

PROLOGUE

Obama was playing by rules that the other side was not. That has been a dilemma for the Democrats for a while now. The Democrats are still playing by normal standards and the Republicans have only one thing in mind, and that is to wield and hold onto power, period.

—David Maraniss, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist¹

Grateful to Be Lucky

I was born in the United States, but my American citizenship is just luck. I could have been born in the crowded streets of Mumbai or the killing plains of South Sudan. I could have been raised under an authoritarian government in Beijing, Moscow, or Havana. I could have had my family and career under the watchful theocratic governments of Saudi Arabia or Iran, or fifteenth-century Spain for that matter. My US citizenship beginning in 1969 was random luck.

For that I am so grateful.

Do you understand how lucky you are as well? You can read this book, which attacks our government, post videos about it on YouTube, or tweet about it with no negative consequences other than Russian trolls and your reactionary cousin perhaps.

You did nothing to deserve being born in a democracy, nor did I. Maybe you think it was karma, earned reincarnation, or God's will that gave us this opportunity. But don't fall for that trap. That's how some of the richest and most powerful in our society justify saying that there was a plan for them to be born into the top 1% of the world in wealth and comfort. Accordingly, under this view, they are justified in not being concerned about the other 99% who deserve their lower caste in society.

Other than Native Americans and descendants of enslaved peoples, most of us were born in the United States due to the risks and sacrifices taken by immigrants—either our parents or generations before them. But when

our democracy is threatened, it is *our* freedom and opportunities that are threatened. The important question is, are you doing anything to protect the democratic system and all of the freedoms and opportunities that are given to us?

I tried. I failed. And that's where our story starts.

Note

1. Chauncey DeVega, "Biographer and Journalist David Maraniss on Trump, Obama and History Turned 'Upside down.'" Salon, 3 Jan. 2020, www.salon.com/2020/01/03/biographer-and-journalist-david-maraniss-on-trump-obama-and-history-turned-upside-down/.

INTRODUCTION

They actually intentionally give you those lists of people that have something to do with your committees, because they know that they're the ones that are most likely to say yes.... It makes prostitutes out of our elected officials. When the leadership says, if you want to advance, you have to demean yourself and go over there at taxpayer time and make phone calls to people that don't even want to talk to you, asking them for money for your party so that you can somehow advance the cause of "good government."

—Representative Zach Wamp (R-TN)¹

I had just finished my third debate during the 2018 Democratic primary for Congress. Excuse the brag, but I had won the debate hands down yet again. Incredibly, I was the only candidate talking about the need to impeach Trump while the others were parroting Democratic Party talking points on health care. But on the ride back home, I turned to my wife and said, "I don't want to go to Congress. I'm done."

That afternoon before the debate, I had had a come-to-Jesus moment with the head of my fundraising staff. He was tired of my moaning about the cold calls I was making to raise money. So he laid it all out for me. What he told me made me sick to my stomach. And though I had managed successful campaigns for a dozen local candidates, his words led me to understand how naive I was about American politics. At that moment, I decided that getting elected to Congress was a hell of a lot worse than quitting the campaign.

What currently passes for campaigning in American democracy will give you a view into the larger problem facing our country. To win, almost all candidates must spend their entire campaign begging rich people and their political action committees (PACs) for money. The candidates who attract the most rich donors or supporters have the greatest shot at winning. The candidates who are then elected are expected to follow their party's approach to advance the interests—whether financial or ideological—of those rich donors. This is the focus of chapter 3.

Any viable congressional candidate in a competitive media market must raise at least \$750,000 by the time of the primary. They do this by making calls to people seven or eight hours per day, five or six days per week, and asking for money. They have a call manager at their side to speed up the process. The candidate operates from a tight script; there's no real discussion with these potential donors because there are too many calls to make. The vast majority of these people are strangers to the candidate and often do not even live in their district. The minimum the candidate seeks is \$500, but the aim is \$2,700, or \$5,400 if they are married.

That's pretty much the entire campaign until sixty days before the vote. There are some public events, but they take up no more than five to ten hours per week, compared to the forty-plus hours per week of calls. Practically no time is spent connecting with voters, hearing their concerns, or discussing issues with them.

