



Reality Must Drive the Right's Actions Going Into 2024

November 21, 2022

Set aside whatever culprit or culprits you believe are to blame for the underwhelming results in 2022. I don't agree with those pundits who dismiss what was gained was insignificant. The Right took control of the U.S. House, which sent nasty Nancy Pelosi to the back benches. It also will stem the flood of spending that is causing historic inflationary pressure across the economy and it will allow critical investigations of the Biden Administration on corruption, border security, and the pandemic. That flip is a big deal.

Moreover, despite being grossly outspent by opponents and hit with 85% or more of negative media coverage, most losing Republican candidates still got within five percentage points. Imagine what would happen if the media stopped serving as lapdogs of the Left and Republican candidates only received 50% negative media coverage. Even though more and more Americans are tuning out the biased media, the drumbeat of negativity still does damage.

Nonetheless, the Right's continued inability to win the big races in key states should cause concern going into 2024.

With that concern in mind, let's deconstruct the map for 2024 based on history. The easy part is to identify the states we know with near certainty that will vote red and blue. The twenty-four states in the red column are: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming. These states total 219 Electoral Votes. You can put those Electoral Votes in the bank today.

These states all voted for Donald Trump twice. Equally important, Republicans garnered 67% of their U.S. House members, U.S. Senators, and governors from these states.¹ Specifically, from these states, Republicans get 60% of their U.S. House members, 92% of their U.S. Senators, and 81% of their governors. On the latter two figures, that means Republicans do a great job of winning races they should win in red states, but fare poorly outside of those states. With the three U.S. Senate exceptions noted below, Republicans need to retake the governor's mansions in Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and North Carolina. With these states, the Republican candidate is 51 votes short of winning the presidency.

¹ This figure assume Republicans will win the four uncalled congressional seats in Colorado and California where Republicans currently lead.

The nineteen states in the blue column are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. Democrats pull 64% of their U.S. House members, U.S. Senators, and Governors from these states, which breaks-down to 63% of their U.S House members, 69% of their Senators, and 67% of their governors. The latter two figures show that Democrats have done a great job of winning U.S. Senate and governor's seats in red states. At some point, Democrats likely will take U.S. Senator Susan Collins' seat in Maine and the governor's offices in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Virginia. These states total 213 Electoral Votes, leaving the Democrat candidate 57 votes shy of The White House.

What about the other eight states? Are Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin all truly battleground states? Let's deal with the four states I'd argue aren't battleground states: Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, and Virginia. In Michigan, Republicans have won just one top-of-the-ticket race out of six since 2016, which was Trump's razor thin win in 2016 by less than 11,000 votes. Joe Biden flipped Michigan back by more than 150,000 votes in 2020. In 2022, Michiganders voted to reelect shutdown Governor Gretchen Witmer by more than ten points and also flipped total control of the legislature to Democrats. As much as Ohio is red now, Michigan is blue (Go Bucks!).

Though Nevada is much closer to being a battleground, the numbers in that state are nearly as ugly. Since 2016, Republicans have won just one top-of-the-ticket race out of seven. In 2022, Republican Joe Lombardo won the governor's race by roughly 14,000 votes, as Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto secured reelection to the U.S. Senate by 11,000 votes. Hillary Clinton won Nevada in 2016 by twenty-seven thousand votes and Biden increased that win by five thousand votes in 2020. Democrats control the statehouse, as well. This state is the most promising one where Republicans can gain ground, especially as Hispanic voters move to the Right.

The story in North Carolina goes the other way. Democrats have only won top-of-the-ticket races twice out of seven opportunities—the governor's race in 2016 and 2020. Trump won North Carolina in 2016 by 175,000 votes and 2020 by 75,000 votes. Republicans now possess both U.S. Senate seats, control the state legislature, and retook control of the North Carolina Supreme Court in 2022.

As for Virginia, despite Glenn Youngkin's surprise gubernatorial win over Democrat Clinton machine man and former governor Terry McAuliffe in 2021 by 64,000 votes, Republicans have lost both U.S. Senate and presidential races since 2016. Clinton beat Trump by five percent in 2016 and Biden doubled that defeat to ten percent in 2020. The Democrat U.S. Senate triumphs hit double-digits both times.

Based on the above, I'd argue that Michigan, Nevada, and Virginia more than likely will vote for the Democrat in 2024, which puts the thirty-four Electoral Votes from those states in the

Democrat column. That places the Democrat presidential candidate at 247 Electoral Votes, or just twenty-three Electoral Votes from winning the presidency. I'd move North Carolina's sixteen Electoral Votes into the Republican column, thereby raising the Republican presidential candidate's haul to 235 Electoral Votes, or thirty-five Electoral Votes short of The White House.

This analysis leaves just Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin as the true battleground states in 2024. Based on top-of-the-ticket results since 2016, Democrats appear to have the advantage in Arizona and Pennsylvania where they've won ten out of fifteen races. With the U.S. Senate runoff in Georgia undecided, the parties have split the fourteen top-of-the-ticket races with seven wins each in Georgia and Wisconsin, making those states THE battleground states. In total, Democrats have won seventeen out of twenty-nine races in the four battleground states, as Republicans have won twelve out of twenty-nine races.

The problem for Republicans is that Democrats only need to win Pennsylvania and one other battleground state to secure the presidency in 2024. Thus, for Republicans to win in 2024, along with the states noted above, they simply must win Arizona, Georgia, and Wisconsin. Trump won all four states in 2016, but lost all four states in 2020. The paramount question for Republican voters is: do they think Trump can reclaim three of those four states in 2024, or is there another candidate more capable of securing North Carolina and winning those states?

An additional consideration to keep in mind is that Republicans also have three critical pick-up opportunities in U.S. Senate races in very red states: Jon Tester in Montana, Sherrod Brown in Ohio, and Joe Manchin in West Virginia. Those three races will be impacted by the presidential race. For Republicans to take control of the U.S. Senate, they must win at least one of those races.

Moreover, Republicans and Democrats each hold 60 U.S. House seats in "unfriendly" states (i.e., Republicans in blue states and vice-versa), with Republicans holding another twenty-nine seats and Democrats holding nineteen seats in battleground states. That means control of the U.S. House again will be a razor thin win for the winning side, with Republicans facing slightly tougher seats to defend given the higher number of seats it holds in battleground states.

Beyond focusing on who to get behind for 2024, national, state, county, and city Republican groups must invest heavily in get-out-the-vote efforts focused on early voting. Instead of whining about the post-pandemic rules that Democrats brilliantly and, in some cases, improperly changed, Republicans must master early voting or risk being relegated to losing in battleground races across the country.

The bottom line for Republicans over the next two years is that the electoral reality as laid out above more than anything must drive who they back for the presidency and key U.S. Senate races in 2024. Winning will come down to who can attract a majority of voters in four states. Nothing else will matter.