion was that Trump voters in Macomb remain supportive, but that support may erode somewhat over time.

According to Greenberg and Zdunkewicz’s research, Trump’s supporters do not regret their vote and are sticking with the President. These voters like Trump now for the same reasons they voted for him in the first place: he is not a politician and does not bow to political correctness; he is viewed as a strong leader and someone who can change Washington; is focused on defending the homeland and the border; is going to put “America first” and bring *back* jobs that Macomb County lost. Greenberg and Zdunkewicz see an opportunity for Democrats if they can connect with these Trump supporters and understand what they are looking for in a leader. They report that these voters may be open to Democrats like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth

Warren and Sherrod Brown, all U.S. Senators, because of their views on trade. Indeed, Sanders won the Michigan presidential primary in 2016. In many ways, his message and Trump’s message on trade were not all that different. They both spoke to the voters of Macomb.

In sum, Trump was able to rekindle the magic of the Reagan Democrats from 35 years before. Trump connected with voters who felt they had been forgotten, especially on the issues they cared about most. His voters remain supportive, but how long that support lasts is an open question should Democrats be able to find a message that makes a similar connection. **RF**

David A. Dulio is Professor and Chair of the Political Science Department at Oakland University, while John S. Klemanski is a Professor of Political Science at Oakland University.

His voters remain supportive, but how long that support lasts is an open question should Democrats be able to find a message that makes a similar connection.

COUNTY FACTS & FIGURES

Macomb County, Michigan	U.S. Averages
Population	867,730 / 323,127,513
Median Household Income	\$54,582 / \$53,889
% of Population in Poverty	12.60% / 15.50%
% of Population With Only a High School Diploma or Equivalent	30.60% / 27.80%
Unemployment Rate (Nov. 2016)	4.60% / 4.60%
Net Unemployment Rate Change (Nov. 2008 -Nov. 2016)	-3.90% / -2.20%
% of Foreign Born Population	10.60% / 13.20%
% Increase of Drug Overdose Deaths (2008-2015)	37.31% / 35.95%
% of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance	7.20% / 10.50%

This data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder database, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map & Database, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER online database (Most recent available).

A View from Kenosha County, Wisconsin

“While Kenosha County has reflected the Republican trend, there is continuing Democratic support.”

by ARTHUR I. CYR

The Republican Party has become dominant in Wisconsin, with promising opportunities for the future.

Viewed from more local perspectives, however, the picture becomes a more mixed, complex tapestry. The Democratic Party has significant challenges, but it also has opportunities. Kenosha County in Southeast Wisconsin reflects both trends.

Donald Trump won the state in 2016, against informed predictions and polling evidence. In the same election, incumbent Republican Senator Ron Johnson beat back former Senator Russ Feingold, whom he defeated in 2010. Southeast Wisconsin reflects state and national trends. President Trump’s approval ratings continue to be relatively low. However, polls generally underestimated his true support in 2016.

Republican Governor Scott Walker has been elected and reelected, and survived a bitter recall effort. The Republican Party controls the state legislature.

Republican U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan represents Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District, which includes Kenosha, after succeeding Republican Mark Neumann in early 1999. Previously, the seat was held for two decades by Democrat

Les Aspin, a respected defense policy analyst. Democrat Peter Barca briefly succeeded Aspin in the House.

While Kenosha County has reflected the Republican trend, there is continuing Democratic support. Trump carried the county by less than 1,000 votes. By contrast, Barack Obama in 2012 had a vote margin of nearly 10,000. Notably lower voter turnout in 2016 helps explain the difference.

Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser and Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian served as Democrats in the State Assembly. Long-time Democratic State Senator Bob Wirth emphasizes his labor union background, and survived an aggressive 2010 Republican campaign. The four Kenosha

Assembly seats are equally divided between Democrats and Republicans, with Peter Barca among the former.

Kenosha was highlighted in the 2016 presidential primary campaign. Senator Bernie Sanders spoke at Carthage College in Kenosha on March 30, 2016, to an overflow crowd. Along with the college community, the audience comprised a large number of working people. Sanders won the primary. The selection of Kenosha as the location for his speech reflects the

President Trump’s approval ratings continue to be relatively low. However, polls generally underestimated his true support in 2016.

