

DEMOCRATS SHOULDN'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE MIDTERMS

Carl Golden, October 17, 2022



There is a definite “whistling past the graveyard” vibe in the air surrounding the Nov. 8 Congressional midterm election.

The pursed lips belong to the Democratic Party leadership, who’ve spent the past few weeks confidently predicting their party will not only maintain control of the House of Representatives, but build on their majority.

Their optimism overlooks the long history of midterms - the party of the president loses seats - but ignores the boiling discontent in the country over a punishing rate of inflation that has driven the cost of virtually every commodity to heights not experienced in decades.

Consider this brief sampling:

Speaker Nancy Pelosi: "We will hold the House by winning more seats."

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer: "I think we're going to hold the majority and we may pick up a number of seats."

Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff: "We are increasingly optimistic about our ability to hold the House."

Their predictions are more about urging the party's base to keep a stiff upper lip than out of any realistic and deep conviction their forecasts will come to pass.

The headwinds Democrats are struggling to conquer are severe - a president whose job performance is stuck in the low 40 percent range, is underwater on virtually every issue of concern, and a nation that two-thirds of the populace believe is headed in the wrong direction.

The fears produced by an unpopular president and a concern his administration's policies are failing to generate favorable results are evident in the decision by Democratic congressional candidates to refuse to campaign with Joe Biden. Some have openly criticized him and suggested he stand down at the conclusion of his first term.

Struggling with a cost of living that has decimated their earning power and shows no significant signs of abating, voters will turn their wrath on the party in power - as has always been the case.

Each visit to the gas pump or the local supermarket are reminders of just how difficult it has become to escape living paycheck to paycheck. Rising mortgage interest rates have turned the dream of home ownership into a nightmare while purchasing a new car has given new meaning to the term "sticker shock."

Democrats were given a small flicker of hope and a bump in favorability when gasoline prices declined, but that's been snuffed out by slowly rising per gallon costs and the prospect of further increases caused by the decision by OPEC to reduce oil production by two million barrels per day.

Crime - particularly violent crime - has re-emerged as a top tier issue of concern, seized upon by Republican-led efforts to portray Democrats as soft on criminals and anti-law enforcement.

Democrats attempted to elevate access to abortion services as the turning point issue and, while it is a topic of concern and interest, it has been consistently ranked below inflation, cost of living, jobs, national economy, crime and immigration on the minds of voters.

With a two-seat majority (three vacancies) in the House, Democrats have little margin for error and polling has wavered only slightly in assessing the anticipated losses the party faces.

Estimates of Republican gains in the House have ranged from a low of 10 seats to upwards of 40 while control of the 50-50 Senate remains very much in play with predictions of a 52-48 edge for either party.

Republicans are feeling more confident of a unified Congress and that the Biden agenda is dead on arrival. In addition, the party is cautiously bullish on prospects for winning the White House in 2024, a task potentially made exceedingly difficult, however, should baggage laden ex-president Donald Trump secure the nomination.

Democratic leaders will, of course, continue to promote their "all is not lost" message. Conceding the potential for a national red wave and waving the white flag of surrender will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

They will continue to whistle while walking past the graveyard, rallying the troops to join in and hoping the tune is celebratory rather than funereal.

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