



The Dems need this redistricting battle

Over the past six months, Democrats have been more than happy to let President Trump be their best campaign ad. From his ill-advised war in Iran to his ill-advised tariffs, his obvious declining mental acuity to his increasing desire to spend taxpayer money on wasteful vanity projects, Dems know that Politics 101 dictates you never interrupt your enemy when he's making a mistake.

With politicos predicting a midterm election bloodbath for Republicans, Dems were riding high. That is, until Trump unleashed his redistricting wars.

Aware of their inability to win with the current maps, the GOP has been redrawing the country in its image, and potentially marginalizing minority voters in the process. That's bad — for the left, but more importantly for democracy. Voters should choose their candidates, not the other way around.

But the right's assault on Black voters in particular may not be the coup they seem to think it is, especially if it unintentionally helps the left shore up one of its most problematic gaps.

In 2016, Donald Trump won his first presidential election largely thanks to white voters, who made up 88% of his coalition. Then, only 1% of his voters were Black.

By 2024, just eight years later, Trump had expanded

that coalition considerably, winning 15% of the Black vote, per Pew.

But over on the Democrats' side, the arrows were moving in the opposite direction. A once-reliable coalition — former President Barack Obama, for example, won 95% of the Black vote in 2008 — has been incrementally leaving the Democratic Party or staying home. In 2024, Kamala Harris won

just 83% of the Black vote, down from Joe Biden's 87% in 2020.

I assume that's worrisome to the Democratic Party, though we don't know how worrisome because it has refused to release its 2024 autopsy.

What I do know is Trump and Republicans may have just given them a lifeline they weren't expecting.

The redistricting forever wars have Republicans carving up predominantly Black majority districts nationwide. On nearly every metaphorical battlefield, the GOP is winning — Trump successfully primaried Indiana state lawmakers who refused to redistrict; the Supreme Court sliced into the Voting Rights Act; Virginia's supreme court ruled against the Dems' efforts to redistrict. According to CNN's redistricting tracker, Republicans could net nine seats in November.

That's unequivocally bad news for the left, but the unintended consequence of the right's zeal to rig the

maps could send Black voters back to the Dems in numbers a single candidate not named Obama could not.

"Democrats are gonna be able to go into African-American communities and say, 'Republicans are doing everything they can to take away your political power,'" Democratic strategist Ian Russell told Politico. "That's a really salient message."

And it could come at a really important time. Turnout among Black voters in the last midterms dropped by nearly 10 percentage points, from 51.7% in 2018 to 42% in 2022, whereas white turnout dropped just 1.5 points. The gap in 2022 was the largest in any election — presidential or midterm — since 2000.

Black voters' disillusionment with Democrats has been growing, with just 66% self-affiliating with the party in 2023. The Republican war on Black districts could pull them back, at least in the short term.

Looking ahead, Democrats simply don't have a transformative figure, like an Obama or a Bill Clinton, waiting in the wings to rebuild the Black coalition, but they do have an issue that could motivate it significantly.

If the Dems had a plan to win back this important voting bloc, or the parts of it that left, we don't know what it was. But the redistricting wars might just be the catalyst they needed, and at the perfect time.

S.E. Cupp is the host of "S.E. Cupp Unfiltered" on CNN.



S.E. CUPP

Cory Booker should be ashamed of himself

I wish "Meet the Press" host Kristen Welker had asked Sen. Cory Booker if he's qualified to represent New Jersey given that nearly 9 out of 10 of his constituents are not Black.

I should probably back up.

Last month, the Supreme Court ruled in *Callias vs. Louisiana* that the state's newest congressional map was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander.

Here's a simplified recap. After the 2020 census, Louisiana drew a congressional map that included just one "majority-minority" district. Some Black voters sued, arguing that Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act required a second majority-minority district, because a third of Louisiana's population is Black, and one district represented only a sixth of the state's congressional representation. A federal judge agreed, ordering the state to redraw the map, or the court would do it for them.

Louisiana tried again, producing a second majority-Black district.

This triggered a lawsuit from non-Black voters, alleging that the new map violated the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause, because Louisiana had over-relied on race to draw it. A three-judge federal court agreed. The Supreme Court affirmed that ruling.

The legal predicament is that the Voting Rights Act and the Constitution can pull in opposite directions. Section 2 requires states to take account of race when minority voters are being unlawfully diluted, but in deference to the Constitution, it also bars over-relying on race to create majority-minority districts.

In short, race can be a factor, but not the overriding one. States must take "the totality of circumstances" into account, including whether minority districts are geographically compact and politically cohesive. States cannot simply draw sprawling districts to hit racial targets.

It's the time when Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) releases its annual "Congressional Pig Book Summary," exposing some of the most outrageous, ridiculous and in many cases unconstitutional spending one can imagine. I guarantee you won't be able to imagine most of it. Why should you when it's not their money they are spending and borrowing, which has driven the debt to unprecedented and dangerous levels.

According to CAGW, the number of earmarks, which is spending that avoids going through the normal appropriations process, totaled 140,826, costing \$484 billion." Republicans used to be against earmarks before they became for them. After an 11-year moratorium, Republicans re-joined Democrats at the trough.

For fun — and for quality and training purposes — let's just pick a few examples from the first section: "\$9,650,000 for two earmarks for the Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center funding equipment and infrastructure modernization and facility repairs and improvements by Senate Appropriations Committee member John Boozman (R-Ark). Sen. Boozman also added a \$117,000 earmark for the center in FY 2023, bringing the two-year total to \$9,767,000."

Got that? To demonstrate bipartisanship and common

ground in action there is this: "\$1,900,000 for the University of Georgia Research Foundation Inc. for a veterinary diagnostic laboratory pathological waste incinerator by Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee member Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.) and Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.). Ossoff is up for reelection. I seriously doubt his Republican opponent will raise the issue.