COUNTY FACTS & FIGURES

Kenosha County, Wisconsin		U.S. Averages
Population	168,183	323,127,513
Median Household Income	\$54,918	\$53,889
% of Population in Poverty	15.20%	15.50%
% of Population With Only a High School Diploma or Equivalent	32.80%	27.80%
Unemployment Rate (Nov. 2016)	4.30%	4.60%
Net Unemployment Rate Change (Nov. 2008 -Nov. 2016)	-1.70%	-2.20%
% of Foreign Born Population	6.00%	13.20%
% Increase of Drug Overdose Deaths (2008-2015)	24.07%	35.95%
% of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance	7.10%	10.50%

This data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder database, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map & Database, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WONDER online database (Most recent available).

Six Month Report Card:

historic labor union strength in the area, especially the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Likewise, history was a factor in the visit of President Donald Trump to Snap-on Tools in Kenosha on April 18, 2017. During the visit, he announced an executive order to “buy American, hire American.”

Snap-on is rightly viewed as an American institution, emphasizing quality workmanship, though today the company is global in hiring, production and sales.

Kenosha has successfully adjusted to the decline of manufacturing jobs, attracting new residents and new businesses, especially related to transportation and storage. New Amazon and Uline facilities reflect this. Kenosha County is closely integrated with the Chicago regional economy.

Wisconsin historically has been in the forefront of labor reform. In 1865, a local chapter of the Molders Union was formed in Milwaukee. In 1886, there was substantial labor protest across the nation in support of the eight-hour workday. Milwaukee had one of the most sizable such efforts. In 1933, UAW workers sat down on the job at Nash Motors in Kenosha, four years before a similar protest and infamous violent

repression of workers at the General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan.

The UAW from the start emphasized health care, and today that is an important political issue at the local and state as well as national levels. Speaker Ryan has struggled to achieve passage of a Republican alternative to the Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act. Ohio resident David Yankovich has received publicity by announcing a move to Kenosha to join other Democrats planning to run against Ryan in 2018. Yankovich is emphasizing

History was a factor in the visit of President Donald Trump to Snap-on Tools in Kenosha on April 18, 2017.

health care reform.

Wisconsin opinion appears congruent with nationwide polls indicating President Trump has a relatively low approval rating. However, the 2016 election demonstrated polling errors dramatically. In 2020, Wisconsin likely will remain a battleground state. **RF**

Arthur I. Cyr is the A.W. and Mary Margaret Clausen Distinguished Professor of Political Economy and World Business, and Director of the Clausen Center for World Business, at Carthage College



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The "OT's" Obama-Trump Counties

208 counties won by Donald Trump in 2016 after they were won by Barack Obama in 2012 & 2008

