

DAPAC DISPATCH

Democratic Advancement Political Action Committee

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Tom Wolf's Win

Across the country, nearly every Democratic challenger running against a Republican incumbent lost in this past election. But not DAPAC Democrat Tom Wolf. He beat incumbent Republican Tom Corbett by just under 10 points. He did it through a simple appeal to common sense, explaining why Corbett's tax cuts and other giveaways to big business were hurting the economy for regular people. *For full election results see page 2.*

Tom Corbett, like many other Republicans that year, won big in the 2010 election. He ran for governor on the strength of the Tea Party wave in an otherwise Democratic-leaning state. With a newly Republican legislature, he proceeded to implement exactly what he promised: steep tax cuts (financed by steep cuts to public schools), total deregulation of strip mining and fracking, new rules to interfere with the right to abortion, a new voter identification requirement, and to cap it all off, a rewrite of the congressional district map to elect more Republicans to Congress.



Tom Wolf

Starting late last year, we made a strategic decision to focus much of our effort on a long-term campaign in Pennsylvania. Nominally a Democratic state, it went for Barack Obama by 10 points in 2008, but just two years later in

2010, it elected a Republican US senator, a Republican governor, and a Republican legislature. We believe we can turn the tide and elect enough progressive Democrats in Pennsylvania to not only implement progressive policies that will benefit the people of Pennsylvania, but also elect a progressive congressional delegation. So we opened a field office in Philadelphia, with plans to open more, and are beginning to build out an organization that will work every day, all year, every year, to turn out progressive voters in every election.

Tom Wolf is one of the first candidates we've supported in this effort, and with our and your help, he won big. He didn't shy away from a progressive message, either. He has talked about increasing taxes to pay for schools and infrastructure, regulating the mining industry to protect Pennsylvania's air and water, and rebuilding the cities of Pennsylvania to provide a solid, sustainable economy, with jobs for everyone.

Tom Wolf's successful campaign for governor provides a model that progressive candidates everywhere ought to look at. His message resonated with Pennsylvania voters, and showed how DAPAC Democrats can win when they talk honestly about what progressive values mean for regular people.

Unfortunately, with the legislature still controlled by Republicans, Tom Wolf will have a lot of trouble getting his ideas passed into law. Pennsylvania still has a legislative district map gerrymandered to elect as many Republicans as possible. We are working on countering this by returning the state Supreme Court to Democratic control. Three out of seven seats on the Supreme Court are up for election in 2015, and if we can win two or three of those seats, we will be able to implement a Democratic legislative district map.

Tom Wolf's win in Pennsylvania shows the path forward for DAPAC Democrats. We know what we have to do now to win.

Election Results

It was a bad year for Democrats in general, but DAPAC Democrats actually did OK:

- All incumbents won reelection
- All candidates running for the US House in open seats won
- One challenger, Tom Wolf, defeated a Republican incumbent (out of all gubernatorial and congressional elections this year, only two Democrats accomplished this)

Here are the results in full (✓ won, ✗ lost):

Governor

- ✗ Wendy Davis, Texas
- ✗ Mark Schauer, Michigan
- ✓ Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania

Senate

- ✗ Bruce Braley, Iowa
- ✓ Jeff Merkley, Oregon

House of Representatives

- ✓ Pete Aguilar, California 31
- ✓ Ted Lieu, California 33
- ✗ Jim Bryan, Florida 1
- ✗ Marihelen Wheeler, Florida 3
- ✗ Wes Neuman, Florida 7
- ✗ Gabriel Rothblath, Florida 8
- ✓ Alan Grayson, Florida 9
- ✗ Michael McKenna, Florida 10
- ✗ Dave Koller, Florida 11
- ✗ Alan Cohn, Florida 15

- ✗ Will Bronson, Florida 17
- ✗ April Freeman, Florida 19
- ✓ Bobby Rush, Illinois 1
- ✓ Robin Kelly, Illinois 2
- ✓ Luis Gutierrez, Illinois 4
- ✗ Sharon Sund, Minnesota 3
- ✓ Keith Ellison, Minnesota 5
- ✗ Domenic Recchia, New York 11
- ✗ Tom Poetter, Ohio 8
- ✗ Andy Ostrowski, Pennsylvania 11
- ✗ Mary Headrick, Tennessee 3
- ✗ Dan Cramer, Tennessee 7
- ✗ Rob Zerban, Wisconsin 1
- ✓ Gwen Moore, Wisconsin 4

State Legislature

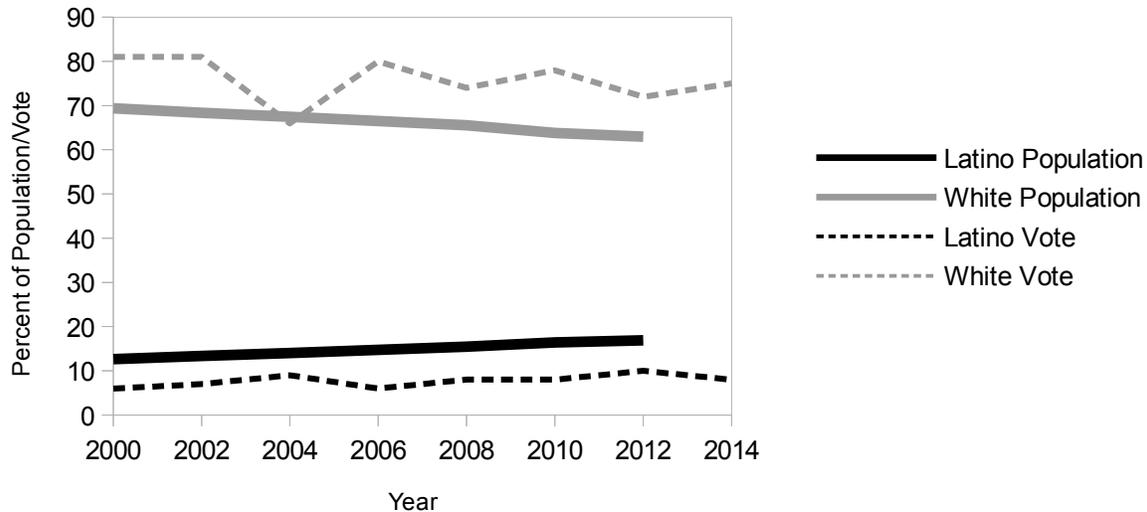
- ✗ Sandra Fluke, California 26
- ✗ Josh Maxwell, Pennsylvania 74

