



The Big Blue Bi-coastal Vise closeth

There is a big blue bi-coastal voter vise that is closing in on Republicans for the 2020 Presidential Election and it is comprised of four states on the West coast (plus Hawaii) and thirteen on the East Coast (including D.C.). Given past voting history, probably all these states will cast their popular and electoral votes for the Democratic Presidential candidate in 2020. Altogether, that's 153 electoral votes.

Some of the states on the West coast were narrowly won by Hillary Clinton in 2016. She walked away with California with 62% of the popular vote, but she only won Washington State by 52.6%, Oregon by 50.7% and Nevada by about 48%. Over on the East coast, the picture for the Democrats was also predictable: Clinton won New York with 59%, Massachusetts with 60% and New Jersey with 63%, among others. The Nation's Capitol gave Clinton a whopping 86.8% of the popular vote while neighboring Virginia gave her 49.7%, but Donald Trump earned 44.4% making the win in Virginia a slim one for the Democrats in a solidly Blue state.

The Midwestern states weighed in with Illinois giving Clinton 55.8% of their vote while Donald Trump only managed to earn 38.8%, making the margin a large, 17% one. Clinton's margin in Minnesota was a razor thin 1.5% (Minnesota also had the largest voter turnout of any U.S. state with 75%)! Trump's win in Wisconsin was a surprise. He garnered 47.2% to Hillary Clinton's 46.5%. Michigan was also a big surprise; Trump took the state by a 0.23% margin (10,704 votes). We all know that the Republicans won in Florida and Texas and in the mountain states and in the Mid-Atlantic states and in the South, but they lost Colorado and New Mexico. The loss in Colorado was expected, but so was New Mexico as the state was already Republican oxygen-deprived and was 'turning blue' during the second Martinez administration.

What's in play for 2020, and where should the President turn his attention, assuming that the 'Big Blue Bi-coastal Vise' keeps tightening against the Republicans?

In my last book on the Republican Party, "Breaking Republican," co-authored by a long-time D.C. pollster, Lance Tarrance, we laid out several scenarios by which a Republican could win in 2016. We also predicted that a 'third wave' or non-traditional Republican candidate had the best chance of winning. Unlike many political analysts at the time, we were right. On election eve in November of 2016, I sat outside the Marriott Hotel in NYC overlooking Times Square on a TV stage as part of a panel of experts organized by the Danish National Broadcasting System. We were sending our program live to Denmark and southern Sweden all through the evening, commenting as the state totals came in. I was the token American on the stage and fielded many questions that night. As the evening wore on, I was asked what I thought Trump's chances were. I said 60% (Pennsylvania hadn't been called yet). I could hear the chuckles and see the grins from the other panelists and the host who then turned to me and said, "Are you sure? Do you want to revise your prediction?" I looked at her and said, "Yes, I do. I'll give him an 80% chance." A short while later, we closed down the set and I walked back to my hotel and fell fast asleep. When I awoke, the networks were calling Trump the winner.

Sometimes it's good to be right and sometimes it's even wonderful, but if the Republicans think they're going to give Donald Trump another four years without an all-out street fight they're wrong. Crystal ball gazing is one thing, but elections are won through hard work. Republicans will need to: 1. shore up their base in the big electoral vote states, 2. recruit a lot more conservative voters, 3. make an appeal to the college-age voter with a powerful message that resonates with their generation, 4. make a concerted effort to turn out Black and Hispanic voters, 5. start now with

messaging to middle-age and older women, 6. concentrate some of their firepower on a few of the states in the 'Blue Vise' where they almost won in 2016 (like Washington, Oregon and Nevada), 7. spend some time with - and download some money to - a few GOP state organizations in promising 'purple' states that could be turned in 2020 and, finally, 8. get to know the individual states' local issues and electorates better and work with Republican leaders to identify ways to solve them with a true national/local effort.

Much can - and will - happen before the 2020 primaries, but Republicans have an advantage; they will not be choosing a candidate. Democrats will, and their contest promises to bring out all their skeletons from their very spacious walk-in closet. Like Indiana Jones in the movie 'The Last Crusade,' they must choose wisely in order to reach the Holy Grail of the Presidency. If the Dems want to re-capture the Midwest and hang on to the states they barely won in 2016 they will not do so by nominating an ultra-Progressive or Socialist-leaning candidate. That kind of candidate will not rip Texas, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania from the clutches of the Republicans. Relying solely on the Blue Vise will not be enough. While it may once again win them the battle of the popular vote, it will most assuredly lose them the electoral vote war.

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