State	County	2008 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2012 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2016 Margin of Victory (Trump)	State	County	2008 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2012 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2016 Margin of Victory (Trump)
AR	Woodruff	7.46%	4.21%	8.91%	IN	Delaware	14.98%	3.12%	13.43%
CO	Conejos	12.93%	9.22%	3.56%		LaPorte	22.04%	12.57%	6.33%
	Huerfano	11.23%	8.27%	6.61%		Perry	22.84%	11.59%	18.55%
	Las Animas	7.04%	2.65%	15.60%		Porter	7.20%	3.90%	6.59%
	Pueblo	14.97%	13.99%	0.50%		Vigo	15.83%	0.86%	14.97%
CT	Windham	14.68%	13.28%	7.78%	KY	Elliott	25.17%	2.50%	44.13%
DE	Kent	9.81%	4.94%	4.87%	ME	Androscoggin	15.22%	12.78%	9.38%
FL	Jefferson	3.66%	1.75%	5.06%		Aroostook	9.58%	7.62%	17.19%
	Monroe	4.90%	0.44%	6.82%		Franklin	20.29%	18.41%	5.47%
	Pinellas	8.25%	5.65%	1.11%		Kennebec	14.78%	13.46%	3.58%
	St. Lucie	12.12%	7.86%	2.40%		Oxford	16.04%	14.73%	12.94%
GA	Baker	1.07%	0.57%	8.68%		Penobscot	5.12%	2.93%	10.91%
	Dooly	3.53%	6.98%	2.05%	Somerset	5.70%	1.68%	22.67%	
	Peach	6.75%	7.48%	2.91%	Washington	1.01%	1.60%	18.44%	
	Quitman	7.90%	9.04%	10.92%	MI	Bay	15.31%	5.56%	12.55%
	Twiggs	6.97%	8.64%	1.58%		Calhoun	9.36%	1.60%	12.46%
IA	Allamakee	14.25%	4.17%	24.15%		Eaton	8.40%	3.13%	4.72%
	Boone	7.63%	6.64%	13.69%		Gogebic	17.27%	8.10%	14.80%
	Bremer	9.31%	2.68%	13.68%		Isabella	19.26%	9.28%	3.66%
	Buchanan	18.48%	13.87%	15.02%		Lake	12.28%	5.01%	22.77%
	Cedar	9.64%	4.59%	17.78%		Macomb	8.62%	3.99%	11.53%
	Cerro Gordo	20.83%	13.38%	7.66%		Manistee	13.26%	5.93%	15.29%
	Chickasaw	20.74%	11.07%	22.94%		Monroe	4.35%	0.98%	21.97%
	Clarke	2.25%	1.47%	28.02%		Saginaw	17.34%	11.89%	1.13%
	Clayton	17.17%	7.03%	22.78%		Shiawassee	8.59%	3.67%	19.59%
	Clinton	23.03%	22.84%	5.12%	Van Buren	8.78%	0.45%	13.92%	
	Des Moines	23.04%	18.41%	6.89%	MN	Beltrami	10.15%	9.89%	9.72%
	Dubuque	20.77%	14.71%	1.23%		Blue Earth	12.95%	9.48%	3.69%
	Fayette	16.60%	11.96%	19.36%		Chippewa	5.87%	1.87%	28.70%
	Floyd	21.88%	14.63%	14.84%		Clay	16.02%	7.92%	1.95%
	Howard	25.78%	20.95%	20.49%		Fillmore	8.26%	7.34%	21.70%
	Jackson	24.39%	16.89%	19.27%		Freeborn	17.13%	14.11%	17.24%
	Jasper	7.50%	7.07%	18.13%		Houston	10.69%	3.16%	13.87%
	Jefferson	20.23%	15.97%	0.47%		Itasca	12.92%	9.83%	16.35%
	Jones	10.40%	7.78%	19.08%		Kittson	18.54%	6.03%	22.05%
	Lee	16.01%	15.49%	16.02%		Koochiching	10.10%	9.45%	19.85%
	Louisa	4.25%	0.64%	28.37%		Lac Qui Parle	5.92%	0.90%	25.60%
	Marshall	9.35%	9.36%	8.31%		Mahnomen	25.31%	18.56%	2.92%
	Mitchell	12.31%	3.37%	24.04%		Mower	23.61%	22.61%	7.82%
Muscatine	15.64%	15.88%	6.26%	Nicollet		10.52%	7.83%	3.04%	
Poweshiek	11.75%	9.35%	6.53%	Norman		26.94%	10.79%	13.34%	
Tama	12.19%	7.43%	20.28%	Rice		11.50%	8.27%	3.06%	
Union	3.70%	3.86%	27.49%	Swift	13.79%	9.83%	25.57%		
Wapello	13.53%	11.88%	20.60%	Traverse	5.41%	4.44%	23.30%		
Webster	8.51%	5.84%	21.52%	Winona	19.09%	12.85%	2.90%		
Winneshiek	22.65%	14.74%	0.79%	MS	Chickasaw	2.13%	4.52%	6.06%	
Worth	22.42%	14.53%	21.68%		Panola	6.52%	8.62%	0.12%	
IL	Alexander	12.62%	13.65%	8.30%	MT	Blaine	19.24%	15.32%	2.46%
	Carroll	4.81%	1.49%	26.69%		Hill	12.21%	3.50%	17.18%
	Fulton	21.33%	11.04%	14.93%	Roosevelt	26.27%	15.58%	6.49%	
	Henderson	17.67%	12.25%	28.43%	NC	Bladen	2.07%	1.97%	9.39%
	Henry	7.74%	3.08%	20.99%		Gates	5.22%	4.11%	9.07%
	Jo Daviess	10.49%	1.16%	14.64%		Granville	6.58%	4.54%	2.49%
	Knox	19.89%	17.37%	2.91%		Martin	4.64%	4.65%	0.43%
	Mercer	11.91%	7.39%	20.36%		Richmond	1.50%	2.95%	9.74%
	Putnam	15.64%	1.82%	19.92%		Robeson	13.78%	17.41%	4.27%
	Warren	8.08%	5.47%	16.50%					
	Whiteside	17.56%	17.02%	6.18%					