All candidates for Congress are telemarketing fundraisers. All of this is caused by the Republicans' first Weapon Against Democracy, covered in chapter 4. For those of us who don't like the act of telemarketing, it's pretty demoralizing. My chief fundraiser had previously run the fundraising operation for the Democrats' House of Representatives' members. This was his come-to-Jesus talk:

If you win the race, the real fundraising begins. The amount of money you can raise as a newly elected congressman in the first three months after your election will determine which committees you get appointed to. How much money you raise each quarter will define your level of influence within your party's caucus. So on most days when Congress is in session, you will join with the other members of Congress from your party in a room across from the capitol. You will sit in a cubicle with your call manager. And you make calls all day asking for money. At the end of the week, you will fly back to your district and hold multiple fundraisers unless you have one scheduled in some hotel lobby in DC. At night during the week, you will often go to fundraisers, usually thrown by corporate lobbyists. That's what you do as a congressman. The more you do, the more you get ahead in the party. Are you ready for that?

I was not.

I complained to my fundraiser that members of Congress were basically cash cows for their parties. He told me I had to win in order to change the system. I then asked him, “How many of your candidates have you told that to?” He replied, “All of them.” I asked, “And how many try to change the system once elected?” And he just smiled and said, “Well, that’s really a leadership issue.”

There’s the rub.

The buying of politicians will be difficult to stop because the ones who have received the most money—that is, the leaders of each party—have no incentive to stop it.

Powerful politicians owe their power to being star fundraisers. Why would they change the system that has enabled them to get ahead? How else do you think the most uncharismatic American in public office—Mitch McConnell—is the second most powerful politician in the country? Or how do Senator Chuck Schumer of New York and Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California stay the leaders of the Democratic Party despite leading their party to defeat in the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 congressional elections? Chapter 5 goes into greater detail on these types of political challenges Democrats face internally as they struggle to save democracy.

This is the part of running for Congress that keeps most good people from running. You have to be a special type of person who is comfortable with constantly begging rich people for money. Congress now is in session only two days per week, and they fundraise the other five.² As Colorado congressman Ken Buck has stated, as a member of the House Committee on Rules, he is expected to “pay” \$450,000 in dues to his party: “So you pay dues to a private, partisan organization to serve in government...\$450,000 means that a member has to hold receptions in Washington, DC. Who comes to those receptions with checks? Lobbyists [and] special interests that want something in return.”

I guess I missed how this all works when I watched Schoolhouse Rock’s “I’m Just a Bill.”

Congress has become a financial club whose membership fees are extremely high and paid for by others.

There been few candidates for Congress as reluctant as me. My law firm had been growing and was rated in the top three for immigration law firms in Los Angeles. My wife and I were planning to have another child (we ended up having twins), and I had worked on enough campaigns to know the sacrifice a family makes during elections. But I saw what Trump was doing to the country. I felt like Democratic leaders were passively normalizing Trump by not seeking his impeachment. Waiting for Mueller was their terrible plan, as I noted on the campaign trail to applause, because it was not Mueller's job to defend democracy. It is all of our jobs. This is the focus of chapter 2.

Besides my decade-long involvement in community organizing and leading political campaigns, I ran one of the biggest unions in California and have spent my life as a part-time political activist. I've been a Democratic delegate to the California convention, written a previous book on political movements, and run a nonprofit dedicated to saving democracy. I have an MA and a JD from the UCLA's Department of Public Policy and its School of Law. I've spent many sleepless nights over the current political state of our country, determined to find solutions. But I have to tell you, I was ignorant when it came to the actual job of a member of Congress—namely, to be a full-time fundraiser. Don't feel bad if this is as surprising—and demoralizing—to you as it was to me.

After selling my law firm and getting quarantined during a pandemic, I had the space to focus on cutting through the smog that is obscuring what happened to our elections—and to our democracy. More importantly, I had the time to figure out a way to fix it. That's why I wrote this book.

Everybody else seems focused on the travesty that is the Trump presidency right now. I get it. His narcissism is unbelievable. There's a never-ending parade of scandals and failed appointees. The Trump family and members of his administration are more interested in leveraging the government for their personal financial gain than actual governance.³ Despite his insistence that he has complete authority over our country, he repeatedly

claims he has no responsibility for his administration's failed response to COVID-19. And as the November 2020 election draws closer, his fear of losing is accelerating his drive toward authoritarianism.

