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2018 MIDTERM ELECTIONS:
RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It's good to have everyone with us this morning. I want to start just by acknowledging that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg has been hospitalized this morning from a fall, so I would ask you all to keep her in your thoughts and prayers.

I'm John Allen, I'm the president of Brookings, and it's a pleasure to have you all join us today for this important event. Let me also welcome those who are coming in by Facebook, webcast, and we also, as we always do, welcome the presence of C-SPAN.

This morning we're here to discuss a topic that's been on many of our minds over the last days and weeks and months -- for some of us since the 9th of November of 2016 (laughter) -- the midterm elections. As with anything political at this moment in history, there's a great deal of anticipation and analysis that is coming from this moment, and perhaps some educated guesses as well as to how these results would turn out. And despite each of those efforts, and as seems to be the norms of late, there are some surprises that have emerged from the events on Tuesday. Even now, there are still some races that are too close to be called.

Regardless from which side of the aisle you hail, these elections are an important indicator of the future direction of our country. As you'll learn in a few minutes, the 116th Congress is set to be very different and likely think and act very differently than that which we have seen before. And in this era of polarized political views and increasing political tribalism, it's important that we watch closely and try to discuss thoroughly what these electoral results mean for our country over the long-term.

Here at Brookings we closely track every U.S. election, as well as the many policies and political issues that are up for consideration at any given moment.

And while we are proudly nonpartisan and independent as an institution, our scholars certainly have their fair share to say about any and all aspects of our electoral process.

Not surprisingly, the 2018 midterms were no different, and today we have gathered some top governance experts in the world on this panel to discuss the results. And they will give us important context for what happened on Tuesday and what we can expect in the future and some more besides, I would imagine.

Before we get started, one final reminder that we are live and we are on the record. And with that, I'm honored and would like to welcome to the stage an old friend, Indira Lakshmanan, who is the executive editor of the Pulitzer Center and the Washington columnist for the Boston Globe, and a cadre of excellent fellows from our Governance Studies program, Bill Galston, Elaine Kamarck, Molly Reynolds, and Vanessa Williams.

So, ladies and gentlemen, again, welcome to this event today, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I expect to get out of it.

So thank you. (Applause)

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Welcome, everybody. Thank you so much. It's an extremely full house. I was really pleased to see standing room only and the long line coming in. I think we have overflow as well.

So a lot to cover today and you have a terrific panel of Brookings experts here to do it who have had long lives at Brookings and long lives before Brookings. So immediately to my left is Elaine Kamarck. She is senior fellow and director at the Center for Effective Public Management here at Brookings and the author of several books, including "How Change Happens -- Doesn't: The Politics of U.S. Public Policy". She served in Bill Clinton's administration creating and managing what some of you may remember as the Reinventing Government initiative, and she has been a member of the

DNC for 21 years. And sitting right next to her is Molly Reynolds, who is a fellow in Governance Studies at Brookings. She studies Congress and is the author of "Exceptions to the Rule: The Politics of Filibuster Limitations in the U.S. Senate", and she supervises Brookings' Vital Statistics on Congress project. Next to her is Bill Galston, who is the Ezra Zilkha chair at the Brookings Institution's Governance Studies program. He is the author of many books, including "Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy". That's his new book out this year. And he served as Deputy Assistant to President Bill Clinton for domestic policy and has participated in numerous campaigns. And, last but not at all least, Vanessa Williamson, who is a fellow in Governance Studies and an expert on tax policy. She is the co-author of "The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism", and previously was policy director at the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

So we want to drill down on what the implications of Tuesday night's results were. But I want to start first big picture. Elaine, tell us, so many people were anxious and nervous about making predictions about this election after the predictions about 2016 were so wrong. But, as it turned out, people who were willing to make predictions said that the democrats were likely to win between 30 and 50 seats, and that has happened -- it appears to be around 35 seats in the House -- and that the republicans were likely to win around 5 seats in the Senate, and they won 3 seats in the Senate it looks like at this point.

So did we actually get it right this time? And if so why did we not get it -- I mean what's the difference between now and 2016?

MS. KAMARCK: Well, thank you for joining us at Brookings. We love having you here. And thank you, everyone, for coming.

Let me go back to 2016. Okay, they did get it right nationally. They had

the national number right, but where they went off the track was that they didn't have the state numbers right. And that's very, very hard to do. Which mean that this time the predictors spent a lot of time looking at state numbers and district numbers and looking at what we political scientists in an earlier day, before we were inundated with polls, used to look at, which is the fundamentals -- what's the history of this congressional district voting. You know, you go all the way back to V.O. Key, which many of us studied, who used to look at, you know, who lived there, how'd they vote in the past. It's actually a pretty good predictor of how they're going to vote in the future. So I think that's why they got it more right, is that they were back to the fundamentals of the electorate and little bit less reliant on polls.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Bill, you have a longer view of history than anyone on this panel (laughter), and I say that with all respect. That's a compliment. And so I want you to tell us a historically about the turnout in this election and how it compares to turnout in the last century. Not that you've been alive that long. I'm not making something (inaudible) (laughter).

MR. GALSTON: I'm sorry, would you repeat that?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay. Tell us how much the turnout mattered this time.

MR. GALSTON: Well, that's the politest reference to my hair color I've heard in quite some time. I'm also happy to represent diversity on this panel.