The "OT's" Obama-Trump Counties

208 counties won by Donald Trump in 2016 after they were won by Barack Obama in 2012 & 2008

State	County	2008 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2012 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2016 Margin of Victory (Trump)	State	County	2008 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2012 Margin of Victory (Obama)	2016 Margin of Victory (Trump)
ND	Benson	33.53%	17.01%	4.33%	VA	Buckingham	0.87%	2.43%	11.28%
	Ransom	15.33%	13.77%	15.77%		Caroline	11.97%	8.24%	5.02%
	Sargent	17.49%	9.77%	19.73%		Chesapeake	1.27%	1.04%	1.26%
	Steele	20.35%	1.92%	17.72%		Covington	12.06%	14.76%	18.26%
NE	Thurston	6.96%	13.91%	5.94%		Essex	10.35%	7.30%	2.14%
NH	Coos	18.19%	17.54%	8.89%		Nelson	9.15%	2.72%	5.59%
	Hillsborough	3.73%	1.12%	0.20%	Westmoreland	10.24%	6.95%	7.14%	
	Sullivan	17.93%	13.27%	2.58%	VT	Essex	14.48%	13.40%	16.65%
NJ	Gloucester	12.16%	10.77%	0.48%	WA	Clallam	3.30%	0.38%	2.76%
	Salem	3.92%	1.31%	15.00%		Cowlitz	11.15%	4.44%	13.32%
NM	Colfax	10.73%	2.24%	8.55%		Grays Harbor	14.56%	14.11%	6.99%
	Hidalgo	2.92%	4.96%	6.73%		Mason	8.66%	7.09%	5.81%
	Valencia	7.72%	2.47%	8.60%	Pacific	14.07%	11.52%	6.74%	
NY	Broome	8.02%	5.31%	2.01%	WI	Adams	18.35%	8.73%	21.92%
	Cayuga	8.48%	11.40%	11.64%		Buffalo	14.66%	2.93%	21.82%
	Cortland	9.96%	9.11%	5.58%		Columbia	15.26%	13.58%	2.14%
	Essex	13.32%	18.77%	1.14%		Crawford	27.03%	19.98%	5.40%
	Franklin	22.23%	26.07%	5.45%		Door	17.33%	6.99%	3.22%
	Madison	0.87%	0.89%	14.20%		Dunn	14.95%	4.97%	11.09%
	Niagara	1.00%	0.84%	17.75%		Forest	15.16%	5.44%	26.58%
	Orange	4.13%	5.65%	5.50%		Grant	23.88%	13.77%	9.43%
	Oswego	2.44%	7.93%	21.99%		Jackson	21.84%	15.01%	11.74%
	Otsego	5.91%	2.72%	11.13%		Juneau	9.00%	7.03%	26.05%
	Rensselaer	9.34%	12.19%	1.41%		Kenosha	18.06%	12.23%	0.31%
	Saratoga	3.40%	2.44%	3.21%		Lafayette	22.32%	15.37%	8.99%
	Seneca	2.60%	9.08%	11.01%		Lincoln	12.48%	0.71%	20.60%
	St. Lawrence	16.33%	16.71%	8.82%		Marquette	5.28%	0.27%	24.09%
	Suffolk	5.99%	3.69%	6.84%		Pepin	12.89%	2.22%	23.08%
	Sullivan	9.46%	9.02%	11.23%		Price	13.40%	0.04%	25.00%
	Warren	2.64%	2.32%	8.47%		Racine	7.41%	3.54%	4.28%
Washington	0.81%	1.90%	18.40%	Richland		20.63%	16.13%	5.50%	
OH	Ashtabula	13.54%	12.78%	18.80%		Sauk	23.04%	18.47%	0.35%
	Erie	13.86%	12.29%	9.48%	Sawyer	6.23%	0.49%	18.41%	
	Montgomery	6.22%	4.62%	0.73%	Trempealeau	26.39%	14.08%	12.64%	
	Ottawa	6.24%	4.30%	19.51%	Vernon	22.00%	14.73%	4.43%	
	Portage	8.99%	5.52%	9.87%	Winnebago	11.66%	3.73%	7.34%	
	Sandusky	4.64%	2.71%	22.58%					
	Stark	5.46%	0.47%	17.17%					
	Trumbull	22.43%	23.00%	6.22%					
Wood	7.13%	4.84%	7.99%						
OR	Columbia	12.02%	5.16%	11.46%					
	Tillamook	9.89%	4.86%	5.58%					
PA	Erie	19.88%	16.03%	1.56%					
	Luzerne	8.41%	4.81%	19.31%					
	Northampton	12.30%	4.71%	3.78%					
RI	Kent	17.40%	17.74%	0.67%					
SC	Barnwell	1.65%	5.33%	5.16%					
	Calhoun	3.55%	4.31%	2.83%					
	Chester	8.30%	10.58%	4.83%					
	Colleton	0.53%	0.19%	8.49%					
	McCormick	6.08%	3.60%	3.32%					
SD	Corson	21.48%	11.08%	4.51%					
	Day	12.89%	6.16%	23.77%					
	Marshall	16.48%	8.66%	15.51%					
	Roberts	19.64%	9.84%	15.53%					
	Ziebach	27.16%	16.43%	1.96%					
TN	Hardeman	6.18%	5.91%	7.92%					
TX	Jefferson	2.25%	1.61%	0.48%					

