

## What The Midterms Mean For Conservatives (+ Trump)

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In case you hadn't noticed it, this is another election year. I know that people don't get as excited about midterm elections as they do about general elections where we vote for president, but midterm elections can be hugely important to our country's direction.

Historically, the party that the president belongs to loses a few seats during the midterm election, tilting the balance of Congress in favor of the opposing party. We saw that happen all through Obama's presidency, with him losing more and more of Congress throughout his presidency. Looking at this purely from a theoretical viewpoint, this can be seen as part of maintaining the balance of power in our government. But it can also be a major stumbling block in any president accomplishing his agenda.

Trump and the Republicans won the 2016 elections by a landslide. Not only did Trump win the presidency by a landslide, gaining 304 electoral votes to Hillary's 227, but Republicans gained the greatest majority they've enjoyed since 1931. One would think with both houses of Congress and the presidency in Republican hands, the party would be overjoyed and the party's platform rapidly implemented as law.

But it hasn't really worked out that way. First of all, President Trump really isn't a Republican in many people's minds. A Democrat most of his life, he has never gained the full trust of Republican lawmakers. But that's not all; Trump's stance on many issues is far from the rest of the Republican Party.

This rift in the Republican Party isn't as much Trump's fault as it is the fault of the Republicans in Congress. Typically, whichever president is in office is also the head of his party. As such, the party is supposed to back him up. But that hasn't been the case with Trump. Between the "never Trump" contingent and the RNOs in the Republican Party, there are too few lawmakers who have stood behind the President and what he's tried to accomplish.

Of course, if we compare the two principal political parties in our country, we find that the Democrats are much better at marching in lockstep than the Republicans. This is even true when the Democrats aren't fully in agreement with their party's direction. Obama was the farthest left-leaning member of the Senate, before being elected president, yet once he was voted in as the Commander in Chief, the entire party stood behind him in everything he did.

This doesn't happen in the Republican Party, which is much more divided; being comprised of a combination of conservatives and moderates. There is rarely a time when the entire party is in agreement and voting together, although there are many times that Democrats all vote the same on an issue, following their party's guidance.

The idea that the Republican Party is a conservative party is untrue. It is merely more conservative than the Democrat Party. They play on the "legend" of being conservative to garner the conservative vote, but they rarely follow-through in their promises to conservatives.

### How This Plays Out in Congress

What this means is that the Democrats have a distinct advantage in Congress. They are much more likely to find Republicans who are willing to side with them on an issue, than the Republicans are in finding Democrat lawmakers who will side with them.

This is, at least in part, the reason why Democrats always seem to get their way, regardless of who holds the majority in Congress. The Democrat's united front keeps them from budging an inch, pushing Republicans to make any concessions that are made. That's not how the system is supposed to work, but as we've seen over and over again, it's how the system is actually working.

Just look at a few of the hottest Republican topics in the 2016 election:

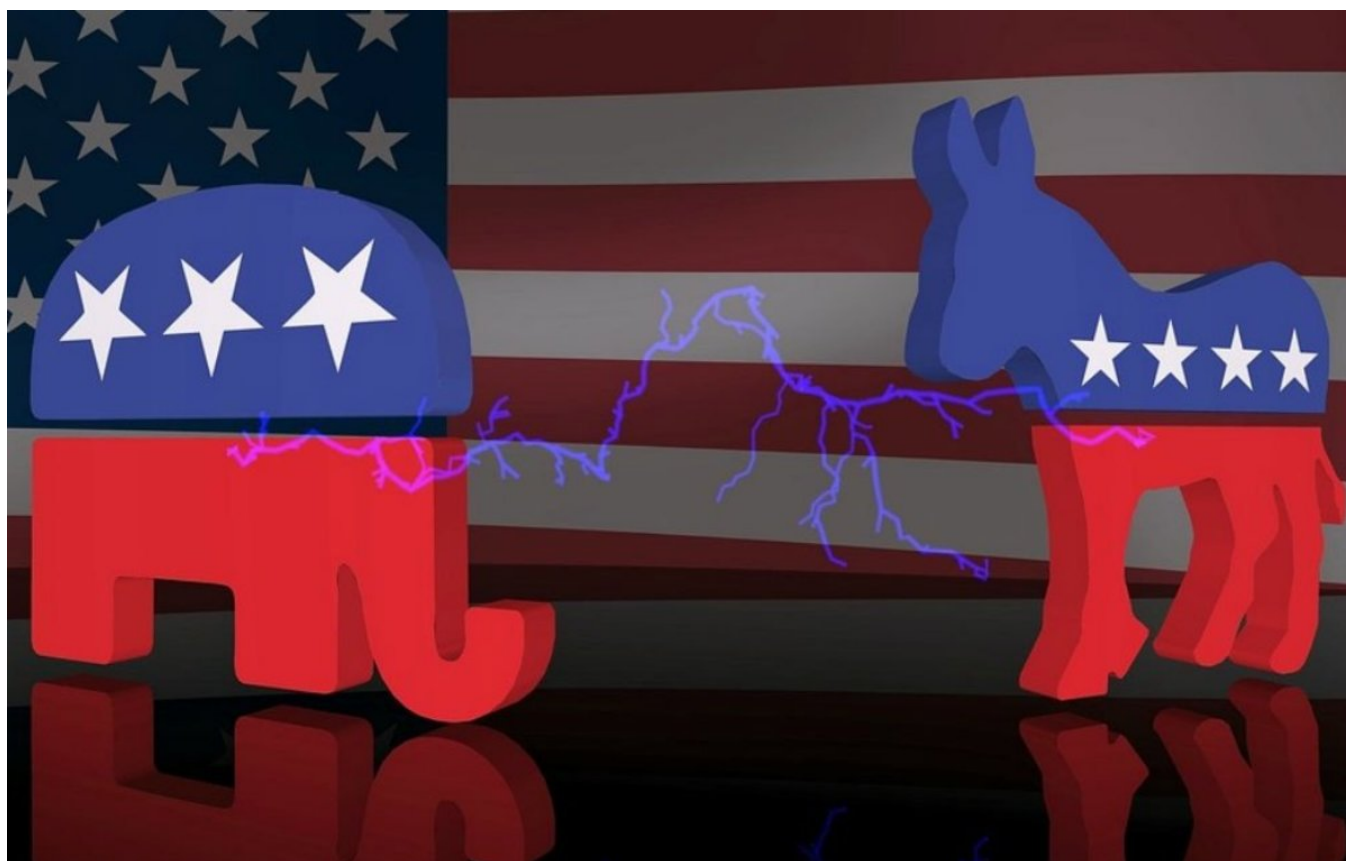
- Repeal Obamacare
- Defund Planned Parenthood
- Reduce the federal budget & national debt
- Immigration
- Second Amendment rights

