

## **Why Democrats Need a Moderate Candidate More Than Ever**

By Zoe Schafer

The 2016 election changed the political landscape of America undoubtedly. For the first time since Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1952 election, a man with no political experience whatsoever became president. Americans fed up with the politicians of Washington D.C. felt that a businessman with a brutally honest approach would better represent them than a staunch machine built by policies and hidden agendas. As so often happens in the American political scape, the pendulum had swung left for too long and corrected itself in an extreme manner. Today, the loudest voices are those who are appalled by the crass attitude Donald Trump has brought to the White House and inadvertently encouraged in American citizens. Trump won the silent majority in 2016, but what are they looking for in a candidate in the 2020 elections? In order to beat Donald Trump, the Democratic candidate must be moderate.

Now more than ever in my lifetime, every citizen in America must pick a side. The country is more polarized than ever. According to Pew Research Center, 71% of Americans currently feel that conflict is strongest between Democrats and Republicans over any other group (compared against the young and old, black and white and poor and rich). This is compared to 2012, when only 47% of Americans felt this way. A moderate president would be able to close this gap by seeing both sides. While Trump encourages his supporters to see Democrats as the enemy in every aspect of life – political or otherwise – a moderate would recognize that both political parties have valid opinions and ideas. Most likely, his or her public statements would reflect this belief and de-escalate the partisan conflict America is currently facing.

The majority of America is actually not very liberal at all. A Gallup Poll in 2019 found that 70% of the country identifies as moderate or conservative. This same Gallup Poll also

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discovered that 47% of Democrats identify as moderate or conservative. Moderate and conservative Democrats may balk at the idea of a candidate that supports more extreme liberal policies. While some may argue that a moderate candidate will alienate leftists and force them to vote for a third-party candidate, I believe that most will understand just how important a united front is in regard to this election. In an election where the Democratic candidate will have to fight hard for every vote simply because of his or her party, it is essential that they be as in line with the majority as possible.

Despite what the 2016 election may display, moderate candidates are actually more successful in elections. According to a study done by political scientist Andrew Hall and doctoral student Daniel Thompson, parties that choose more extreme candidates see an average six-point drop in voter turnout, whereas moderate candidates exhibit average voter turnout. During the 2018 midterm elections, it was found that candidates who supported more extreme policies such as Medicare for all, saw an average three-point drop in the polls. Candidates that supported Nancy Pelosi saw an average 2.5-point drop. This research proves that even among their own party, Democrats are more likely to vote for a moderate candidate. To choose an extreme leftist would be to alienate an obvious majority of the Democratic voting base. Extremists have never fared well in presidential elections. In 1972, George McGovern lost 49 states to Richard Nixon. In 1988, Michael Dukakis, who was only slightly extreme, won a measly 10 states against George H.W. Bush. Moderates or perceived moderates tend to do best in presidential elections, such as Obama's decisive victory in 2008.

This election is important for more reasons than just getting Trump out of office. In the 2022 midterm elections, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives will be up for election along with 34 Senate seats. If Trump gets reelected, political scientists project that the majority

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of both the House and the Senate will swing Republican, allowing Trump to have a free-for-all politically. It is in the best interest of our country to choose a Democratic candidate who will not only have the voter support to be able to beat Trump but will also keep this country from dividing beyond the point of repair. Most importantly, it is in our best interest as individuals to utilize our right as American citizens and vote in the upcoming presidential election.

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