This Ripon Forum analysis of the "OT Counties" was prepared using data from the Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections at www.uselectionatlas.org

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

by DAVID WINSTON & MYRA MILLER

As Donald Trump reaches the six month mark of his presidency, the media predictably is focused almost solely on the short term. An assessment at six months is inevitable politically. But Republicans need to look through a different lens and play a smarter long game if they are going to be successful legislatively and in the coming mid-term elections. For Republicans, the 2018 mid-terms present a rare and not easily attainable opportunity to win a consolidating election.

What do we mean by a consolidating election and why is it so difficult to achieve? One of the toughest challenges for a majority party after a presidential win is to repeat its success in the next election by retaining the support of the voter groups that made up its winning coalition. After an election, voters have certain expectations based on the presidential and congressional agendas defined by candidates and parties in the election. When it comes to winning a consolidating election, performance tops politics. It's all about keeping promises by getting the job done or, at a minimum, be seen as moving on policies that meet voter expectations. When voters are disappointed in progress, the party in power can pay a steep price.

For example, after President Obama's win in 2008, books were written about the death of the Republican Party and the permanent Democratic majority. Two years later, the Democratic coalition was gone, with Republicans building a mid-term coalition that stayed in place in 2014 thanks, in large part, to Obama's decision to focus on health care when the electorate still had

serious concerns about the state of the economy.

Similarly, in 1992, despite the Clinton campaign's famous "it's the economy, stupid" message, President Clinton spent his first two years focused on a series of secondary issues including a failed health care plan and, as a result, lost the House decisively in 1994. After the 1980 election, when jobs and the economy were the central issues, President Reagan did move on economic

issues and hoped to win the House in 1982. Instead, unemployment hit 10%, and the GOP lost 26 seats.

While the 2016 election saw Republicans make historic inroads into various voter groups, the opportunity can be quickly lost if voters are disappointed in the results of a government with GOP control of Congress and the presidency. To avoid that outcome and win in 2018, Republicans must enact a policy agenda that connects with the voters who made up the 2016 majority coalition. First, they must build support among key groups that voted for Trump after historically not voting for Republicans, including union households, low and middle-income voters, and those with

less than a college degree. Second, Republicans must expand support among coalition groups crucial in a midterm coalition -- independents, women, young voters, and Hispanics. While the partisan mix of Senate races in 2018 should be favorable to Republicans, only a carefully crafted strategy that addresses voter expectations will deliver majorities in both houses.

The 2016 election presented a uniquely volatile environment, with both party frontrunners having



While the 2016 election saw Republicans make historic inroads into various voter groups, the opportunity can be quickly lost if voters are disappointed in the results of a government with GOP control.

unprecedented negatives. However, voter frustration and economic anxiety led the electorate to vote for change over the status quo, an attitude that remains today and will likely influence the outcome of the next election. In the national exit polls, voters were asked to choose which of four candidate attributes was most important to them. The top attribute was “*can bring needed change*” (39%), and among the group that values this attribute most highly, Trump won overwhelmingly by 82-14.

