

Review of the California 2018 Midterm Election and What It Portends for the Future

Report by Carole Georges

The Institute for Governmental Studies at Berkeley sponsors a Conference after each California Statewide election to analyze the results and interpret trends for the future. It is open to the public, free and this year it was held in the auditorium of the beautiful, newly built Citrix Building. The lunch was also free and a notch above most conference lunches.

The First Session was about the Changing California Electorate.

Notables on the first panel were Lisa Bedolla, Director of the Institute; Kristin Olsen, former Assembly Republican Leader; Mindy Romero, Director, California Civic Engagement Project, USC; Dan Schnur, Director Sacramento Bee California Influencer Series

There were changes in the makeup of the electorate this year. The numbers of youth voting increased from the 2014 election almost 20% so that they now amount to 7% of the electorate. 21% of Latinos voted, although 36% were eligible. The numbers on race and ethnicity were imputed from the location of the votes and other factors according to Political Data, Inc.

Another important point about the electorate is that there is a misconception about Independents that they are “moderates”. Actually, these people are dissatisfied and have hostility toward both major parties and “politics as usual”.

With respect to **Republicans**, Kristen Olsen, former Assembly Republican Leader stated that Republican registration is 12% down in the last two decades and with the white population going down, the Republican party is “dead” in California. The Party has been unable to demonstrate that it is different from the National Party. She expects 2020 to be the same. In 2008 a study was done, but the Republican Party rejected the outreach it recommended and moved more toward white nationalism. UCLA research found that there is now more diversity in the suburbs, therefore outreach needs to change.

The California Republican Project reports that Republicans don't care about housing affordability, mobility, income inequality, poverty levels, transit, school choice.

Some are trying to explore creating a third party which would need 3 or 4 common issues, a donor base and to rebuild from the ground up with a new director and staff

As to **Democrats**, growth in the Party has been driven by Latinos and Asians. Their registration has been sustained with young Latinos now in Leadership. Orange County Moms have been organizing for 15 years and are now openly Democratic. The Cohort that voted in 2018 could be a sustained higher turnout.

[Lets do the work to make that happen]

The Second Session was about The Battle to Be Governor

The panel for this Session consisted of men who were Campaign officials and DeLaine Eastin. The question put to the panel was “What was the most effective sales pitch?” Gavin Newsom’s Chief Strategist, Ace Smith, said the Story of the Candidate was important. Newsom’s strategy was to drive the debate, to show he knew more about national and international issues. Attention was paid to media markets. The goal was to win in the Primary.

Villaraigosa’s Campaign Manager, Pat Dennis, said the goal was to end up in the top two in the Primary. Villaraigosa was aiming for the moderate, blue collar vote. He was handicapped by being five years out of office.

John Chiang’s strategist, Brandon Hall, said he was seen as fiscally conservative although he is more liberal on other issues. Although he was seen as well rounded, many groups did not see him as a Chief Executive.

According to Tim Rosales, Campaign Manager for John Cox, their strategy was to let Villaraigosa and Chiang fight each other, so Cox could get into second place in the Primary. He got Gingrich’s endorsement early.

Delaine Eastin, former Superintendent of Public Instruction, said she got into the race to remind people how important Education is as an issue. She said Budgets are statements of Values.

In General, Democrats spent money smartly, aiming to win in the North and break even in the South.

The Third Session was titled Year of the Woman II

Panel members included Nicole Boucher, Co-Executive Director, Donor Table; Mary Hughes, Democratic Strategist; Amanda Renteria, Chairwoman, Emerge America.

There are a number of Democratic organizations working to enable women to run for office:

Emerge America trains women candidates. Amanda Renteria talked about training women activists, passionate, sincere candidates of diverse backgrounds. So far, they have trained 415 candidates. There are now 15 Latinas in the State Legislature.

