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## Why Democrats Are So Okay With Losing



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Ever since the Democratic Party abandoned its New Deal legacy and adopted the neoliberal centrism associated with the Carter presidency and then cast in stone by the Democratic Leadership Council in 1985, each election loss has generated a chorus of remonstrations in the left-liberal press about the need to run “progressive” candidates if the party wants to win. The latest instance of this was a post to the Jacobin FB page that stated: “By running to the right, Democrats insist on losing twice: at the polls and in constructing an inspiring agenda. Bold left-wing politics are our only hope for long-term, substantive victory.”

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The question of why Democrats are so okay with losing has to be examined closely. In some countries, elections have huge consequences, especially in Latin America where a job as an elected official might be not only a source of income for a socialist parliamentarian but a trigger for a civil war or coup as occurred in Costa Rica in 1948 and in Chile in 1973 respectively.

In the 2010 midterm elections, there was a massive loss of seats in the House of Representatives for the Democrats. In this month's midterm elections, the Democrats hoped that a "Blue Wave" would do for them what the 2010 midterms did for the Republicans—put them in the driver's seat. It turned out to be more of a "Blue Spray", not to speak of the toothless response of House leader Nancy Pelosi who spoke immediately about how the Democrats can reach across the aisle to the knuckle-dragging racists of the Republican Party.

Out of curiosity, I went to Wikipedia to follow up on what happened to the "losers" in 2010. Did they have to go on unemployment? Like Republicans who got voted out this go-round, Democrats had no trouble lining up jobs as lobbyists. Allen Boyd from Florida sent a letter to Obama after the BP oil spill in 2010 asking him to back up BP's claim that seafood in the Gulf of Mexico was okay to eat. After being voted out of office, he joined the Twenty-First Century Group, a lobbying firm founded by a former Republican Congressman from Texas named Jack Fields. A 1980 article on Fields describes him as a protégé of ultraright leader Paul Weyrich.

Glenn Nye, who lost his job as a Virginia congressman, his considerable CV that included working for the Agency for International Development (AID) and serving in various capacities during the occupation of Iraq to land a nice gig as Senior Political Advisor for the Hanover Investment Group.

John Spratt from South Carolina was described by Dow Jones News as "one of the staunchest fiscal conservatives among House Democrats." That was enough for him to land a job with Barack Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform that was supposed to come up with a strategy to reduce the deficit. Just the sort of thing that was calculated to lift the American economy out of the worst slump since the 1930s. Not.

Pennsylvania's Chris Carney was a helluva Democrat. From 2002 to 2004, he was a counterterrorism analyst for the Bush administration. He not only reported to Douglas Feith in the Office of Special Plans and at the Defense Intelligence Agency, researching links between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, but served as an interrogator in

Guantanamo. These qualifications landed him a job as director of homeland security and policy strategy for BAE Systems when the House of Representatives gig ended. A British security and munitions powerhouse, BAE won a contract worth £4.4bn to supply the Saudis with 72 fighter jets – some of which were used to bomb Red Cross and Physician Without Borders hospitals in Yemen.

With such crumb-bums losing in 2010, you'd think that the Democrats would be convinced that their best bet for winning elections would be to disavow candidates that had ties to the national security apparatus and anything that smacked of the DLC's assault on the welfare state. Not exactly. When the candidates are female, that might work in the party's favor like sugar-coating a bitter pill.

In Virginia, former CIA officer Abigail Spanberger and retired Navy Commander Elaine Luria defeated Republican incumbents. Air Force veteran Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, former CIA analyst Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, and former Navy pilot Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey also helped the Democrats regain the House. Sherrill calculated that moving to the center would serve her own and the party's interests. She told MSNBC: "As a Navy helicopter pilot I never flew Republican missions or Democratic missions, I would have had a very short career. This is something I do think vets bring to the table, this willingness to work with everyone."

An article titled "['Montclair Mikie' Sherrill recast as 'Moderate Mikie' as Webber attacks in NJ House race](#)" described her Road to Damascus conversion to DLC principles:

For Sherrill, a newcomer to politics, the 11th has proved to be a tricky terrain. She is seen as a progressive, but appears wary of carrying the "Trump resistance" banner into the fray. At Wednesday's debate, Sherrill was determined to show she is more Morris Plains than Montclair.

There were no heated vows to fight Trump, even though being "appalled" by the president was what motivated her to run in the first place. The Nov. 6 midterms loom as a referendum on Trump's presidency, but you would never have guessed that watching Wednesday's contest.