Contrary to conventional wisdom at the time, voters gave Republicans an across-the-board win. But to whom much is given, much is required. Now, voters expect the President and the GOP Congress to deliver the change they promised. Without it, those same voters may well rock the boat again in 2018 or, at a minimum, stay home.

People often ask us to predict what the political environment will look like a year from now. The answer isn’t all that complicated. The political outlook for Republicans will largely depend on two basic statistics: how many jobs have been created and have real wages increased. In other words, have Republicans delivered the kind of change, especially economic change, voters expected?

VOTER DEFINITIONS OF CHANGE

But in the context of expectations, how do voters define and assess change? In a recent study for the Congressional Institute, we asked respondents to describe and rank the change they want to see from this President and Congress. The top four were jobs coming back to the U.S., dealing with terrorism, upholding the Constitution, and an increase in incomes. Voters see jobs coming back

By the Numbers...

Most important candidate qualities	Percentage	Trump - Clinton
Can bring needed change	39	82-14
Has the right experience	22	7-90
Has good judgment	20	25-65
Cares about people like me	15	34-57

Kinds of changes you would like to see	Ranking
Jobs coming back to US	1
Dealing with ISIS and terrorism	2
Upholding the Constitution	3
Increase in incomes	4

Issue	Republican Party - Democratic Party	Margin
Defense/terrorism	48-31	+17
Jobs	46-37	+9
Economy	44-36	+8
Taxes	42-37	+5
Health care	35-43	-8
Education	34-47	-13

as one of the best ways to improve the economy and their personal situations.

DEVELOPING POLICIES THAT MEET VOTER EXPECTATIONS

Republicans' top priority in the coming months must be to develop, enact and implement legislative accomplishments (and executive actions) that will directly address these major areas of concern. This means offering voters an anti-status quo "product line" with clear benefits to people, their families, and their communities. For example, in the context of jobs coming back to the U.S., there are a number of policy opportunities that can meet that definition of real change such as tax reform, regulatory reform, and health care reform.

Both parties have a history and long term standing with voters when it comes to how issues are handled which affects the starting position for each side when proposing policies on a particular issue. The chart on the preceding page shows issue handling on the major issues from recent survey research done by the Winston Group. Republicans' strongest issue is defense/terrorism, with a lead of 17 points. They also have advantages on the economy (+8) and jobs (+9). On taxes, Republicans have a five point lead, but with a margin that close, only a strong, comprehensive tax reform plan that people believe will improve their personal economic situations will win the issue. Republicans trail by 8 on health care, in part, because the electorate is not yet clear on what the Republican replacement for the Affordable Care Act will do.

ADOPTING A GOVERNING MINDSET

When it comes to voter expectations and issue preferences, Republicans have an advantage at the moment. But after eight years of President Obama in the White House, House and Senate Republicans have to rethink how they will govern and how they want to work with each other and with a more amenable White House to make the most of the huge opportunity they have been given. **They are now in charge.** This means that not only do Republicans have to be *for* things, but they have to demonstrate and explain how these policies will improve the lives of people and their communities.

Republicans have to transition from the mindset of "reacting to President Obama" into a new era of creating Republican initiatives that deliver results and

provide a governing framework. People want change and they want it soon. They expect Congress and the President to get something done and get government working again for them.

In a focus group after the election, one voter in Pittsburgh told us that it now felt like the country was in "*the bottom of the ninth and there are two outs.*" In other words, this might be America's last chance to get it right. Republicans in Congress need to focus on voter

priorities and they need to deliver results. **RF**



Republicans' top priority in the coming months must be to develop, enact and implement legislative accomplishments (and executive actions) that will directly address major areas of concern.

David Winston is the president of The Winston Group, a Washington, D.C., strategic planning and survey research firm. Myra Miller is the firm's Senior Vice President and Co-Founder.

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Brady Lays Out His Vision for Reforming the Nation's Tax Code

“Make it bold, make it permanent, and make it now.”

WASHINGTON, DC – In a June 7th speech to a breakfast meeting of The Ripon Society, U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady (TX-8) laid out his vision for reforming the nation's tax code, saying he would like to see a reform plan that is not only bold and permanent, but approved and signed into law by the end of 2017.