I hope you enjoyed that previous paragraph, because the rest of the book is free of Trump bashing (relatively speaking). Yes, he is the epitome of all that is wrong in politics, our country, and the world. But he rode into power because of the GOP's attacks on democracy during the first half of the 2010 decade. He did not orchestrate those attacks—notwithstanding his racist birtherism aiming to delegitimize President Obama. And even if his unhealthy lifestyle and refusal to wear a mask result in his death from COVID-19 before this book is published, the GOP's 4 Weapons Against Democracy (unlimited dark money, extreme partisan gerrymandering, voter suppression, and diversionary propaganda) would remain as powerful as ever.

If Trump is no longer in the White House come January 2021, the GOP's 4 Weapons Against Democracy will still blow up and destroy the Democratic Party on November 8, 2022, around eight p.m. Pacific Standard Time. That is when we will learn the outcome of the first midterm election when Trump is no longer on the ballot. That will be the moment when Democrats are thrown out of government yet again. But this time it won't just be for one decade; it will be forever. Yes, we will continue to have elections, but as explored in chapter 2, elections do not mean we have a democracy.

The window to prevent this 2022 wipeout is extremely small. On November 8, 2022, the dismantling of democracy will be complete, regardless of who is in the White House. From that point on, we will be forever ruled by Republicans despite the popular will. Simply put, the Democrats will never govern again. As the November 2020 election shapes up to be another blue wave, Democrats can't imagine losing it all so quickly as I am predicting. Democrats could not have imagined that they would have lost all their gains made from the Obama landslide in 2008. But they were summarily tossed out of power just twenty-four months later.

Given Trump's actions during the summer of 2020, it is important to distinguish his particular drive to become the authoritarian leader of the US from the Republican elites' effort to keep Republicans in power despite the popular will. They are two separate efforts. Even if Trump is ejected from the White House, the efforts of the Republican elites continue. If Trump

manages to steal the election, then the efforts of the Republican elites will just be subsumed under the new Trump regime. Either way, democracy will end in the United States after the 2022 mid-term election.

It's our duty as citizens of a democracy to come to grips with this. In fact, if we consider democracy to be more important than country or party, it is our number-one priority. We must understand what the heck happened in the 2010 decade. Then we must act on the opportunity afforded by the repulsion to Trump that the majority of America feels and fix our democracy in 2021. Otherwise, mark 11/8/2022 on your calendar now as the death knell for democracy.

The plan to save our democracy is laid out in chapters 7–10 of this book. I call it the #DemRevPlan. If we force Democrats in Congress to follow it, American democracy will be strengthened in powerful, yet common sense ways. Furthermore, Democrats would consistently hold a six- to ten-member majority in the Senate, continually win 60% of the House, and control the White House and Supreme Court at least 80% of the time (unless, of course, their policies are rejected by Americans and Republicans begin to offer actual alternatives).

If you are thinking, “Surely if the stakes were as high as this book suggests, we’d be warned,” consider this book your warning. We either save democracy in 2021, or we lose it based on our inaction.

Who Is This Book For?

1. If you're tired of Democrats losing elections or not having power, this will show you how Democrats can be in power for the next decade or two.
2. If you feel like all of your activism has gained very little for the cause, you will now have the solutions to revive our democracy, which will finally enable your advocacy efforts to be successful.
3. If you're just absolutely done with people like Trump and McConnell being the leaders of our country, this is for you. Without the solutions in part 3, McConnell will retake the Senate in 2022 and Donald Trump Jr. will take the White House in 2024.

4. If you want a more progressive country—fans of dear Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—this book will show you what must be done first. Once we have these significant Democratic majorities, Democrats won't have to govern from the center-right.
5. If you would like a return to bipartisanship—allies of future president Biden—this book will show you what must be done first. Because until we disarm the GOP of its 4 Weapons Against Democracy, Republicans will have zero incentive to cooperate in governing the country.
6. If you do not know what to do or how to get involved, we give you the detailed, step-by-step action plan. You can be part of this historic moment in saving democracy for this generation and the next. We cannot wait to see what you do.

So let's start this book at the point when 53.9% of the country got a rude awakening. A night in 2016 that no one will ever forget.