Of those, which has Congress successfully addressed? None. Anything that has happened to address the issues of the Republican constituency has been done by the President, not by Congress.

Worse than that, the Republicans in Congress seem to be backing the Democrats, more than they are the President. Since Trump's inauguration there have been two budgets passed, both of which gave the Democrats essentially everything they asked for, while giving Trump nothing. He didn't get money for the wall, they continued to fund Planned Parenthood and they continued to provide funding for a host of other left-wing causes that President Trump wanted to eliminate by defunding them.

At the same time, the only two bills to increase gun rights which have been introduced in Congress have stalled. The Hearing Protection Act, which was intended to allow the purchase of firearm suppressors, without paying the ATF tax stamp was shelved by Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and the Concealed Carry Reciprocity bill has been stalled in committees.

I will give Congress credit for standing against the left's attacks on our Second Amendment rights, but just barely. The question still remains as to whether they are going to cave on this, especially when it comes to bump stocks. Of course, that issue is actually becoming irrelevant now, as the principal manufacturer of bump stocks is going to stop selling them.



## The President's Conservatism

Many on the political right have lauded Donald Trump's presidency as being a conservative, some even comparing it to Ronald Reagan's. It is easy to see where this has come from. Since being sworn into office as President and Commander in Chief, Donald Trump has done more for conservative causes than anyone since Reagan himself. That makes it seem like he is a conservative.

But Trump isn't really a conservative. He's pragmatic. He is the founder and has been the CEO of an international corporation, which made him a billionaire. How did he do that? By finding solutions which worked. That's exactly how he is running the country. It just so happens that solutions which work are mostly conservative solutions, not liberal ones. While that puts him on the side of conservatism, it doesn't mean that his personal core values are conservative.

Trump made a large number of campaign promises to the American people, but he didn't do it like most politicians do. Typically, politicians forget their campaign promises once they are elected; at least until it is time to start running for reelection. Then they dust off those old campaign promises and try to do something at least symbolic about them, so that they can point to that "success" in their reelection campaign.

But Trump is different. First of all, he's not a politician. Even though he's stinking rich, he's much closer to being a "normal working guy" than anyone who has been seated in the Oval Office in my lifetime. His word to the American people means something to him and he seems to be doing everything within his power to keep it.

The other factor here is that Trump isn't as beholden to major campaign contributors as most politicians. Only 18.6 percent of his total campaign contributions came from donors who gave more than \$100,000, while Clinton garnered 30.7 percent of her support from them. If you compare the top donors, side by side, the amounts of those donations were much smaller too.

Trump's success, from the very beginning of his campaign, has been based upon his popularity with the people, not with other politicians, not with the media and not with the behind-the-scenes movers and shakers of politics. Some have called him a "populist president," which is probably a fair accusation. He is popular; and he is popular because his constituents trust him; at first as an outsider and now because he is actually doing what he said he was going to do.