Brady serves as Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee. In this position, he is leading the effort underway on Capitol Hill to rein in the IRS and rewrite the tax code. He also led the Committee's work to author a reform [blueprint](#) that is intended to achieve this goal. Brady opened his remarks by talking about the blueprint, saying it is designed to ease the tax burden on American families here at home, while at the same time leveling the playing field for American businesses abroad.

“We went straight at our competitors with the lowest rates in modern history,” the Texas lawmaker declared, pointing to the fact that the blueprint cuts taxes across-the-board and noting that the U.S. is currently ranked 31st in the world for tax competitiveness. “That's what it takes for our companies to compete and win. We redesigned the tax system so our local businesses can compete and win anywhere in the world, including here at home. We

know that other countries don't tax worldwide. We still do, and it's time to end that.”

Brady has served as Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee since November 2015. He previously led two of the Committee's key panels – Health and Trade – and also served as the top House Republican on the Joint Economic Committee. Before



his election to Congress, he spent 18 years as a Chamber of Commerce executive, where he saw first-hand the tax code's impact on both big business and small business, and how the system had gotten so unwieldy it often could not tell the two apart.

As Ways & Means Chairman, he noted that he has been working closely with the White House and Administration officials to craft a single reform plan that will win support on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

“Perhaps the most encouraging thing I've seen is when President Trump agreed to have his team sit

down with the House and the Senate and work to unify behind one tax reform plan,” Brady said. “The thought of having two plans or three plans or six plans -- which is where it was headed -- was not going to get us to the finish line this year ... Our tax teams are meeting regularly. The principals from the House, Senate, and the White House are meeting weekly. I'm on the phone with Secretary Mnuchin several times a week at least. So we continue to do the work. And despite all the other white noise that's going on politically, it has not distracted us one minute about where we need to go. We are still focused.”

With regard to exact timing of the plan, Brady was optimistic but matter-of-fact.

“I tell people, ‘The focus should not be on the month, the focus should be on the year -- 2017.’ After 30 years of waiting for bold, pro-growth tax reform, achieving it in one year will be an achievement in itself. So we're still on that timetable going forward for 2017.”

Noting that the Ways & Means Committee has held numerous hearings and listening sessions to ask Americans what they want from the tax code, Brady said one message was heard loud and clear when it comes to tax reform: “Make it bold, make it permanent, and make it now.”

“Go bold and make it permanent so we can count on it,” he continued, referring to the feedback the

Committee received, “but do it now in 2017. That permanence I think is really critical. We’re looking for the greatest growth for the greatest number of years. And the way you do that is through the Reagan model in 1986, where he went bold with reforms. It balanced within the budget. Businesses could count on it, and families could count on it.”

As for those who remain skeptical that tax reform can be accomplished this year, Brady suggested that the past should serve as a guide here, as well.

“Tax reform is one of those issues that will be declared dead many times before it passes,” he observed. “Eight weeks before the tax reform bill passed in 1986, Senator Malcolm Wallop said, ‘If this were a horse, I would take it out back and shoot it.’ And yet eight weeks later, he was watching the President sign the bill into law.

Tax reform is a process. You work through a lot of issues. There is a lot in the current code that people feel strongly about. We made a decision to go very bold from the House standpoint, because we believe that’s where we need to go to compete.”

Following his remarks, Brady took a number of questions, including one about his first two years as Ways & Means Chairman and what he has found most surprising about the job. Here, too, the veteran legislator was not only realistic, but relentlessly upbeat.

“I knew it was the best job in town and it is,” he said. “I knew we had 24 of the smartest Republicans around on the Committee -- and that’s proven to be the case, as well. In any of these positions, some days you’re up and some days you’re not. That’s just sort of the way life works in

the political world. I don’t know that I’ve enjoyed every moment... But I really love this job. I love the issues we’re involved in. And after we finish health care and tax reform and try to get trade back on track and see where we can help on infrastructure, I’ve got some plans on our entitlement programs as well, because that’s the other part of getting our financial house in order.