Notes

1. Sharyl Attkisson, Sinclair Broadcast Group. "Full Measure: The Price of Power." KTUL, 29 May 2017, ktul.com/news/connect-to-congress/full-measure-the-price-of-power.
2. Derek Willis et al., "How Congress Stopped Working." *ProPublica*, www.propublica.org/article/how-congress-stopped-working.
3. Bob Brigham, "Trump Knows He Going to Lose and He's Scooping up as Much Cash as He Can before He's Ousted: Ex-White House Official." *Raw Story*, 25 July 2020, www.rawstory.com/2020/07/trumps-knows-he-going-to-lose-and-hes-scooping-up-as-much-cash-as-he-can-before-hes-ousted-ex-white-house-official/.

CHAPTER 1

Understand That the 2016 Trump Victory Was an Unintended Result of the GOP's Seven-Year Attack on Democracy

I am quite sure I will never forget Election Night 2016. We were in a room full of a thousand Culinary Workers Union members and activists in Vegas, ready to celebrate the election of the first woman president in the United States. The night ended in catastrophic disappointment. My wife and I then made the long drive back to Los Angeles with a carload of Clinton volunteers as Trump's victory became official. We were in disbelief. And in tears.

Our country—our neighbors—had elected a sexual predator whose campaign to the White House was based on the racist demonization of hard-working immigrants. As the months painfully went by and his policies began to hurt more and more people, I alternated between anger and disbelief.

- Anger that Trump had welcomed Russian interference into our election and was not held accountable
- Anger at his defense of racists and Nazis
- Anger that he pushed tax breaks that will let his family save almost a billion dollars¹ while it's harder to get or stay in the middle class for the rest of us
- Anger that while the planet burns, Trump's golfing at his resort has already cost taxpayers over \$133,000,000² while he fools his supporters by constantly bragging that he's forsaking his \$400,000 presidential salary
- Frustration at Democrats in the 2016 election—and the media—who kept focusing on health care but stayed virtually silent regarding how Republicans have crippled majority-rules democracy and the people's power of voting

- Anger that Trump was assassinating leaders in other countries to invite a war against Iran simply to distract us from his own impeachment
- Fear that so many more people will die as Trump first denied the importance of COVID-19, then focused more on the blame game than actually fighting the virus
- Outrage as Trump seemed to oppose the media, protestors, and Democratic Party leaders more than he opposed brutal dictators such as North Korea's Kim Jong-un or Russia's Vladimir Putin

A lot of this is personal for me. I have spent my entire career working on issues of immigrants' and union rights and improving public schools, and my wife has worked on health care, disability, and employment rights. My anger, though, isn't just at Trump.

I am angry at Democrats for failing again. I realized that night in Las Vegas that Democratic leaders will not save us. They do not have a plan, at least one that will work against the Republican's 4 Weapons Against Democracy detailed in chapter 4. It will be up to us—the cliché “we the people”—to save ourselves. Since that election, I have dedicated myself to understanding how Republicans could keep winning elections after embroiling us in two fruitless and horrific wars and the Great Recession in the 2000s, then doing nothing but obstruct Obama, vote to repeal Obamacare, and investigate Hillary Clinton's emails in the 2010s.

How could Republicans have gone from forty senators to controlling the Senate and House for eight years? How could the Democrats have lost the White House running against Trump, the most unfit person to ever be a party nominee?

Republicans won the House elections in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 and the Senate elections (or at least gained seats) in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018. Were they really more popular than Democrats during this time?

This book is a result of my deep dive into understanding the answers to these questions. And the answers are even more disturbing than the prospect of Trump's re-election in 2020. Things are far worse than our Democratic leaders are talking about publicly.

Before we go any further, let's look at what happened in the 2010 decade. The rest of the book expands on some of these points at greater

length. But I want you to get up to speed as fast as possible to understand just how *unusual* the Republicans' reversal of fortune was after they got wiped out in 2008.

What Happened to Democracy in the 2010 Decade

In 2008, the United States felt like a democracy full of opportunities and freedoms. So many of us were fighting to expand those opportunities and freedoms for all. After eight years of President George W. Bush and recession and wars, our country demanded change. We elected Barack Obama as president. The coalition that elected him was growing demographically and was set to prevent the party of Bush and recessions from governing for a generation or more.

Fearing that outcome, Republican billionaire funders understood they needed to change state and national laws so that their party could stay in power even though a shrinking minority of Americans supported them.³ They used three weapons to attack free and fair elections: First, they financially supported lawsuits that led to a Republican-dominated Supreme Court changing how elections could be funded. Thus, beginning in 2010, giant corporations and billionaires started dumping unprecedented sums of money into state and national elections with no transparency. Republicans were able to massively outspend Democrats in key battleground elections, sometimes 20 to 1.