This was a remarkable election. Early estimates suggest that 113 million Americans showed up for this midterm election. If that number is roughly right, that means that the turnout was 49 percent. For purposes of reference, the last time turnout was that high was in 1966. And the all-time record occurred in 1914 with a 51 percent turnout in a midterm. So this was very close to an all-time high. Looking at the most

recent midterm benchmark, which was of course 2014, turnout was 36.4 percent.

So the turnout this year was slightly more than one-third higher than it was just four years ago. I can't imagine a more concrete manifestation of public interest and mobilization.

Let me make just one more point, which I'll do with reference to the State of Florida. Four years ago 5.9 million Floridians voted in the gubernatorial election, which Mr. Scott won by about 1 percentage point. This year 8.1 million Floridians showed up, an increase of 2.2 million, and the republican candidate won by about a percentage point. In other words, not only was there a massive mobilization, but there was an equal mobilization on both sides. And the fact that there was an equal mobilization on both sides is one reason why the democratic margin overall in the national race is going to turn out to be a relatively modest 7 percentage points when the dust settles.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Molly, you wanted to jump in?

MS. REYNOLDS: Yeah. I mean one thing that's really interesting to note about that, Bill, is that when we looked at midterm elections historically, at least in recent history, we think that democratic turnout has lagged republican turnout in many of them in part because of what we know about the types of people who generally turn out to vote in midterms. In midterm elections without a president to drive turnout at the top of the ballot, the electorate tends to be older, whiter, wealthier -- the things that are generally correlated with being more likely to vote. And so one thing that will be interesting as we get more and more data about what the 2018 electorate looks like, is to what degree did we kind of buck that historical pattern this year.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Vanessa, I want to ask you, people were obviously mobilized to come out and vote on both sides. And this is kind of a hard question to answer, but were they voting for something or against something? Was this really a

referendum on Donald Trump, or was this something else? And it was interesting that Donald Trump came out immediately and said this was a big victory for him even though he did lose the House. But he's been emphasizing the victory I guess of holding onto the Senate and of also several republican wins in state elections that looked iffy, like Texas and Florida. So what were people really voting for this time?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think one of the most important things to recognize about the contemporary political moment is the extent to which partisanship is really driving vote choice these days. In the past there were a far larger percentage of Americans who were swing voters, that is to say they would vote for one party in one election, another party in another. As the parties have become more polarized it has become more predictable who you're going to vote for, which makes the races more of a mobilization race. It's less of a persuasion race, it's more of a mobilization race. And it also, I think, helps explain why we're seeing in this contemporary era such a fight over what kind of democracy we want to be. That is to say, we are having fights over the rules of democracy now. You saw that in Florida, you saw that in Georgia, you're continuing to see it in Georgia, in Texas, many states. One of the fundamental factors people are trying to take into account when they're thinking about turnout is who will be eligible to vote, who will be allowed to vote.

So I think that this sort of hairs breadth divide that we're talking about in Florida is part of the thing that's driving a real debate about whether we're an inclusive democracy that tries to get everyone who is eligible to the polls or a restricted democracy that keeps some of us on the outside.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Do we have any early answer on that?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Well, there is one early answer in Florida, which is the passage of Amendment 4, which --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: The felons.

MS. WILLIAMSON: -- gave convicted felons who had served their time the opportunity to become voting citizens again. And it should -- and this gives you a sense of how profound the problem of mass incarceration has been in this country -- it will enfranchise over a million people. So it is likely to make a real difference in what voting in Florida looks like next time.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: I heard an incredible statistic on NPR, maybe you could tell me whether this is right. I heard that something like one-third of the African American men in Florida were disenfranchised in this way. And so that seems like it will make a huge difference.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes, that's right. I think that it's very important to connect the patterns of mass incarceration of our cultural state with a very long and horrifying tradition of trying to exclude African Americans from the polls. These are connected traditions in our history. And I think in Florida, and to a lesser extent in Louisiana, there was also a measure that changed Jim Crow era cultural state law, how juries have to be unanimous. I bet you were shocked to know that in Louisiana that was not the case. So I think we're beginning to see a turning of the tide on these two issues at once. But the fight is still real. Things like voter suppression are going to continue to be a problem through 2020 and possibly beyond.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And we saw it in Georgia of course.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Absolutely.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: A huge fight in Georgia. Elaine, let me ask you, midterms are usually a rebuke of the party that is in power in the White House. It was interesting because I saw some republicans quoted as saying this was rebuke and not a repudiation of the President because of the way it went down differently in the House and

the Senate. But Americans often are supposedly voting for a different party in the midterms than in the generals because they want bipartisanship, they want the two sides to work together, to work across the aisle. This felt to me like a vote for divided government, not for bipartisanship. And is that how it's going to play out?

MS. KAMARCK: Well, I think we had two different messages yesterday from both the congressional press conferences after the vote and the President's press conference. (Laughter) But, you know, not as different as you would think. I mean there was an area that they both defined for cooperation, prescription drug costs and infrastructure, which Bill has been writing about infrastructure since the last century.

MR. GALSTON: Since my hair was black. (Laughter)

MS. KAMARCK: And we haven't managed to get -- everybody says we need this, we should do it, et cetera. We haven't managed to get that. So it was interesting to hear that emphasis coming even out of the President's press conference.