“I’ll finish with this. These are all big issues, none more challenging than tax reform. For Congress, it is the challenge of a lifetime every time. And we’re kind of privileged. It may not feel like it right now, but we really do have the opportunity to dramatically change the course of this country. And not just for us. We always talk about making a difference for our kids and grandkids. We really have a chance to do that. I’m convinced we can, and I’m convinced we can this year.” **RF**



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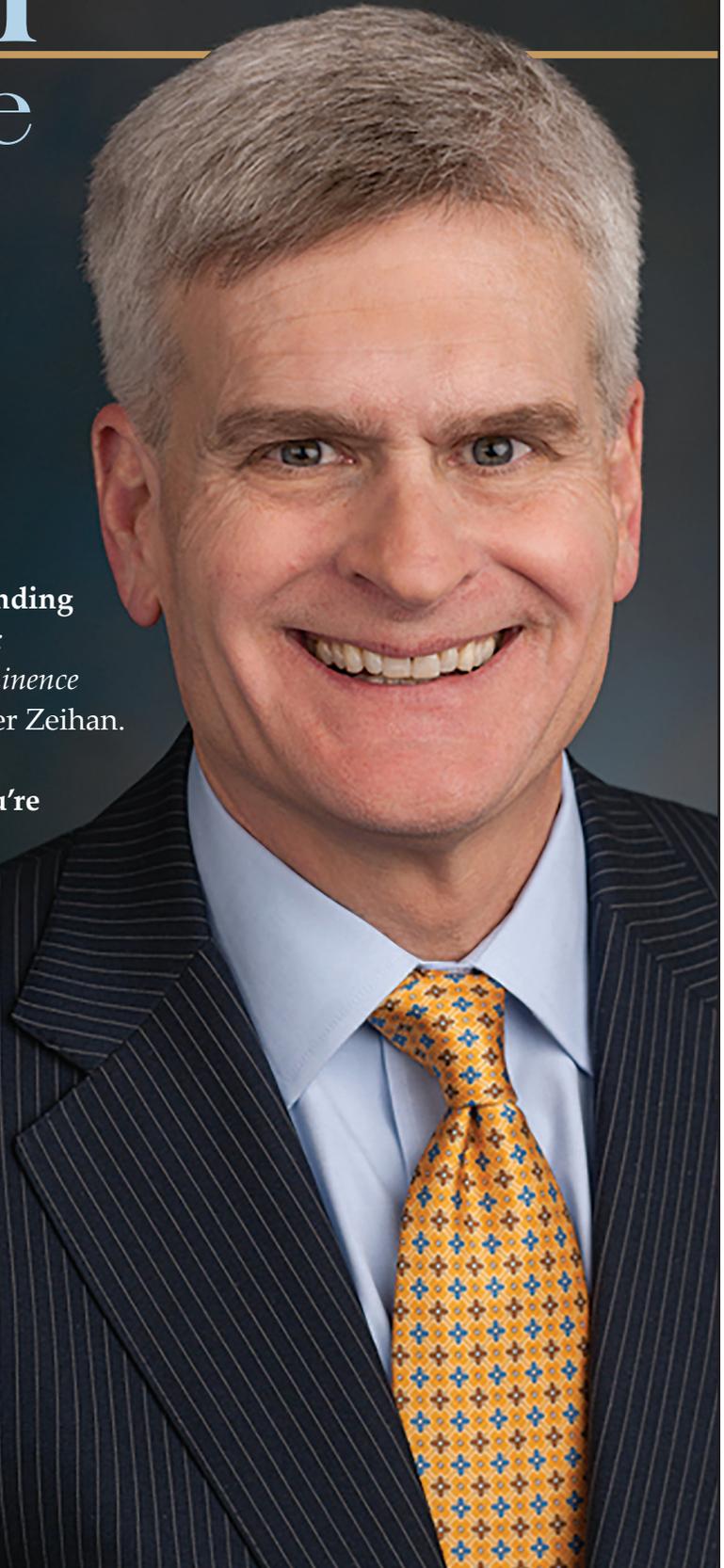
First job & lesson(s) you learned from it: Mowing grass. I learned if you work hard you can do well.

Book you read that you're recommending to friends: *The Accidental Superpower: The Next Generation of American Preeminence and the Coming Global Disorder* by Peter Zeihan.

Challenge facing your State that you're working to address: Better jobs for working families.

Priorities in the United States Senate that you hope to achieve this year: Replace ACA with a plan which meets the needs of working families. Reform National Flood Insurance Program and reauthorize it for 10 years.

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