Because of this—not because of Obamacare, as I show below—the GOP swept into power in state and federal government in 2010 throughout the United States. Second, once the *Citizens United* decision enabled them to buy majorities in states where they only had minority support, they had to take further measures to keep those majorities. Accordingly, they changed election maps in 2011 by concentrating Democratic voters into fewer districts. This made it almost impossible for Democrats to win majorities in many states or in Congress as a whole. Third, once they had voter-proof majorities, they then began targeting Democratic Party supporters in Republican-controlled states by purging voter rolls and making it difficult for groups in the Obama coalition to both register to vote and cast a vote. Fourth,

they used a sophisticated scheme to hide those three Weapons Against Democracy. They ran what amounts to a counterintelligence program aimed at keeping the media, the public, and even the Democratic Party focused on anything but the GOP's 4 Weapons Against Democracy.

Because of those 4 Weapons Against Democracy, the Republicans maintained majorities in state and federal governments starting in 2010, despite having fewer voters supporting them than Democrats.^{4, 5, 6}

Because of those Republican majorities, bad things began happening. Our country went backward in many ways in the 2010s: It became harder to buy a home, harder to find a steady job, harder to pay for college. For most of the country, income, wealth, and life expectancy stagnated during this decade.

Politically, President Obama's agenda was stalled for the last six years of his presidency. Republicans then constantly criticized him for being slow to clean up the wars and recession he inherited from Bush. He accomplished almost nothing that was on the wish list of Democrats or progressives, despite being re-elected with massive support from the electorate. Republican senate majority leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky was even able to stop him from appointing federal judges, including to the Supreme Court during his second term.

Meanwhile, Republican candidate Donald Trump was able to solicit Russian help with his own election to succeed Obama, and later—with Republicans safely in the majority—get away with it. White supremacist movements began growing again. Mass slaughter due to gun violence continued unabated in our schools and communities, yet Congress did not pass a single piece of gun-control legislation. Tax breaks were targeted to help super-rich Americans—the vast majority of whom are Republicans or Republican donors⁷—gain more of the nation's wealth than at any time in history. And no progress was made on major social and economic issues such as global climate change, racism, immigration, health care, homelessness, or so many others.

Then came COVID-19. The incompetence and corruption of Republicans unnecessarily cost America 150,000 lives in its first five months. Add in ongoing deaths of Black Americans at the hands of the police and Trump's repression of peaceful protestors, and now, at the dawn of the 2020s, people are pissed. And awake.

On the political right and on the left, it's clear to all that we have a dysfunctional government. Our investments in critical infrastructure, such as education, science, and even bridges, have decreased. Storms and fires rage out of control due to climate change, and our government does nothing. There's more intolerance and attacks on "the other." Our country is in decline both domestically and internationally. Our response to the pandemic of COVID-19 has been piecemeal at best and months too late. Trump has accelerated the decline of America so quickly that his red hats saying "Make America Great Again" are best read as mocking irony.

This decline is a direct result of the power shift away from Democrats in 2008. People forget, though, just how huge that power shift was.

Think back to 2008. That election was bigger than one Democratic president. President Obama won the Electoral College 365–173 and won the popular vote by 9.5 million votes. Democrats held a supermajority in the Senate (60–40 advantage), a significant House of Representatives majority, and twice as many blue-governed states than red.

Reread that paragraph. It's vital to understand how big the Democratic majority was in order to understand what happened in 2010 that reversed all of that. It's also important because if the Democrats win big in 2020, they will likely fall into the same trap of a lazy triumphalism. They imagine that they will stay in power for the foreseeable future and forget the lesson of 2010.

It seemed that after 2008, we—just like the abolitionists of the late nineteenth believed—would see the arc of history bending toward justice.⁸ It hasn't. This is because justice is only present in a democracy. Since 2008 there has been a sustained attack on American democracy that very few people seem to understand and upon which almost no elected Democrat stays publicly focused.

In 2008 it was clear that the Democrats were secure in their role as our country's governing party. They believed it would be lasting like President Franklin Roosevelt's majorities seventy years earlier. Political experts were looking at the demographic changes ahead and noting that the Democratic Party's advantage would continue to grow steadily.

But instead, Republicans clawed back starting in 2010. (See Figure 1.)