And then there was this of course extraordinarily divisive note that also came out of the President's press conference. The 800 pound gorilla in the room is the Mueller report. That's what makes this post midterm situation unlike any other. We don't know what Mueller has, we don't know when he's going to drop it, we don't know if next week we're going to open the papers and see 15 more indictments. That's what's hanging over this Administration and that's what keeps their politics and congressional politics from being a more normal politics. If you told me that a month from now we'd be in the middle of impeachment hearings, I wouldn't be that surprised. If you told me a month from now we'd be in the middle of a bipartisan infrastructure bill, I also wouldn't be that surprised.

So it's a very different time and I'm afraid history doesn't teach us much about it.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Well, Bill, though I mean the President in his press conference yesterday -- essentially it was like a blackmail line, he said I'm willing to work on infrastructure, prescription drugs, as long as you don't try to prosecute me and as long as this Mueller investigation doesn't go forward. That's essentially what he said, that if democrats play ball by not pursuing the Mueller investigation, then he'll work with them on these other things. That does not seem to be the message we're getting from the new chairmen in the House who do want to pursue the Mueller investigation, and yet the Acting Attorney General is someone who has talked about prosecuting high profile democrats, including Hillary Clinton.

So where do you see this going in terms of how it's going to affect congress' ability to actually make legislation?

MR. GALSTON: If things play out according to the scenario laid down yesterday there's not going to be a great burst of legislation (laughter) in the next two years. I'm not sure that was to be expected anyway. The list of legislative topics where bipartisan compromise and cooperation was even conceivable prior to the election was very short. It has not gotten longer. In my view, the House leadership, whatever it turns out to be -- and that's an interesting question in itself -- the House leadership will do its best to restrain the more extreme and ill considered impulses in the democratic caucus. Nancy Pelosi has probably said a dozen times that she's not in favor of a pell mell rush to impeachment. The Mueller report, if it is allowed to be completed, if it sees the light of day, may force her hand, but that's clearly the last thing the democratic leaders want. And if you look at the survey research coming out of the election on the public appetite for impeachment, it's 39 percent. And given the fact -- that tells you that more than a quarter of democrats don't want to proceed with impeachment. On the other hand, I don't see how the House Intelligence Committee can or should be restrained from doing

oversight. And most of the other committees would be derelict in their duty if they didn't do the oversight that has not occurred in the past two years.

So if the President thinks that the democrats are simply going to lay down their investigative and oversight tools in the name of an infrastructure bill, then -- well, I won't even complete the sentence (laughter), you know, in the interests of a good bipartisan Brookings conversation. So suffice it to say that he already knows the answer to his question.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: So, Molly, is that the name of the game for the next two years in congress? Is the name of the game oversight essentially, with hands tied in congress about getting other legislation done but very tight and heavy oversight? And is that what the American public wanted when it voted in the midterms? Are those the issues we were voting on? Oversight?

MS. REYNOLDS: I do think that most of what we're going to see out of the House over the next two years is on the oversight front. I tend to agree with Bill, that even absent what the President said yesterday, we were not heading towards some sort of enormously legislatively productive congress for the next two years. And that's in part because what democrats I think in the House see part of their job after this midterm is to investigate the President. And, importantly, not just the President. So we will see things like the Ways and Means Committees trying to obtain Trump's tax returns, we will see investigations of things like how many foreign governments are paying money to stay at the Trump Hotel, things that are very Trump related. But we will also see a lot of oversight and investigative work on other things that have happened in the Executive Branch over the past two years that have gone unexplored. So things ranging from conflict of interest in financial dealings by cabinet secretaries to the implementation of things like the family separate policy at the border and the affordable care act at HHS.

That sort of thing. So it won't all be about the President himself, much of it will be about operations in the Executive Branch more broadly.

The other thing that I will say that sort of does not bode well for bipartisan legislating in the new congress is that it is Senate where, as you said, the republicans stand to gain two to three seats, depending on kind of how everything shakes out from here. That gives Majority Leader McConnell a little bit more of a cushion than he has now. And he has made no secret of the fact that he would be perfectly happy just to spend most of the Senate's time confirming additional judicial nominees. He has long seen that as a big part of kind of his mission as the republican leader in the Senate. And so if you're the majority leader and that's what you really care about and you get to set the agenda in the Senate, you will likely feel like it's a better use of your time just to keep doing that for two years rather than perhaps try to cut some bipartisan deals with democrats in the House.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And just quickly, what would you say the main issues were that people were voting on? I mean was the caravan something that actually drove people to the polls in the end, or where they voting to keep and maintain the affordable care act? What was really motivating people?

MS. KAMARCK: So I'll first return to a point Vanessa made earlier about how most of what we see in voter choice about who to vote for in American elections now is about partisanship. It's about do you identify with the democrats, do you identify with the republicans. In terms of the issues that we saw kind of play out in this campaign, particularly on the democratic side, healthcare was overwhelmingly what candidates were talking about. If you look at data that the Wesleyan Media Project puts together on what was being talked about in campaign ads, you'll see that for the House about 60 percent of the ads that were aired in favor of democratic candidates around the country during the

election were about healthcare. You know, on Tuesday night when Nancy Pelosi gave her speech, she said something along the lines of like we have to thank pre-existing conditions --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Yeah, she did.