As a theater buff, you might think I would like this one: "\$1,753,000 for two earmarks funding theaters: \$1,588,000 for renovations at the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Center by Senate Appropriations Committee member Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and \$165,000 for facility improvements at the Shea Theater Arts Center, Inc. in Turners Falls (pop. 4,510) by Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.)."

Not so. Let theater survive on ticket sales and local support. Moving forward (or in this case backward, if you care about the financial health of the country), I especially love this one: "\$300,000 for Texas A&M University for the Feral Hog Community Cooperative Management Program." Nothing says pork more than feral hogs. It's chump change to be sure, but as the saying goes it eventually adds up to real money.

This one sounds fishy: "\$11,917,000 for nine earmarks supporting fishing industries, including \$2,000,000 for an Alaskan seafood modernization ini-

tiative at the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation by Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee member Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska); \$1,875,000 for the Fishing for the Future program at the Coonamesett Farm Foundation by Sens. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.); and \$1,000,000 for a Mississippi oyster restoration and workforce program at the Mississippi Wildlife Fisheries Parks Marine Foundation by Senate Appropriations Committee member Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.). According to NOAA, the U.S. fishing industry produced \$319 billion in commercial and recreational sales in 2023. It can go fish and get by without the support of earmarks."

Go fish. White House Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett predicts economic growth of 6% this year, triple what mainstream economic forecasters have forecast. Relying solely on economic growth to reduce the debt and continue prosperity is a recipe for disaster. Remember recessions of the not-too-distant past? If not, ask someone who does.

None of this will stop until big government is forced to go on a diet. That won't happen until we the people decide we are no longer entitled to other people's money. Read the entire Pig Book report at CAGW.org and weep if you have any sense of personal responsibility and accountability.

Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaeditors@tribpub.com.



JONAH GOLDBERG

judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.

That's why the Voting Rights Act explicitly says, "Nothing in this section establishes a right to have members of a protected class elected in numbers equal to their proportion in the population." In other words, even the text makes it clear that we don't want to live in a country where white voters can be represented only by white representatives and Black voters by Black representatives.

One irony of the push to create majority-minority districts during the 1980s and 1990s is that while it did wonders for boosting Black congressional representation, it also boosted Republican representation. By squeezing reliably Democratic-voting Black Americans into compact districts, the remaining districts in the South became more winnable for Republicans — which is why the GOP often cynically cooperated with the process. The Congressional Black Caucus consider this a worthwhile trade-off — Lord knows Republicans did — on the theory that racial representation is more important than partisan advantage.

But do we really believe that white Democrats — in the post-Jim Crow South, or anywhere else — are unwilling or incapable of representing the political interests of Black voters? Do Black legislators ignore the interests of their white constituents? Which brings me back to where I started.

Cory Booker is Black. Black residents make up roughly 13% of his state's population. Are the other 87% disenfranchised or otherwise unrepresented by his election? Of course not. But I would love to have heard Booker explain why.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast. His Twitter handle is @JonahDispatch.

Feeding the government pig

And I don't mean Christmas.

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PULSE

FROM PAGE A1

her with values like patience, kindness and respects. It's challenged her to be the person she is becoming now.

"I recently had a shift in perspective," she said. "I realized that if I or a member of my family were a patient, I would want a provider who doesn't just remember words, but truly comprehends their craft. I want to know that I'm in capable hands. That realization changed everything. I now strive to reach my full potential of always giving 100% effort every day to ensure I become the best possible advocate for my future patients. The UP Center hasn't just strengthened my career aspects, it has given me a sense of purpose to change lives for the better."

Students who earned their NOCTI, CRP, OSHA 10 and HIPAA certification were awarded their first stethoscope.

Emma Mattingly, a third-year student, spoke about her experience in the program and the confidence she gained. Pulse's third-year students must determine an area of study to focus their learning on a specialized medical skill. Mattingly is a recently accredited Medicaid Nurse Aid and a certified phlebotomy



KATELYN NORRIS/The Kentucky Standard

Lesley Sims (left) poses for a photo with Julie Frye, Pulse Instructor, after being recognized as the only student to earn the program's newest certifications.

technician.

"This experience made me realize that our healthcare dreams will slowly, but surely, can come true," she said. "We learn our skills and who we serve, the place that unite and the shared mission that guides us. I learned my mission is to unite compassion and competence and to support others, just as I was supported wherever I go next."

Eight students received their Medicaid Nurse Aid accreditation this school, including Mattingly. Three students also earned their phlebotomy technician certification.

Lesley Sims is the first student to receive the Pulse program's newest certifications: Certified Electronic Health Record Specialist and Certified

Billing and Coding Specialist.

This is the first year every student in the Certified Medical Assistant class passed both their Certified Clinical Medical Assistant and Certified Phlebotomy Technician. Pulse also saw a 100% pass rate for the certified EKG technicians.

Two seniors earned the programs most difficult certification — Pharmacy Technician.

Looking ahead for the students, eight were recognized for moving ahead in their career by taking a position with the district's Care Clinic. Seven of the eight students are assigned to school across the Nelson County School District, the final student will serve all of the county schools, aiding at each clinic.

GUEST

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graduates earn about \$80,000 early in their careers in Washington, D.C., compared

with roughly \$65,000 in Houston and \$57,000 in New Orleans.

No wonder so many recent graduates are lighting up social media with posts about the difficulties of finding a job in their field, the crushing

burden of paying off big loans, and the increasing inability to get by, much less thrive.

We do our children a great disservice by not giving them access to all the facts, even if reality is harsh.