

Mainstream Democrats Deliver Against Extreme Republicans



Democrats fended off intra-party primary challenges from the extremes—unlike Republicans.

- The center-left NewDem Action Fund had a 77% success rate with its endorsed candidates in primaries. Moderates like Haley Stevens (MI11), Shontel Brown (OH11), and Sean Casten (IL06) who were targeted by the far left overcame those internecine attacks. Candidates endorsed by Sanders-style Our Revolution and AOC-style Justice Dems lost more than they won, with primary win rates about half that of New Dems (37% and 43% respectively).
- Where far-left candidates did succeed in the primaries, they underperformed in the general. In OR05, their candidate lost a winnable seat, while in TX28, a moderate Democrat the left attempted to oust won by double digits.

- By contrast, the Republican primaries consistently favored the most extreme candidates, with Trump's endorsements carrying the day in 21 of 26 races. According to The New York Times, 70% of Republican candidates for Congress have questioned the legitimacy of the 2020 election, and 8 of 10 Republicans who supported impeachment are now unemployed.

Swing voters were the majority makers.

- From coast to coast, voters split their tickets in major statewide races—choosing mainstream Democratic candidates against extreme Republicans. The votes are still being counted, but in key states like Wisconsin, Georgia, New Hampshire, and Arizona, it looks like a decisive number of voters chose different parties on the same ballot.
- Although turnout was down in Biden counties in battleground states, making the electorate about two points more Republican leaning than the last election cycle, Democrats were able to outperform Biden's support by persuading swing voters.
- According to AP Votecast, Republicans outnumbered Democrats by four points in the electorate, but Democrats held on and flipped seats in many places because they appealed to Independents—winning that group overall by four points.

Moderate candidates overcame historical headwinds.

- New Dems delivered the gavel to Nancy Pelosi in 2018 and were the only ideological caucus to flip seats (3) from red to blue in 2020. They have flipped 7 seats red to blue so far this cycle and defended countless swing seats from Republican challenges. Justice Dems and Our Revolution have continued their record of ZERO flipped districts since their formation. It's now three cycles in a row they have failed to contribute to a Dem majority.
- When asked to map themselves and the parties on an ideological scale, voters put themselves closer to Republicans than Democrats—as do swing voters. And a majority of voters (55%) describe Democrats as preachy and too extreme, and 59% say the party has gotten more extreme in recent years.
- Yet successful candidates were able to overcome the baggage of the party brand by distancing themselves from the far left. When asked which party has nominated more extreme candidates this cycle, voters chose Republicans by a seven-point margin (44%–37%). Among swing voters, that margin was twenty points. In key states including Ohio (10 points), New Hampshire (12 points), and Georgia (3 points), moderate candidates significantly outperformed other Democrats on the statewide ballot.

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