MS. KAMARCK: -- for this victory. (Laughter) There's a little bit of clunky articulation, but the underlying point there is that because republicans in congress last year tried and failed to repeal the affordable care act, they tried and failed to take away protections for people with pre-existing conditions as part of health insurance plans, that was a major issue that democrats ran on.

On immigration, we have --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And, by the way, many republicans were out there campaigning saying, I love pre-existing conditions.

QUESTIONER: Republicans were taking the side of pre-existing conditions.

MS. KAMARCK: They were contorting themselves into --

QUESTIONER: Pretzels.

MS. KAMARCK: Exactly. And statements of questionable veracity about how they felt about providing protections for pre-existing conditions. My favorite of those were governors in states where their state attorneys general had joined this lawsuit to overturn the ACA and they were still out there saying that they were in favor of protecting people with pre-existing conditions.

But on immigration, we have some evidence that in recent elections, both 2016 and likely 2018, immigration is perhaps a more important part of voting choices for white voters in the United States. But not a lot of evidence that that changed over the course of the 2018 cycle.

So to your point about the caravan, there's not a lot of evidence that people who said immigration mattered to them or didn't matter to them earlier in the year changed their minds and all of the sudden it became a more relevant point later in the year.

So, again, just in terms of issues, I think really healthcare was the biggest one that we saw.

MR. GALSTON: Yeah, the exit polls absolutely confirm and underscore the point that you just made. When Americans were asked to name the single most important issue that they brought into the polling booth with them, 41 percent said healthcare.

QUESTIONER: Healthcare.

MR. GALSTON: By contrast, 23 percent said immigration, 22 percent said the economy, and interestingly, number four was guns. And let me tell you why that --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: What percentage was that?

MR. GALSTON: Ten. But that's significant for the following reason -- very preliminary estimates suggest that turnout among young adults, which was 19 percent 4 years ago, was as high as 1/3 this time. And guns, for obvious reasons, have turned out to be a major mobilizer for young adults.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And just this morning we have another mass shooting in Los Angeles.

MR. GALSTON: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, in Los Angeles.

MR. GALSTON: That is really -- if you ask in each generation what are the formative experiences for this generation of young adults, school shootings are high

on the list of formative experiences. They're willing to organize and mobilize and vote around that issue. And this is a harbinger of a different future on these issues because these young people are the future and eventually the balance of power on this issue will shift, not today, not tomorrow, not in 2020, not even in 2024, but I think I'll live long enough to see the change. (Laughter)

MS. REYNOLDS: If I can jump in on that.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Yes.

MS. REYNOLDS: I think that when we were talking about how little is likely to get done legislatively at a national level, but that shouldn't lead people to believe that there aren't important issues upon which most Americans agree about what the legislative solution is. So I think this again speaks to kind of dysfunction of the democracy, because people do. I mean poll after poll for I think decades now has shown that there are any number of gun control measures that receive overwhelming majoritarian support from both parties, when you ask voters, not when you ask legislators.

And so I think there's more and more work suggesting it. There are these large disconnects between what people in a district think and what legislators think the people in their district think. So there are these major gaps. Again, you saw some of that at the polls just this year. For instance, several purple or conservative states did things like pass the Medicaid expansion or raise the minimum wage. We saw Missouri raise the minimum wage in their state, but not return Claire McCaskill. And that suggests that there's an issue interest that is not filtering into the parties in the way that people who follow politics very closely would expect. It would be I think sort of a standard view that the party more likely to engage in things to raise the minimum wage would be the Democratic Party. Or, you know, in Florida, again that same example, the party who has

been talking more about expanding voting rights, the Democratic Party, but you get felon re-enfranchisement, but not Gillum.

So I think that there's this very serious issue where there are major policy areas in which there is substantive widespread agreement, bipartisan agreement among voters, that is not translating into substantive agreement among legislators.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: What about taxation? Is that one of those areas of substantive bipartisan accord in this case? And you've studied -- maybe it's a rhetorical question -- but you've studied the Trump tax cut a lot and I'm curious how much of a role that played in the midterms.

MS. WILLIAMSON: So I think that it's very telling that Bill did not list taxes in his list right there. No, the tax cut had very little to do with this election, which is shocking again, because it was the signature legislative achievement of congress and some republicans early in the season tried to run on it, some of the special elections, republican legislators tried to run on taxes.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: But it didn't get traction.

MS. WILLIAMSON: It didn't get traction. And you saw the percent of ads and mailers that talked about taxes decline, decline, decline over the course of the election season because it wasn't winning with the voters. And frankly that should have been obvious in advance because republican voters were not very excited about the tax bill even as it was moving through.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And why do you think that is?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think there are a couple of reasons. One, it was a very top heavy tax bill and so most of the benefits went to wealthy people and corporations. Most republicans do not think corporations need to have their taxes cut; actually they think corporate tax rates should be the same or go up. Same with taxes for

wealthy people. So that's actually on your question of accord. There is a remarkably high level of interest in the Republican Party on keeping taxes high for wealthy people when you talk to voters, not when you talk to legislators.

MR. GALSTON: Or donors.