Sherrill repeatedly promised to be bipartisan — a far cry from the combative, confrontational tone that many in the party's grass roots are demanding.

On tax policy she sounded more centrist Republican than mainstream liberal Democrat, and she refused to endorse issues like free community college tuition, which has become a popular talking point for Democrats and was launched by Gov. Phil Murphy this summer.

“Without understanding how that would be paid for, I haven’t supported it because it sounds like it would raise taxes on our families,” she said.

The moderate tone puzzled some of her ardent “resistance” activists who mobilized around her candidacy.

For Eric Fritsch, 32, a Teamster for the film and television industry from West Orange, it was jarring to hear Sherrill oppose Democratic Party wish-list items like free community college tuition or “Medicare-for-all” coverage out of fear that it may raise taxes. She used the same excuse to sidestep supporting a “carbon tax” to reduce global warming.

“By going on the defensive about taxes ... she is accepting a Republican framing that we don’t want to be responsible with taxes in the first place,” said Fritsch, who insisted that he remains a “very enthusiastic” Sherrill supporter.

It should be abundantly clear by now that the Democratic Party leadership will be selecting a candidate in 2020 in all ways identical to Hillary Clinton but perhaps with a less tawdry past and less of an appetite for Goldman-Sachs speaking fees. Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer, Joe Biden, Andrew Cuomo, et al have no intention of allowing upstarts like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to spoil their plans, even if it means a second term for Donald Trump.

No matter. Jacobin editor Bhaskar Sunkara urges his readers and DSA comrades to plunge ahead trying to consolidate a “socialist” caucus in the Democratic Party. From his perspective, working in the Democratic Party seems to be the “most promising place for advancing left politics, at least in the short term.” Keep in mind that Sherrill raised \$1.9 million for her campaign and my old boss from Salomon Brothers Michael Bloomberg ponied up another \$1.8 million just for her TV ads. Does anybody really think that “socialist” backed candidates will be able to compete with people like Sherrill in the primaries? Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was able to defeat the hack Joe Crowley on a shoestring but that was something of a fluke. Until there is a massive shake-up in American society that finally reveals the Democratic Party to be the capitalist tool it has been since Andrew Jackson’s presidency, it is likely that a combination of big money and political inertia will keep the Democratic Party an agent of reaction.

Furthermore, the takeover of the House might turn out to be a hollow victory in the light of how Trump rules. His strategy hasn’t been to push through legislation except for the tax cut. Remember the blather about investing in infrastructure? His minions in Congress have no intention of proposing a trillion or so dollars in highway or bridge repair, etc. With

Nancy Pelosi fecklessly talking about how the two parties can collaborate on infrastructure, you can only wonder whether she has been asleep for the past two years.

Donald Trump has been transforming American society not by legislation but by using his executive powers to put people in charge of government agencies who are inimical to their stated goals. It is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse as Malcolm X once put it. Two days ago, the NY Times wrote about how the “Trump Administration Spares Corporate Wrongdoers Billions in Penalties”. It did not need legislation to help big banks rip off the public. All it took was naming former head of BankOne Joseph Otting comptroller of the currency. Senator Sherrod Brown, one of the few Democrats with a spine, called Trump out: “The president’s choice for watchdog of America’s largest banks is someone who signed a consent order — over shady foreclosure practices — with the very agency he’s been selected to run.”

For all of the dozens of articles about how Trump is creating a fascist regime, hardly any deal with the difference between Trump and Adolf Hitler. Hitler created a massive bureaucracy that ran a quasi-planned economy with generous social benefits that put considerable restraints on the bourgeoisie. Like FDR, he was taking measures to save capitalism. Perhaps if the USA had a social and economic crisis as deep as Germany’s and left parties as massive as those in Germany, FDR might have embarked on a much more ambitious concentration camp program, one that would have interred trade unionists as well as Japanese-Americans. Maybe even Jews if they complained too much.

By contrast, Trump is imposing a regime that was incubated long ago by people such as Grover “Starve the Beast” Norquist and every other libertarian think-tank funded by the Koch Brothers et al. The big bourgeoisie might not like the bad taste, racism and thuggish behavior of the Trump administration but they couldn’t be happier with the results. This is an elected government that has fulfilled its deepest policy aspirations and that shows a willingness to push the Democrats back on their heels, so much so that someone like Mikie Sherrill lacks the courage to defend policies that might win elections down the road. After all, if she is unseated, she can always go back to a job as a federal prosecutor in New Jersey. What happens to someone working in Walmart’s is not her business, after all