Why Democrats Lost

In the 2014 election, Democrats in general did poorly. But why? Pundits are offering many answers. “They need to stop talking about women's issues.” “They need a real economic plan.” “They need to stand up to Russia.” The real answer is more prosaic. Despite what we want to believe, there is no grand moral lesson about Democratic values to be learned from this past election. Democratic candidates lost because, simply put, Democratic voters who vote in every election are getting replaced by Democratic voters who only vote in presidential elections.

This is a trend that is getting more pronounced over time. The reason has to do with the propensity to vote among two different groups of people, and how their share of the population is growing or declining over time. The first group is

Latinos Versus Whites



Note: The population data is from the US Census Bureau, the voting data is from the New York Times. (2014)

New Deal Democrats, and the second group is Latinos.

New Deal Democrats are the voters who came of age during the Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman administrations, and gratefully appreciate the programs introduced by Democrats during that time. New Deal Democrats remember the introduction of Social Security, the Fair Labor Standards Act (including the minimum wage and the 40-hour work week), the Works Progress Administration, and the Wagner Act (including the right to organize unions), among others. Younger voters may agree that we should keep these programs, but they tend to take them for granted.

Latinos have been part of the United States from the beginning, but since the Immigration Act of 1990, the Latino population has exploded. Many of us are aware of the large Latino populations in California, Texas, Florida, and New York. Recently Latinos have become a significant population in states such as Georgia, Iowa, North Carolina, and Virginia. Latinos tend to vote Democratic, and that tendency has increased over time.

The problem for Democrats is twofold. New Deal Democrats vote in every election, but they are passing on, and their share of the electorate is

steadily shrinking. Latinos, by contrast, tend to vote in presidential elections only. So while their share of the presidential electorate is expanding, their share of the midterm electorate is shrinking. This leads to the “seesaw effect” whereby Democrats tend to win in presidential years, and lose in other years.

The problem is exacerbated because Republicans have been leveraging their wins in midterm elections to reshape the playing field in their favor. They have used their control of most state legislatures to pass gerrymandered district maps and voter suppression laws, further cementing their hold on power.

However, we are not helpless. We know how to increase voter turnout, and thus how to eliminate the Republican advantage in midterm elections. The proven method is to go to the people in person, door to door, and talk to them about the importance of voting. Controlled experiments by political scientists have shown that it works. And surveys have shown that while voters are getting bombarded with ineffective television, radio, and direct mail advertising, they still get very little person-to-person contact. We must redouble our efforts toward getting voters out to the polls.

The Problem with the Filibuster

Ultimately, the reason why Democrats lost control of the Senate in this past election is easy to answer. It's because turnout among Democratic voters is bad in non-presidential elections. However, that assumes that there is nothing that could be done to expand the base of Democratic voters.

Imagine this: after the election of 2008, the new president Barack Obama, and Congress, with the biggest Democratic majority in decades, spends the next few months passing bold, progressive legislation. It shouldn't be so hard to imagine. That is exactly what happened the last two times Democrats had such a mandate. After the election of 1932, Franklin Roosevelt used his mandate to implement the New Deal. After the election of 1964, Lyndon Johnson used his mandate to implement the Great Society.

After the election of 2008, Barack Obama faced six years of filibusters. The filibuster is the strange custom in the Senate whereby any senator is allowed to talk for as long as he or she wants, unless 60 other senators vote to stop talking. This was most famously used by Strom Thurmond to delay civil rights legislation advanced by President Johnson. But this time, Republicans decided to filibuster everything.

To get 60 votes, the economic stimulus was watered down, because conservative Democrats preferred that their constituents go without jobs. The pathetic economic recovery of the past six years, where real median income has stayed stagnant, has resulted.

After that, healthcare reform was passed. Now, you have surely before seen politicians claim credit for building a bridge, or a road, or an airport. Some politicians have claimed credit for

programs like Medicare or the Earned Income Tax Credit. It may be a little crass, but voters do appreciate when government works, and will naturally reward the politicians who make it work.

Conservative Democrats threw that practice out the window, and insisted on a confusing system of 50 different state healthcare plans, with dozens of different names. Then they pretended that delivering health insurance to several million people who didn't have it before was somehow shameful. So then, Republicans could demonize "Obamacare", and the several million Americans who now have health insurance hate the very "Obamacare" that provides them with insurance, because in reality, it's called something else.

The source of this political malpractice is, as explained before, the filibuster. And under the Constitution, Democrats could have eliminated the filibuster at any time with a simple majority vote. Ultimately, they finally did eliminate the filibuster this year, but only for presidential appointments that must be approved by the Senate. But for almost six years, even with huge majorities in Congress in the first two years, Democrats allowed Republicans to sabotage procedure, and hand all the power to the most conservative Democrats in the Senate.

Because of this failure of will, they did not bring the economy back to full steam. And because of this failure of will, they did not even take credit for what they did accomplish with healthcare reform. So they failed to expand the coalition of Democratic voters – voters who might appreciate a better job market, or having health insurance where before they had none – and failed to keep their majority.

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