MS. WILLIAMSON: And certainly not donors. (Laughter) So the bill wasn't structured in a way where its major provisions were going to be popular, even as people learned more about them. With the ACA we saw it was not terribly popular, but as people learned more about the provisions, like pre-existing conditions, it became more popular. This was not a bill that could be sold that way.

Also, structurally, the Republican Party did not do some of the things that you would think they would learn from the Bush administration about selling a tax cut. That is to say, send everyone a check for a small amount of money so that people get that idea in mind. What we find is that people forget about tax cuts very quickly.

So it wasn't a winning issue for the republicans this year, it hasn't been a winning issue for republicans recently. And what's been interesting to watch is at the state level, increasingly they're putting taxes on the ballot because about half the time they can get them passed.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Let's come back to that, because I want to come back to ballot measures. But, Elaine, I wanted to ask you about the role of women in this election, women candidates. Because we did have a record number of women running and I think a record number of women winning.

MS. KAMARCK: Oh, yeah. I mean women were a big story in this election on two dimensions. First of all, an overwhelming number of women were running, most of them as democrats and many of them winning. I mean you just saw those pictures on election night and it was one after another after another. And the data

is on the Brookings website for those of you who are interested on exactly what those numbers looked like. So we had a really energized activist women base.

The second piece of that story is the gender gap. So the gender gap, which has been with us since 1984, sometimes matters and sometimes doesn't, because of course it's the difference between how men and women vote. And this time there was a substantial gender gap even among white voters. And women voting much more democratic than men, which probably goes to explain the suburban swing that we saw across the country.

So as election night went on you will notice that suburbs, the near suburbs, and even some medium to far suburbs, that's where the democrats were picking up House seats. And as we've heard for much of this year, that is probably due to a gender gap and to some women moving away from -- republican women moving away from the Republican Party and towards not necessarily democrats -- you can't call them democrats -- but towards an independent stance.

The other thing we've seen this year is a drop in the number of -- the last two years, drop in the number of voters identifying as republican. So you have 90 percent approval ratings of Trump, but among a smaller base of identifiers in the electorate than we've had in quite some time.

So you've got a women's story on both sides, both candidates and voters.

MS. REYNOLDS: So just to sort of jump in here, one piece of data that speaks to your observation about women and women in the suburbs is that among white women, white women are still pretty evenly split as a whole between republicans and democrats. Where we see the big gap and the big advantage for democrats is among white women with college degrees. And that's a group that's now I would say pretty

firmly entrenched in the democratic coalition to a pretty sizeable degree. And I think that really helps explain some of the results that we've seen with democrats picking up these more suburban and in some places pushing exurban House seats.

MR. GALSTON: Just to underscore Molly's point, white women with college degrees went democratic by 20 points this year, 59 to 39. White men with college degrees were 47 to 51. So that is, if you do the math --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: 47 for democrats, 51 for republicans.

MR. GALSTON: 51. So if you do the math the way the pollsters do, that's a gender gap of 24 points.

MS. KAMARCK: Which is very, very large by historic standards.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: What explains that?

MS. KAMARCK: It's interesting what explains it. I mean I think that a lot of this is actually a sort of general cultural revulsion to the President and to the kind of attitudes that he displays all the time, beginning with the Billy Bush tape during the campaign.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: So MeToo is part of this?

MS. KAMARCK: And I think MeToo plays a big, big role in this. And I think that -- you know, because it's hard to argue that well to do suburban women with college degrees have strong feeling against a tax cut, against the tax bill, you know what I mean. There's things here that are just a little bit difficult to say that oh, yeah, that must be the reason. And so I think that you've got to look at the sort of zeitgeist on this one. And the MeToo movement, the President's own behavior, which is sometimes sort of boorish (laughter) -- chuckles here -- and I think you've got to look at that to explain because look, this revulsion among college educated women, it started on inauguration day.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Or it started before that, with the tape. The Access Hollywood tape. Oh, the hats.

MS. KAMARCK: With the tape. But remember, the day after his inauguration we had --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: The pink hats.

MS. KAMARCK: Yes, we had this mammoth, mammoth march in Washington and around the country.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And all over the country.

MS. KAMARCK: So women have been turned off by Donald Trump from the beginning. And there's been countervailing forces among men. And, in fact, one of the things I wanted to bring up before is that a lot of republicans feel that the Kavanaugh hearings actually worked in their favor and that what the Kavanaugh hearings did was wake up their base. And I know McConnell yesterday felt that the fact that they retained control in the Senate and did as well as they did in the Senate was due to energized based that happened as a result of the McConnell hearings.

So these sort of Zeitgeist issues can work both ways.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Bill, I think you have been tracking some of the gaps other than the gender gap, the urban rural gap. Tell us a little about the other key gaps that you've seen.

MR. GALSTON: Oh, my goodness, where to start. Well, I have come to the conclusion based on research, not just in the United States but also in the UK and in Europe west of the Urals, that the gap between metropolitan voters on the one hand and small town and rural voters on the other is perhaps the dominant political phenomenon of our times. And it's a fateful gap because it correlates with economic wellbeing, with education, with cultural outlook. And so in the old days of the pluralist dominance in

American political science, the dominant paradigm was Madisonian, the technical phrase was crosscutting cleavages. That is to say that you might be with people on one point but against them on another, so that coalitions would form and reform because people were cross pressured. Increasingly, people are not cross pressured and where they live turns out to be -- the kind of community turns out to be absolutely formative.

