

A Day at the Beach, Or Is It?

The midterm elections in the United States is like a day at the beach. Just consider; waves driven by the wind, shoals and undertow. Those analogies have a strange resonance to the electoral results.

The waves were those driven by economic winds. The shoals which those powerful waves encountered turned out to be abortion rights, and the undertow dangerously dragging swimmers into the open sea was Donald Trump.

The economy should have created for the Republicans a so-called “red wave.” It did not. The reason why the wave did not reach the beach is that the Democrats latched on to the hot button issue of “my body my right.” The party successfully turned out the vote for abortion rights.

Had Donald Trump stayed in Florida, playing golf at his resort, there would be more Republicans in both the House and the Senate post-election. Instead, Trump came to Pennsylvania, helping to defeat Mehmet Oz. Doug Mastriano never had a chance anyway. The powerful undertow of Josh Shapiro certainly helped John Fetterman in his desperate attempt to flip the Toomey seat to the Democrats.

Frankly, most of us would have preferred a day at the beach dealing with the real wind driven waves, shoals and undertow. However, what we now have is once against divided government. Once upon a time, I was having lunch with two lobbyists, one a Republican and one a Democrat. They did not agree on anything, except for the unspoken value of divided government. “That way nothing gets done,” one of the lobbyists said. They both laughed and agreed that many times it is a good thing for government to do less, and to permit the administrative agencies to run business in an orderly fashion on a day-to-day basis.

It may surprise many Americans that the border crisis did not resonate with more voters. There is a good reason why Democrats will not do anything to secure the border. They see potential voters in the strong tide of immigrants entering this country. There is nothing new under the sun about that issue either. The Democratic Party, originally the enemy of immigration has, since the turn of the 19th into the 20th Century, based its electoral progress on immigrant populations.

As for Donald Trump, he has been and will continue to be a spoiler. He is unable to pack up his own outsized ego and let the Republican Party be successful with new and more appealing candidates. The proof text is Florida. In Florida, where Marco Rubio and Ron DeSantis won convincingly, Trump was given the signal to stay away. The young, energetic, new thinkers of the Republican Party can be found in both Rubio and DeSantis, who routinely come in for chiding and unnecessary unctuous inappropriate remarks by the former President. Trump’s malevolent attitude towards his fellow Republicans, helped both Rubio and DeSantis win, and hurt other Republicans he endorsed throughout the country.

It will be difficult for Republicans to reject Trump at the polls, given his divisive, bizarre, but nevertheless strongly appealing message. Trump’s time has passed, but he

will do everything he can to destroy the Republican Party. The Party will survive; it will eventually shelve Trump, and new leadership like those who have captured the hearts and minds of Floridians will eventually prevail. In the meantime, Republicans will take a beating.

Democrats, for their part, are intoxicated with the victory of not being butchered in this midterm election. They will take it as a mandate that the only thing people really care about is abortion, more new immigrant voters, and a culture dependent upon elevating some Americans, while degrading others. That strategy will not last long for them either. Leaders like Josh Shapiro are waiting in the wings to reintroduce America to a kinder, gentler Democratic Party. The Josh Shapiros of the Party have their work cut out for them. While the southeastern Democrat won convincingly, his Republican opponent who had been abandoned by his party was dramatically outspent. Shapiro, as he sniffs around for a higher national office, will find the competition within his own party daunting.

In the meantime, America is likely to survive divided government as it has in the past. With the agenda of both parties put on the shelf, leadership in both parties will be forced to work together on the most important issues of the day. Perhaps there will be another attempt to address the immigration crisis; the national debt; and our robust socioeconomic problems. Just a few issues, even two or three, which make it to the desk of whomever is president, will be better than the gridlock we have endured for far too long.

Divided government is the hallmark of most parliamentary systems throughout the world. Democracy is a social compact, which is so frustrating that many countries wind up throwing it out the penthouse window. Others, like the United States, have managed to keep their shaky, oftentimes irrational and pillar-to-post democracies in semblance of order, a legacy for the next generation to grapple with.

Being that it is winter, most of us will not be going to the beach soon, unless we can hop a flight to some southern paradise. In the meantime, the waves of change will be driven by the winds of public sentiment, while the shoals frequently impair the plans of the most ambitious politicians. Too often our leaders will forget the undertow, which will drag even the best swimmer back out to sea. I cannot wait for another day at the beach!

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