

Llewellyn M. Toulmin, PhD, FRGS

13108 Hutchinson Way, Silver Spring, Maryland 20906
lewttoulmin@aol.com; 301-775-6115 (cell); www.themosttraveled.com

August 21, 2019

Hon. Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, US House of Representatives
c/o Hoyer for Congress
4201 Northview Drive, Suite 220
Bowie, MD 20716

Hon. Ben Cardin, US Senate
451 Hungerford Drive, Suite 230
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Congressman Hoyer and Senator Cardin,

As you have no doubt reasoned out, we Democrats are quite likely to lose the Presidential election in 2020, not re-take the Senate, but hold on to the House, all while winning the national popular vote by a large margin. This letter analyzes why this is the case, and provides new “thought leadership” on a strategy to win at least the White House in 2020. I am writing to the two of you because we are all from Maryland, but more importantly because I think you two are some of the only people in the country who can implement this strategy, and thus save the country (and the planet) from four more years of disaster. The letter has the following sections:

- Why Listen to Me?
- Why We Democrats Will Likely Lose
- A Strategy to Win the Presidential Election

Why Listen to Me?

You should listen to me because I predicted that Hillary Clinton would lose her Presidential bid, almost a year before the election. My wife and I agreed on this because we are from the South (Georgia and Alabama respectively), have a second home in south Alabama, and spend a lot of time there and traveling outside the DC Beltway. Many of the people we met hated Hillary so much that they were willing to take out second and third mortgages to give money to her opponent. (We liked Hillary and of course voted for her, but we were shocked at the hostility towards her.) Closer to the election, we were on a trip and drove several thousand miles around the country, and noted that while we saw over 1500 Trump signs, we only saw two Hillary signs, in a month of driving. Signs matter.

Current pundits have recently figured out the Trump might well win with an Electoral College strategy focused on a few key states. I was saying that many months ago.

In terms of my professional life, I have a PhD in public administration, have advised 12 Federal agencies and 30 foreign governments in the areas of management analysis, strategy, emergency management, and telecommunications policy. I have managed two political campaigns, worked on Capitol Hill (for Bill Lehman (D-FL)), worked as an organizer for Cesar Chavez, and taught national politics at American University in DC. So I know a lot about public administration, and a fair bit about politics.

Why We Democrats Will Likely Lose in 2020

There are six reasons why the probability is high that we will lose the Presidential election in 2020, despite the insanity of Trump:

1. An incumbent President always has a huge advantage.
2. Although he is incompetent, Trump knows how to dominate the news cycle, distract from real issues, and mobilize his base.
3. Respected American University professor Allan Lichtman (a former colleague of mine) has a simple but highly effective method for predicting President elections, using what he calls "levers." There are 13 of these, and to beat an incumbent President, at least 6-7 must be "pulled." So far only 3-5 have been pulled. See: <https://macroaffairs.com/13-keys-to-the-white-house-2020-allan-lichtman/books/>
4. Of course the key point is that the 2020 Presidential election is NOT a national election. Because of the Electoral College, it is an election to win the hearts and minds of about 77,000 people in the following key states: OH, WI, PA, IL, FL, VA, and perhaps AZ and NC. Trump knows that and is already campaigning hard in those states. Our Democratic Presidential candidates are focusing (understandably but wrongly) on Iowa and New Hampshire. And our leading Presidential candidates are embracing issues and positions that are too far to the left now, thinking perhaps they can "tack" to the center later. But that will bite them in the fall of 2020.
5. Trump has a huge war chest.
6. Most Democrats, including Democratic leaders, STILL do not understand the depth to which many Trump supporters have "drunk the Kool-aid." True story: my wife and I were driving through Louisiana and stopped at a McDonalds. We got into conversation with a local woman, very sweet and nice, who was clearly a true believer Trump supporter. Not wanting to be impolite or confrontational, I attacked Trump indirectly, saying gently, "Don't you worry a bit that many of the President's appointees and Cabinet members seem to be corrupt, have scandals, and have to leave office?" She said, "Oh, no! That is part of Trump's plan. He appoints bad people so they will bring along other bad people, then they will be exposed, and then Trump will fire them. So that way he is Draining the Swamp." You cannot reason with such people. They are faith-based members of a cult, like the followers of Jim Jones.

I predict that we Democrats will win the popular vote in 2020 by about 6 million votes, but lose the election in the Electoral College by about 2-3 votes. Since Senatorial seats are so difficult to change or take, I predict that we will flip 1-2 Senate seats Blue, but will not win that chamber.

A Strategy to Win the Presidential Election

So that was the bad news. What is the good news? I think that it is possible to take the White House, by implementing the following six-part strategy:

1. Focus on the key Electoral College states mentioned above, NOW! By the summer or fall of 2020 it will be too late. We need to persuade those key 77,000 voters that Democrats care about them, are listening to them and their concerns, and will work for them when we get into Presidential and other offices. This focus should have the following elements:
 - a. Identify those key 77,000 voters, down to the precinct and household levels.

