

The fight to be the 51st

By Jasper Williams

'Taxation without Representation'
-Washington D.C.

Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush Sr. and Barack Obama have all made overtures towards the admittance of a 51st state to the union. So then why has a new state not entered the union for the longest stretch in American history, especially when there are areas calling for statehood that have been part of the USA for centuries?

Together with the fifty states, the United States has sixteen territories, existing in a limbo between independence and statehood, and characterised by some as being 'colonial'. Of these sixteen territories, five are occupied: American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. The latter four are organised, meaning they have government, which is necessary given their combined population of 4,045,385, as of 2010. The most significant of these states is Puerto Rico acquired in 1898, which has a greater population than 21 of the states

proper. Although the term 'territory' traditionally implied eventual statehood, the term is not so clear anymore.

Puerto Rico's special position means that, whilst its population are American citizens, the Constitution and Bill of Rights only partially apply to them, and whilst the United States Congress has full jurisdiction over the territory, Puerto Rico has no senators and only one non-voting member of the House. Couple this with the fact that the territories are unable to vote in presidential elections (due to the Electoral College only giving votes to states and the District of Columbia) and it becomes clear that there are over 3,000,000 American citizens in Puerto Rico who are disenfranchised at the national level. This allows Puerto Rico to be effectively governed as a colony, ironically being subject to federal taxation, without representation.

The disenfranchisement of more than three million US citizens should, in theory, make statehood an obvious choice. However, there have been a series of votes over the years which

indicate the people of Puerto Rico are not unanimous on the matter. In addition, five referenda on the status of Puerto Rico have been held. In 1967 and 1993, preservation of the present 'commonwealth' status defeated the other options of statehood or independence. In 1998, 50.5% of voters chose 'none of the above' on the ballot paper due to disputes over what the other terms ('statehood', 'independence', 'free association', and 'territorial commonwealth') meant. 2012 marked the first time that Puerto Rico voted for a

"Taxpayers are slapped with a large tax burden, whereas illegal aliens are blessed with the generosity of the American welfare state"

change in its status, with 54% of people voting against continuing its territorial status, and 61% of people favouring statehood out of the non-territorial options. However, this result has been marred by the 2017 referendum, which saw statehood win 97% of the vote, but with only 23% turnout due to a boycott by the pro-territory Popular Democratic Party. This lack of clarity over what Puerto Ricans themselves want is capitalised upon by those who wish to keep them disenfranchised, including citizens who



believe they enjoy more autonomy as a territory.

In the wake of Hurricane Maria though, Puerto Rico's representative in the House, Jennifer González-Colón, introduced a bill 'to enable the admission of the territory of Puerto Rico into the Unions as a State'. Many Puerto Ricans hope that becoming a fully-fledged state will help them receive the funding necessary to improve conditions on the island, which were not only worsened by the poor federal response to Maria, but also by the removal of tax incentives in 2006 by Congress. This is important given the fact that people of Puerto Rico have no control over their taxes. Although it is unclear where the bill now stands in the wake of the midterms, it is clear that there is a major push for statehood. Yet President Trump's attitude towards Puerto Rico is both insulting (by saying Hurricane Maria was not a proper disaster when compared to Katrina) and dismissive (by stating that if Puerto Rico 'can guarantee us two Republican senators [statehood] can be a very quick process'), indicating that the struggle for statehood may be an uphill battle, rather than the inevitable end as it was for the territories of the 19th and 20th centuries. ●

Rebuilding the Blue Wall

By Ben Brind

The 2018 midterms were stacked early with success for Republicans, but by 10PM Democrat gains were becoming more and more apparent. This accident of time has marked down the great Democratic success as simply a score draw. To coin a phrase of Zhou Enlai, *It is too soon to say what the consequences are*, as a result. The incoming hordes of Democratic candidates are likely to project different visions of what the result meant and why they are the right politician to take on President Trump.

A deep dive into the results is necessary in order to explore where Democrats won and why they did so. Democrats ran across America, leaving few races uncontested, and were extremely well resourced: it was common for them to have a 2:1 fundraising advantage over their Republican challenger.

This was a Senate map historically unfavourable to Democrats, with the vast majority of the thirty-five seats up for re-election being seats they held. In fact, the party only went on the offensive in the



sunshine states of Arizona, Nevada, and Texas, prevailing in the first two whilst Beto O'Rourke fell just short of a miraculous win. Indiana, Missouri and North Dakota were simply too crimson-red for a Democrat to hold on. Florida did a Florida and Senators Tester and Manchin held on remarkably in Montana and West Virginia. This election proved that neither Democrats nor Republicans can hold on in states unfavourable to their party, as incumbency falls by the wayside as partisanship intoxicates America.

It is the results in the rustbelt and the sunbelt states that point to the path which Democrats can take to win back the White House in 2020. Hillary Clinton made gains in the sunbelt states, but did not manage to win them. This was combined with her falling back in the rustbelt that enabled her to win the popular vote, in gaining 2.9m more votes than Trump, while falling foul of the Electoral College. Winning back the Blue Wall of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin would be enough to see a Democrat over the line in 2020 and therefore their midterm performance must be analysed.

Democrats built on Hillary's suburban gains to extend their urban advantage to the outer reaches of cities to take back the House and largely held down vote losses in rural areas, only losing two extremely rural races: Minnesota's first and eighth. They gained Districts like Iowa's first and third. This helps explain their successes in the Midwest.

Democrats gained Governorships in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Kansas and easily held their Senate seats in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan. Two House seats were gained in Michigan and Pennsylvania respectively, as well as comfortably holding the Governorship in the latter. Wisconsin remains the reddest of these states and the 1% defeat of Governor Walker electrified Democratic parties across America. These states remain statistically far more Democratic than those in the sunbelt.

The story in the Sunbelt was more mixed. Little can be read from Georgia and North Carolina. In Arizona, however, Krysten Sinema (America's first openly atheist Senator) just beat Martha McSally to become the first Democratic Senate victory in the state since 1988. In a proudly independent state, she won by running as a *McCain-esque* moderate. A Democratic Presidential Candidate is unlikely to be able to pull off this trick in 2020 to win Arizona.

In Florida, Democrats gained two House Seats, however the night proved very disappointing. Having not won the Governorship since 1994, against a young Jeb Bush, polling suggested that the charismatic African-American Mayor of Tallahassee, Andrew Gillum, would see off the

Trumpian Representative Ron DeSantis. Despite a recount looming, Democrats seem destined to lose this race. Even more disappointingly, three-term Senate incumbent (and former astronaut!) Bill Nelson looks set to lose the Senate race to two-term Governor Rick Scott by 0.2% of the vote. Scott's victory in a swing

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