California Donor Table matches funds with training. One aim is to find electable seats including open seats. Strategies included investing in Orange County, the Central Valley and San Diego. Also, building a civic engagement structure was a goal: being in touch with the community, providing campaign consultants, collecting data, providing support after the election. There were candidates in local elections, using community power accrued from work in the community. The focus was on what matters to local communities – i.e. water issue.

The Million Voters Project seeks to mobilize minorities, immigrants, refugees, faith-based constituencies, formerly incarcerated people, and young voters to civic engagement.

There are now enough women in the U.S. Senate - 30% - to change the discussion. There will be “role modeling” in the next National Campaign. There will be use of progressive potential, exercising power in a bigger way – do more good work, get more power.

Women expect to broaden images of leadership: 1) Decisiveness, 2) Strength, toughness; 3) law enforcement; 4) slaying of dragons; 5) focus on America’s children.

Their hurdles are “likeability vs. strength”, women punished for asking for what they want, and women are trained to accommodate vs. authenticity.

Liz Cheney wants to see women appointed to the Senate.

Session IV was about What Happened in Competitive House Races

On this Panel were Katie Merrill from Fight Back California; Pablo Rodriguez, Founding Executive Director, Communities for a New California; Mike Madrid, Republican Consultant, GrassrootsLab; Mark DiCamillo, Director, Berkeley IGS Poll; and Lea Grundy, Partner, Groundworks Campaigns

Mark DiCamillo described the polling IGS did. They had 8 polls going at the same time, 6 weeks before the election. There were email invites to voters who were on the voter rolls. They used stratified, random samples, 500-1,000 sample size of likely voters. By October 4th, it was clear that there was a heavy risk for the GOP in California.

There was a domestic thread, the view of Trump’s political performance; in 6 of his districts, the President was underwater.

For the GOP, the gas tax did not work this time; health care and cost of living issues were more important.

Latino turnout was high for a midterm election.

For the **Democrats**, many activist groups were affecting the election. Communities for a New California (CNC) has an Action Fund for State and local races that related to the San Joaquin and Coachella Valleys, Imperial County and the Central Coast. They helped in Districts 10 and 21.

National Groups had previously come in late; now Fight Back California was targeting Ticket Splitter voters, persuadable voters.

There was a California War Room that brought together Red to Blue, Next Gen, Labor voter files, Voter Fund, CNC, Indivisible and Swing Left.

From the Field Perspective, resources were flowing in, activists were firedup. Money and people went to flippable districts.

There was early investment – 1 year in advance. There was a focus on issues and holding the GOP accountable, for example, Trump Tuesdays in Issa's District.

Gil Cisneros volunteers did 132,000 doors, 755,000 phones, 46,00 voter I.D.s for Get Out the Vote (GOTV), social media and mail.

Volunteers stayed with the campaign – 27,000 in the last 4 days.

The Party overperformed in registration of millennials in communities of color.

For the Republicans,

Mike Madrid, Republican Consultant, GrassrootsLab, said that they are On the Down Escalator, The train is down the track. He saw 1) the election drive the Latino vote to a historic turnout, 2) a historic break against the GOP – 70%, 3) a break in the GOP coalition, 4) in the 25th C.D., (Northern San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas) college educated GOP women voted for Democrat Katie Hill or did not vote.

In Orange County, for college educated women, the Kavanaugh hearings moved them toward the Democrats.

In District 10, Denham's District, GOP voters hated him, or really hated him. In District 22, 26% of Latino voters and Decline to State voters were against Nunes. They were still outnumbered.

The issue now is what a Congressperson does – i.e., Kevin McCarthy. For the GOP, the question is whether my country is more important than my party.

Overall, the Main issues were health care, the economy and in San Joaquin – water.

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UPDATE – At their Convention, February 24th, the State GOP elected Jessica Patterson, a Latina, the first woman to head their party. They also voted for Peter Kuo, a Taiwan immigrant, to be Vice Chairman and Greg Gandrud, who is openly gay, to be Party Treasurer.