And here are some statistics for you. Among urban voters in this election, democrats got 65 percent of the vote and republicans 32. In rural areas democrats got 42 and republicans got 56. The suburbs were split down the middle, 49-49. They are the battleground, but as Elaine and Molly and Vanessa have pointed out, there are all sorts of indications that that split also tracks geographical lines.

Here's another development which sort of goes to young adults and guns. Among first time voters, democrats prevailed in this midterm by 62-36. And political scientists will tell you that early voting patterns, if they're repeated for a second or a third time, tend to be like a kind of indelible dye in a white cloth. And that was a leading indicator of the way young adults will vote when they're not such young adults.

MS. REYNOLDS: Can I jump in here? Because I've been wanting to talk about age. I mean I think there's --

MR. GALSTON: Well, you started talking about --

MS. REYNOLDS: Started talking about age, and we'll pick it right up. (Laughter) So it's important to understand that a lot of political science shows that the early habits stay with people for a very long time. And one of the things I noted from the exit polls is that the people under 50 constituted about 44 percent of the electorate. People over 50 accounted for the rest of it, 56 percent. Under 40, however, they were heavily democratic. In fact, the younger you got the more democratic they were. And then over 50 they were republican. In this election, not that much, but we've seen in

various polls of the President's approval, when they break down his approval ratings, his approval ratings are highest at the top of the --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Age range.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- age distribution.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: But isn't it true that also voters become more conservative as they become older?

MS. REYNOLDS: No. No.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: That's not true?

MS. REYNOLDS: No, that's not true because that confuses the cohort analysis.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay.

MS. REYNOLDS: In fact, that's not the case. The FDR generation, my father-in-law, my father, both of them passed away now, they were part of that. They cast their first vote for FDR. They were democrats right up until the end. My father kind of diverted in 1972 and got sick of all these hippies, including me, and voted for Nixon. But basically people take their party identification with them. But that's based on looking at silent generation people who in fact came into the electorate with Eisenhower. And you're going to have some of that with people who came into the electorate with Reagan. Some of these Gen Xers are more conservative than some of their younger millennials. So you've got to look at the age cohort as they move through the electorate.

And the thing about millennials are twofold that we need to bear in mind. One is it's the largest generation in American history.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Millennials?

MS. REYNOLDS: Millennials. And this took everybody by surprise, (a) because us baby boomers had our children later, so people were looking for it and then it

didn't happen, and (b) because of immigration. And the other thing to remember about millennials is if you had not -- the youngest people voting in 2008 were overwhelmingly for Obama. If you had taken out that vote, guess what, McCain would have won the election in 2008. That's how powerful this generation in.

So when you're looking at generation, you've got to remember two things, (a) what their formative experience is, and (b) their size. Because it's the big generations that move through -- they used to call it like the pig in the python -- that move through the electorate. It's the big generations that really affect American politics.

MR. GALSTON: Just let me add a footnote to that. There's a third thing you have to pay attention to, and that is the fact that voters over the age of 65 are highly and with each passing year increasingly dependent on large government programs. So they will not be conservative when it comes to the programs that enemies usually sum up as entitlements and their friends call social security and Medicare, and in many cases Medicaid as well, because as older Americans find out, many of them the hard way, it is Medicaid that pays for nursing homes and not Medicare.

So don't hold your breath. And, by the way, the fastest growing share of the population in the next 15 years will be people over 65 and even more so, people over 85. So don't hold your breath waiting for big cuts in entitlement programs over the next 20 years.

MS. KAMARCK: A few years ago somebody asked me to write an article about the future of Medicare and Medicaid and I said the future is the same as the past. This ain't going away.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Short article. (Laughter)

MR. GALSTON: Except more so.

MS. KAMARCK: Except more so.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Vanessa, you wanted to jump in?

MS. WILLIAMSON: I mean I think it's important to -- so I spent a few years spending time with activists in the Tea Party, who are this older white strong Trump supporter population, and I was struck by the extent to which their concerns were a generational concern. Because you've got to remember that older America is white America, younger America is more a diverse America. And so concerns about immigration sort of interacted with that knowledge that the political future of America does not look like its political past. And I think that particularly on the issue of entitlements, which Tea Party activists were very strongly in favor of, in part because they were receiving them, but also I think just because they thought that they had earned them, right, while they had their doubts about whether those young people were earning anything at all or were just sitting around doing nothing, including sometimes members of their own family would often be used as the example. Ne'er-do-wells. (Laughter)

But I think that actually creates a cleavage, because where I think older white Americans who are quite conservative will line up to defend their social security and Medicare, I think programs designed to cut future benefits for beneficiaries in that younger cohort who are seen as so suspicious by older white conservatives I think that could easily be the dividing line that allows the republican leadership to achieve something that it has very much considered a priority for a long time, which is to wind those programs down.