In 2008 the Democrats held more than 4,000 state legislative seats, while the Republicans held 3,200. In sixteen states Democrats held the governor's mansion and both state houses, while Republicans held only nine

At state level, Dems have lost 900+ seats and 39 bodies

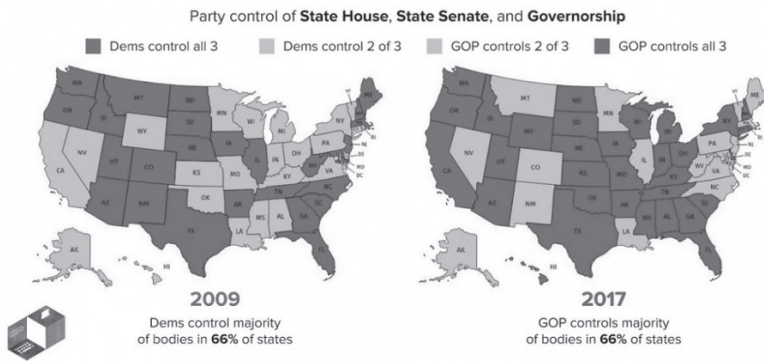


Figure 1. Source: Tech for Campaigns www.techforcampaigns.org; Heilweil, Rebecca. “This Silicon Valley Organization Aims To Flip Red States Blue.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 8 June 2017, www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccaheilweil/2017/06/07/this-silicon-valley-organization-is-working-to-flip-red-states-blue/#67ce3ab8206c

trifectas. After the Republicans unleashed Weapon #2—the gerrymandering of 2011—Democrats lost almost 1,000 state legislative seats (on top of seats lost in 2010). By 2017, Republicans had twenty-six trifectas and Democrats only six—a swing of twenty-five state trifectas in seven years. Yet during this same time Obama was re-elected and Hillary Clinton received three million more votes than Trump—beating him by more than 2%. In this same period, the Republicans had not a single legislative accomplishment other than shutting down the government, thanks to Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

The “enduring majority” of the Democrats only lasted for two years. Why? Was it that Obama’s policies turned out to be unpopular? He was re-elected in 2012 against his well-funded and highly respected opponent Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney. The false narrative that voters rejected Democrats for Obamacare or because Democrats overreached is easily dispelled by looking at the polling on the congressional generic ballots just months before those elections in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. (See Figure 2.)

Despite the polling showing that the Democrats were well positioned to win those elections, they ended up losing all of those elections. The polling shows there was not a sustained upwelling of anti-Democratic-Party sentiment throughout these years. In fact, it shows the opposite. On the whole, the majority of Americans wanted Democrats to govern from 2008 to 2020. Yet the Democrats lost seats or their majority, or remained in the

2010

FOX News	6/8-6/9	900 RV	38	41	Democrats +3
PPP (D)	6/4-6/7	650 RV	41	43	Democrats +2
ABC News/Wash Post	6/3-6/6	RV	44	47	Democrats +3
Gallup	5/31-6/6	1600 RV	46	46	Tie

2012

Bloomberg	6/15-6/18	734 LV	41	48	Democrats +7
Rasmussen Reports	6/11-6/17	3500 LV	45	38	Republicans +7
Pew Research	6/7-6/17	1563 RV	43	47	Democrats +4
Reuters/Ipsos	6/7-6/11	848 RV	44	47	Democrats +3