## The Coming Elections

But now we've got the mid-term elections coming up. The big question in everyone who tracks politics minds, is what's going to happen. Are the Republicans going to keep riding high on the anti-Obama wave or will the Democrats take control of Congress in a new wave of support?

Unfortunately, neither party has a strong track record to stand on. For the last three elections, Republican lawmakers have run on the promise of undoing what Obama and the Democrat-controlled Congress did during his first two years in office. First they said they needed the House of Representatives, so we the people gave it to them. Then they said they needed the Senate, so we gave them that too. Finally, they said that they needed the presidency, so in 2016, we voted the Republican candidate in. But even with that, the Republicans haven't done what they promised to do.

Granted, fulfilling Republican campaign promises is going to hurt some people; that's a given. That won't play out well in the media. But by not doing what they promised to do, Republican lawmakers are hurting the very people who voted them into office, rather than hurting those who voted Democrat. Do they really think that they are going to get those people to change their vote by not taking away their free goodies from Uncle Sam?

To a large part, the media is driving this. It has been proven a number of times over, that media influence has a major part to play in who wins elections. Since the number one goal of any politician is to get reelected, that gives the media an inordinate amount of power over our country's political system. A power, as we all know, which they are using to further the progressive-liberal agenda.

What this means is that Republican lawmakers can't point to their successful track record in the upcoming campaign. Literally the only thing they can show their constituency for their last two years of effort is passing tax reform, which was a Trump initiative. They can't talk about much else.

This could cause Republican voters to stay home from the voting booth in droves, as it has before. If that happens, we will see the same results we've seen over and over again; Democrat wins. But why should Republican voters bother to turn out, when there is no reason for them to believe that their elected officials are going to do what they were voted into office to accomplish?

The only way that Republicans can win is to rally behind Donald Trump and ride back into office on his coattails. But there are too many of them who are still busier being anti-Trumpers, than backing up their president. While politicians may be good at speaking out of both sides of their mouth, that one might be too much of a stretch to manage.

Fortunately for Republicans, things are even worse for the Democrats who will be opposing them. The

Democrat party literally doesn't have anything to stand on for the upcoming elections. They've lost their vision, their direction and their plan. They have nothing to offer except hate. So, they're capitalizing on that, standing on a platform of hate Trump. That's it. "Vote for me, because you and I both hate Trump." What a great campaign speech.

Between problems in the Republican Party and problems in the Democrat Party, this is turning into what could very well go down in the history books as the election of losers, rather than winners. Those who get elected into office won't get there by winning their election, but by their opposition losing it. It won't be because they are such great candidates that people turn out to vote for them, but rather because too few people will turn out to vote for the other guy or gal, as the case may be.

## The Supreme Court

One of the big issues of the 2016 election came to be the empty spot on the Supreme Court, vacated by the untimely and rather suspicious death of Antonin Scalia, probably the most conservative member of the court. Many on the right saw this as a defining issue, being concerned about Hillary Clinton appointing a liberal justice and giving the left a strong majority on the highest court in the land.

Trump's win and subsequent appointment of Neil Gorsuch maintained the balance of power in the Supreme Court. But we most likely could be facing the same sort of danger in the upcoming two years. Of the seven Supreme Court Justices, two are likely candidates for replacement between now and 2020. These are Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Clarence Thomas.

While the Supreme Court tends to be populated by older justices, Ginsburg is currently the oldest serving justice at 85. She is also the most liberal of all the justices currently on the court. However, she has made it clear that she has no intention of retiring and running the risk of her chair being taken by a conservative, at least as long as Donald Trump is in office. But at her age, she's already managed to beat the average life expectancy in the United States, so there is no guarantee she will be around until the end of Trump's presidency.

Two other justices, Anthony Kennedy, who is 81 and Steven Breyer, who is 79, are old enough so that their age and subsequent health could play a role. Breyer was appointed by Bill Clinton and Kennedy, who is the most moderate member of the court, often serving as the tie-breaker, was appointed by Reagan.

Of course, there is always the possibility of one of the other justices deciding to retire. While partisanship shouldn't play a part in the workings of the Supreme Court, the appointment of justices to his highest court is the epitome of a political act. Therefore, the retirement of any of the justices becomes a political act as well, whether they want it to or not.

Rumors have floated around about one justice or another retiring. But they are just that... rumors; not based in fact. As of this writing, there are no justices talking publically about retiring, except in the negative sense.

Even so, the risk of one of the justices retiring or dying needs to be paramount in our thinking for the upcoming election. President Trump made an excellent choice in selecting Neil Gorsuch to fill Scalia's empty seat. I can be assumed that he will make as good a choice again, should he need to fill another seat. But that is only true if he has the backing of a Republican majority in the Senate. If he loses that, the best we can hope for is a moderate, along the lines of Justice Kennedy. If this new justice replaced

a conservative, that could give the liberals a decided advantage on some important issues.



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