MS. REYNOLDS: Right. And you also run into this challenge of trying to untangle what is seen as a policy position that I should have as a voter with what my party is telling me I should think as a voter. And so if, as I did, you spent probably more time than I should have watching the ins and outs of the debate over repealing the ACA last year, one of the big challenges there was that republicans had this party goal, they

had formulated and committed to the idea that getting rid of Obamacare was what they had to do. They run on it for eight years, they had promised that this was what was going to happen, and then when push came to shove, designing a bill that could meet that objective while also not alienating parts of their constituency proved ultimately to be too great a challenge. But it was a real -- I mean you talked before, Bill, about things being crosscutting. This is a place where we had two sets of crosscutting incentives that really got them into trouble and is what meant that they couldn't ultimately achieve this legislative success.

MR. GALSTON: You also had -- and you might call this an important part of the Trump difference -- let me explain. Everybody remembers his famous down the escalator announcement speech, what he said about Mexicans. Hardly anyone remembers the line in that very small, very same speech where he said "We have to save social security and Medicare and Medicaid without cuts". That is a direct quote. Donald Trump, as every Tuesday afternoon populist, is not the same thing as Paul Ryan.

QUESTIONER: That's right.

MR. GALSTON: And Donald Trump represents a change in the Republican Party and what the party stands for. And the more the Republican Party becomes "Trumpified", the more the entitlement cutters are going to be forced onto the defensive. It's not a place they really want to go anyway, except on paper.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: That's interesting. And, Molly, you know, we've seen some of the entitlement cutters already sort of retreat, like Paul Ryan, and people not wanting to fight this fight, whether because it's about entitlements or whether it's because they don't like fighting it with Trump. Tell us, what are the big stories going to be in congress in 2019? Lay out for us what you see.

MS. REYNOLDS: First let me make one point on this entitlement cuts

discussion, which is to say that it depends a lot on which entitlements we're talking about cutting. So, you know, you have had Trump saying he opposes cuts to Medicare, he opposes cuts to social security. At the same time we have seen republicans, with some success, implement work requirements for Medicaid across the country, there's been a big debate that's I think more likely to end poorly for the people who want more work requirements for SNAP, but that's been a big --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: You're talking about children's?

MS. REYNOLDS: SNAP -- food stamps.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Oh, food stamps

MS. REYNOLDS: Food assistance. But this gets to the point that I think Vanessa was making about who deserves the entitlement benefits that we're talking about. And I think there's still a lot of room in the Republican Party for people who favor cutting entitlements to what they see is less deserving Americans as opposed to cutting entitlement for people who have earned those benefits. And I actually think that dynamic, that kind of what I have and what I deserve versus what you have and what you get from the government for not -- without having done anything is an important group based dynamic in this whole big group based system that we're talking about.

But to answer your question about what I expect the big stories of congress in 2019 are going to be, again, one of them is going to be oversight in the House. What does that look like, what issues does the House choose to investigate. I would caution folks who think that that's going to -- if it's done well it's going to happen especially quickly. Good, high quality oversight takes time. One of the things that you get when you get to be the House majority is you get more money to hire more staff. Getting those people in place isn't something that happens overnight. So if we want -- and I think from a normative perspective, we do, we want that oversight and that

investigative work to be done in a serious way. I don't think we're going to be looking for big, flashy reports come February. So I think that's kind of the biggest story in the House.

It is important to remember that of the current House democratic caucus about 40 percent of those members have never served in the majority. When you add in the House freshman, both in seats they flipped and in just seats where democrats are replacing other democrats, we're going to be pushing probably about half of the House democratic caucus who has never served in the majority. So there's some real muscle memory that a lot of those members don't have, but kind of what it means to get to decide what your committees do and get to decide what bills come to the floor. So that will be part of what needs to --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: So inexperience?

MS. REYNOLDS: Inexperience. And just not -- I mean the last time democrats were in the majority was before the 2010 elections, so it's been a while.

Also in the House, the remaining republican conference is likely --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And a smaller, more conservative House GOP --

MS. REYNOLDS: Yes, which is important.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: -- caucus at the same time.

MS. REYNOLDS: The kinds of republicans whose seats turned over to democrats this year tend to be in the relatively more moderate wing of the party, republicans who were still representing some of these more suburban, more moderate districts. And so the center of gravity in the House republican conference is going to be more conservative, which I think will set us up for some difficult legislative fights in congress between the House and the Senate in particular.

And then, again, just to repeat what I said earlier about the Senate and judges. You know, in a Senate where Leader McConnell is going to have a little bit larger

of a majority, that's going to free his hand a little bit on -- probably both on judges and on Trump Administration nominees. We talked about Jeff Sessions a little bit. They're going to have to confirm a new Attorney General and they're going to have a little bit more latitude perhaps than they did with just a 51 vote.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Briefly, Bill.

MR. GALSTON: Briefly, may I? Molly, a quick question.

MS. REYNOLDS: Sure.

MR. GALSTON: Jim Jordan just threw his hat into the ring from one of the leaders of the House Freedom Caucus. So Jordan versus McCarthy, how does that play out?

MS. REYNOLDS: So at this point I have trouble seeing -- particularly if Trump is behind McCarthy, which is kind of what I would expect at this point -- I have trouble seeing the House republican conference going in the opposite direction from a Trump-McCarthy position on picking the new minority leader. I will say if a third viable candidate gets into the race, then I would think things would start to get quite interesting. But at this point, particularly if Trump stays in his support of McCarthy, I would expect that that would be where that goes. But, you know, I've been wrong about these things before.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: I want to open it up to questions soon, but, Vanessa, briefly give us your take on why these high profile progressives didn't make it. I mean there was a lot of hope behind Gillum, Abrams, O'Rourke, Cordray, all of them lost.