2014

FOX News	7/20-7/22	1057 RV	41	43	Democrats +2
Rasmussen Reports	7/21-7/27	3500 LV	39	41	Democrats +2
CNN/Opinion Research	7/18-7/20	899 RV	44	48	Democrats +4
Pew Research	7/8-7/14	1420 RV	45	47	Democrats +2
Rasmussen Reports	7/14-7/20	3500 LV	39	39	Tie
Rasmussen Reports	7/7-7/13	3500 LV	38	39	Democrats +1
Quinnipiac	6/24-6/30	1446 RV	39	41	Democrats +2
Rasmussen Reports	6/30-7/6	3500 LV	38	41	Democrats +3
Rasmussen Reports	6/23-6/29	3500 LV	38	40	Democrats +2
FOX News	6/21-6/23	1018 RV	42	42	Tie
CBS News/NY Times	6/20-6/22	RV	39	42	Democrats +3
Rasmussen Reports	6/16-6/22	3500 LV	38	40	Democrats +2
Rasmussen Reports	6/9-6/15	3500 LV	37	39	Democrats +2
Bloomberg	6/6-6/9	763 LV	43	43	Tie
Rasmussen Reports	6/2-6/8	3500 LV	37	41	Democrats +4
FOX News	6/1-6/3	1006 RV	43	39	Republicans +4
ABC News/Wash Post	5/29-6/1	RV	45	47	Democrats +2
Rasmussen Reports	5/26-6/1	3500 LV	38	41	Democrats +3
Rasmussen Reports	5/19-5/25	3500 LV	38	42	Democrats +4
CBS News	5/16-5/19	RV	39	40	Democrats +1
Rasmussen Reports	5/12-5/18	3500 LV	37	41	Democrats +4
FOX News	5/10-5/13	1025 RV	40	43	Democrats +3
Rasmussen Reports	5/5-5/11	3500 LV	38	40	Democrats +2
CNN/Opinion Research	5/2-5/4	911 RV	46	45	Republicans +1
Rasmussen Reports	4/28-5/4	3500 LV	37	41	Democrats +4
Gallup	4/24-4/30	RV	44	49	Democrats +5
ABC News/Wash Post	4/24-4/27	855 RV	44	45	Democrats +1

Figure 2. Source: Real Clear Politics (RealClearPolitics.com).

2016

NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	11/3-11/5	1282 LV	47	44	Democrats +3
McClatchy/Marist	11/1-11/3	940 LV	48	47	Democrats +1
Economist/YouGov	10/30-11/1	1228 LV	46	41	Democrats +5
Reuters/Ipsos	10/29-11/2	1858 LV	42	41	Democrats +1
CBS News/NY Times	10/28-11/1	1333 RV	49	46	Democrats +3
Economist/YouGov	10/22-10/26	1209 LV	45	40	Democrats +5
FOX News	10/22-10/25	1221 LV	47	45	Democrats +2
ABC News	10/22-10/24	828 LV	47	46	Democrats +1
Associated Press-GfK	10/20-10/24	1212 LV	46	41	Democrats +5
CNN/ORC	10/20-10/23	779 LV	50	47	Democrats +3
Reuters/Ipsos	10/20-10/24	1170 LV	44	39	Democrats +5
Economist/YouGov	10/15-10/18	925 RV	43	38	Democrats +5
Bloomberg	10/14-10/17	1006 LV	47	43	Democrats +4
Reuters/Ipsos	10/13-10/17	1190 LV	43	39	Democrats +4
CBS News	10/12-10/16	1189 LV	50	45	Democrats +5
NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	10/10-10/13	905 LV	47	44	Democrats +3
ABC News/Wash Post	10/10-10/13	740 LV	47	44	Democrats +3
FOX News	10/10-10/12	917 LV	48	42	Democrats +6
GWU/Battleground	10/8-10/13	1000 LV	47	42	Democrats +5
NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	10/8-10/10	900 RV	48	42	Democrats +6
Reuters/Ipsos	10/6-10/10	2363 A	46	36	Democrats +10
NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	10/8-10/9	500 RV	49	42	Democrats +7
Economist/YouGov	10/7-10/8	971 RV	42	39	Democrats +3
Economist/YouGov	10/1-10/3	911 RV	43	37	Democrats +6
Reuters/Ipsos	9/29-10/3	1669 RV	42	38	Democrats +4
FOX News	9/27-9/29	911 LV	44	43	Democrats +1
Reuters/Ipsos	9/22-9/26	1041 LV	42	36	Democrats +6
Bloomberg	9/21-9/24	1002 LV	46	44	Democrats +2
Economist/YouGov	9/22-9/24	948 RV	43	38	Democrats +5
NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	9/16-9/19	1000 RV	48	45	Democrats +3
McClatchy/Marist	9/15-9/20	758 LV	49	45	Democrats +4
Economist/YouGov	9/18-9/19	936 RV	43	36	Democrats +7
Reuters/Ipsos	9/15-9/19	1111 LV	39	40	Republicans +1
Economist/YouGov	9/10-9/13	926 RV	44	38	Democrats +6
Reuters/Ipsos	9/8-9/12	1752 A	40	38	Democrats +2
Economist/YouGov	9/4-9/6	955 RV	41	38	Democrats +3
Reuters/Ipsos	9/1-9/5	1084 LV	40	39	Democrats +1
CNN/ORC	9/1-9/4	786 LV	47	49	Republicans +2
GWU/Battleground	8/28-9/1	1000 LV	45	43	Democrats +2
McClatchy/Marist	8/1-8/3	983 RV	49	41	Democrats +8
NBC News/Wall St. Jnl	7/31-8/3	800 RV	47	43	Democrats +4
PPP (D)	7/29-7/30	1276 LV	47	44	Democrats +3
FOX News	6/26-6/28	1017 RV	46	41	Democrats +5