- b. Mobilize teams of Congressmen, Senators, Democratic Party leaders and other spokespeople to visit those states and voters, beginning now. Each team would have a focus, such as health care.
 - c. So for example the Democratic Health Care Team would include the Democratic members of Congress and other leaders who are doctors or nurses, and who are experts on the topic. These could include: Dr. Kim Schrier (D-WA), nurse Karen Blass (D-CA), Dr. Ami Bera (D-CA), nurse Lauren Underwood (D-IL), nurse Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Dr. Raul Ruiz (D-CA), Dr. Jeff Van Drew (D-NJ), and similar. They would do low-key, rather “retail” politics, and would do lots of sincere listening, not just talking and lecturing. The effort should not be high cost or use a large media buy, since this would just attract a counter-effort from the Republicans. The reason this needs to start now is that it will appear desperate and insincere to the key voters if it happens late in the cycle, in the summer and fall of 2020. Obviously this Team effort would be coordinated with and support local Congressmen, Senators, state legislators and Democratic Party leaders.
 - d. The Teams should not include high profile Democrats who have already been successfully demonized by the Republicans, such as (sad to say) the Squad and Speaker Pelosi. (Sorry, but you don’t wave a red flag in front of an irrational bull, and then try to reason with the bull.)
 - e. The team members need of course to be allowed time to campaign in their own districts, and thus perhaps a “tithing” system (in terms of time) could be devised, with members in purple districts asked to do less, but ones in safe districts asked to do more, and suitable Party rewards given to members who fully participate.
 - f. Starting now will allow planks to be drafted that specifically address the concerns of these crucial 77,000 voters, to prove to them that the Democrat Party is listening.
 - g. Similarly, there should be a team on infrastructure (focusing on the decrepit Brent Spence bridge and other similar high priority needs in the key states), on job development, on protecting unions, union pension funds and health care plans, on introducing international best practices (e.g. from Germany and Japan) to protect and develop domestic industries while preserving free trade, on developing new “green” industries in the region, and on other “kitchen table” issues important to these voters.
2. A major focus of the 2020 Democratic Convention should be on these 77,000 voters and their states. The bi-coastal “look and feel” of the Democratic Convention of Hillary Clinton should not be in evidence. Of course the Convention needs to be inclusive in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, location, etc. And college-educated suburban women from across the country should be substantially appealed to. But every element of the Convention (and of campaign advertising) needs to have a VERY substantial portion that will explicitly appeal to the 77,000 largely blue-collar voters in the key states.
 3. The current crop of Democratic Presidential candidates needs to be strongly urged to spend time in the key states, addressing the needs of the 77,000 and actually listening to them and how they have suffered under both Democratic and Republican administrations. These are generally blue collar, often unionized Americans who had good-paying jobs, then lost them and pretty much everything else as a result. They are bitter and they have good reason to be.
 4. The schedule of Democratic debates needs to be shortened up, substantially. These are turning into a “circular firing squad,” with the only winners being the Republicans and CNN. The ESPN

style of the program introduction is unseemly and disgusting; this is not pro wrestling, it is the future of our democracy and even the planet that is at stake. Participants should be counseled not to attack each other, but to prove how good they would be in debating Donald Trump, by addressing him directly, through the camera. The times for each candidate to respond should be lengthened; 60 or 30 seconds are ridiculously short times for serious, complex issues.

Questions that play directly into Republican hands, such as “should we decriminalize illegally crossing the border,” should be explicitly ignored. Instead, the candidate should say something like, “That is not a Presidential question, that is a relatively minor issue of good public administration and enforcement that could be handled by any good GS-15 civil servant. Rather, a Presidential-level question and issue, is: what would comprehensive immigration reform look like, what are the demand and supply questions, what are the drivers (including climate change, and the violence the US helped create in Central America) of migration, and what level of immigration do we need to help pay for future Social Security payouts.”

5. Stacey Abrams has proven herself to be an excellent strategist and appealing vote-getter. She has avoided getting damaged in the debates by not participating, yet has perfectly positioned herself to be a king-maker and Vice President. Such savvy needs to be rewarded, and the Democratic Party should put no stumbling blocks in her path. As VP candidate she will be invaluable in mobilizing the black female vote, a mainstay of the Democratic Party.
6. Whoever becomes the Democratic Presidential candidate should have Stacey Abrams as VP, per the point above. The Presidential candidate should identify the other most popular Democratic Presidential candidates, and include them in several pre-named Cabinet slots, who will campaign for him/her. Thus if, say, Joe Biden is the Presidential candidate and Elizabeth Warren is not, but did well, then after the Convention, Biden should negotiate a suitable Cabinet slot for her, and together they should announce that she will have that job in a Biden Presidency. (This is thus a sort of “British Shadow Cabinet” approach that works well to assure voters that at least someone on the team is in their corner.) In this example, that would help pull in Warren’s dynamic, young and active supporters. A team of three, four or even five strong Democrats, all working together between the Convention and the election, and focused on the 77,000 voters in the key states, could put us in the White House.

I hope you have found this analysis useful. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
Thanks and good luck!

Sincerely,

Llewellyn M. Toulmin

cc:
Dr. Kim Schrier, US Congress
Congressman Anthony G. Brown
David Betras, Youngstown, OH
Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*
Daniel Kucin, *The Montgomery Sentinel*
Brian Karem, *Playboy*

*No reply
received from any
addressee*