Figure 2 (continued).

minority in both the Senate (2012–2020) and House (2011–2018) in those elections and lost the White House in 2016. The tide against the Democrats only turned in the last few months of each election.

Why is that? This tide turned because of Weapon #1 the GOP used in this past decade to significantly damage Americans' ability to choose who governs them: unlimited dark money.

In most of these elections, the cumulative votes for Democrats exceeded those for the Republican candidates, but the Republicans still won a majority of seats.^{9, 10, 11} So how is it that Republicans have won ten of the last twelve federal elections after Obama's tidal wave in 2008 despite not having a majority of voters supporting them? Let's follow the money.

The richest of the Republican donors were able to eliminate campaign contribution limits in 2010 so that they could literally now spend hundreds of millions—instead of a few thousand—in support of their political goals. By enabling that surprise attack of secret money in November 2010, Republicans won key districts that they otherwise would not have won.

Then Republicans targeted just enough legislative and congressional districts to flip key states from Democrat-controlled to Republican-controlled and gain veto-proof majorities in Republican states. Knowing that their victories would have been short-lived, Republicans continued to build their firewall against the popular will. Through an extraordinary campaign of gerrymandering and voter suppression in a handful of these states, they maintained control of Congress and various state legislatures even when Democrats received more votes.

In this chaos of an undemocratic Congress, Russia was able to step in to help throw the 2016 election to Trump. After Trump seized power, he blocked any repercussions for Russia's hack of our democracy. He then sought continued help from Putin, his oligarchs, and even the new Ukrainian president—for which Democrats finally impeached Trump.

But you know all this, right?

What you don't know is what happens next.

1. Will Trump be re-elected in November 2020?
2. Or will there be such a massive rejection of Trump and his allies in Congress that Democrats win the White House and the Senate?
3. Most importantly, if there is a massive rejection of the Trump party,

will the new Democratic trifecta in the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives focus on fixing our democracy, or will they simply chase the most popular issues of the moment according to their polling or corporate media?

The actual existential crisis facing our democracy is whether or not we will continue to have free and fair elections where the majority decides who governs them.

Unlike other seminal political books of the Trump era, my focus is on that third question. Because, even though this seems counterintuitive, the current crisis is not just about Trump. In fact, he is our best opportunity.

Notes

1. Mark Murray, "Trump and His Family Could Save More than \$1 Billion under House Tax Bill," NBC News, 16 Nov. 2017, www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/trump-his-family-could-save-more-1-billion-under-house-n821491.
2. Ryan Grenoble, "Trump Takes Heat For Golfing During Pandemic, Blames Obama For Some Reason," HuffPost, 26 May 2020, www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-blames-golf-obama_n_5ecd77cac5b6658c20604c9e.
3. Jeffrey M. Jones, "Democrats' 2008 Advantage in Party ID Largest Since '83," Gallup.com, Gallup, 8 June 2017, news.gallup.com/poll/113947/democrats-2008-advantage-party-largest.aspx.
4. "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives, history.house.gov/Institution/Election-Statistics/Election-Statistics/.
5. Paul Singer, "Democrats Won Popular Vote in the Senate, Too," *USA Today*, 10 Nov. 2016, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/11/10/democrats-won-popular-vote-senate-too/93598998/.
6. Dylan Matthews, "The Senate's 46 Democrats Got 20 Million More Votes than Its 54 Republicans," *Vox*, 3 Jan 2015, www.vox.com/2015/1/3/7482635/senate-small-states.
7. "What Billionaires Want: The Secret Influence of America's 100 Richest," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 31 Oct. 2018, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/30/billionaire-stealth-politics-america-100-richest-what-they-want.
8. This phrase, used by Obama and MLK, originally came from the abolitionist Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister.
9. "Election Statistics," US House.
10. Singer, "Democrats Won."
11. Matthews, "The Senate's 46 Democrats."