MS. WILLIAMSON: I think there are two things to remember, one is if you didn't have the level of polling that we have nowadays, those would have looked like very good impressive surprising results that they go so close. I think only a few years ago the idea that the Texas Senate seat was going to be hotly contested would have

unimaginable. So I think some of it is -- one of the results of our very detailed level of polling is that on election night what -- we get emotional about the deviations from the mean as opposed to the mean, which we were usually -- usually expecting. I think that there's a real question about where the Democratic Party is headed, and I think that's a really profound question. But I think that if you're going to think about it, it's not just thinking about the people who will be running, right, it's thinking about the policies. Because if you think, Barack Obama running in 2008, he was not the candidate talking about healthcare. He was not. Hillary Clinton was. He got criticized widely in the -- especially on the left side in the press -- for the weakness of his healthcare plan. And it's Obamacare nowadays, right. So a lot of what the candidates end up standing for is about interests in the party that are powerful. And sometimes I think that there's this sort of a blurry line of someone who is seemingly establishment and then, you know, changes his outfit and suddenly he's like one of these upsurgent characters.

So I think that one of the real questions for the Democratic Party looking forward is how are you passing Medicaid expansions in red states but you're not winning there. How are you raising the minimum wage in red states and purple states and not controlling the legislature. So I think that there are two things to think about. There's one thing about what's the candidate with the charisma, with the right connections, with the right background to be a successful candidate. And then there's what policies reach the voters. And those are two questions.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Bill, briefly, you were nodding your head extremely enthusiastically while Vanessa was talking about how these high profile progressives -- and some who had all the charisma she just mentioned -- Beto O'Rourke, Andrew Gillum -- you know, ended up going down whereas meat and potato democrats in the Midwest won governorships in Wisconsin and Michigan.

So what does this tell you about the path to 2020 for the democrats? Is that through the Midwest and not through surprise places like -- not through Florida or Texas?

MR. GALSTON: Let me put this very simply. It is hard to think of a state that Hillary Clinton won in 2016 that Donald Trump is likely to win in 2020. He has not made himself more attractive to a single one of the 240 electoral votes that Hillary Clinton got. I'm sorry, 227. If you add up Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, you put those on top of Clinton's states, and the 2020 democratic nominee will be the next president of the United States.

So there is the cake and then the frosting. The Midwest is the cake. Florida is the frosting. Georgia is a dream. (Laughter)

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And Texas too.

MR. GALSTON: And Texas too. And as you'll recall, in late September, early October, the Clinton campaign in 2016 thought that Georgia and Arizona were in play. And so they spent time and money in those states, which if they had spent them in the upper Midwest would have changed the election in my opinion.

So democrats having been reminded forcefully of the constitutional nature of our democratic elections, I think would be crazy not to pay attention to the electoral college. To put it as simply as possible, a crucial test for any democratic nominee in 2020 is what are your chances of carrying Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin. If they're good to excellent, you're a good choice. If they're not, you're a terrible choice, whatever your other merits maybe.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And does that mean you need a more sort of centrist meat and potatoes candidate, or what about the progressive, the Bernies, and the Bernie-likes?

MR. GALSTON: I would pay attention to the way in which democratic candidates in Pennsylvania, in Michigan, and in Wisconsin won. And if Michigan the winning slogan was, fix the damn roads. That was the bumper sticker. You can't get more meat and potatoes than that.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: That is good old (inaudible).

MR. GALSTON: Right. My infrastructure heart went pitty pat.
(Laughter) But I really think that there is a pretty clear message coming out of this election. Democrats can win in the Midwest. And there is a way in which they can do that and a way in which they can't. Mr. Cordray lost the Ohio governorship by a surprisingly large five point margin. That is not a hopeful sign.

MS. REYNOLDS: But to go back to the point that Vanessa was making about the way that kind of issues and other elements of this don't necessarily map on neatly to one another, that in some of these Midwestern states we're seeing support for what we might call kind of progressive policies. But there are questions about the kinds of candidates who are going to be most successful at running on those. And I will say, as someone who used to live in Michigan, the set of statewide officers who were elected in Michigan this year is fabulously diverse. It includes a white woman at the top of the ticket as governor, a black man as the new lieutenant governor of Michigan. And so there's I think -- it's so shocking when I say this -- it's just I think a little bit more complicated and I can take away maybe less clear lessons than you do for how we go forward.

And to speak about Ohio, thinking about Cordray loses the governor's election, but Sherrod Brown wins the Senate election handily. And kind of what lessons can we learn at the intersection of talking about issues and who the candidates are.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And they campaigned differently, quite differently.

All right. Well, I'd like to open it up to the audience for questions. And I

just want to remind you, please state your name, any affiliation, and please make sure that it's a question. And we've got a microphone here.

I saw this hand go up first from this gentlemen, but I'll try to come around to everybody.

QUESTIONER: It was all those years in school. Hi, my name is Andrew Everett. My question is primarily towards Elaine and Bill, but all of you all I'd be interested to hear your thoughts. With respect to gun control, what do you think the -- traditionally, because it's been like -- people who are pro gun, they always turn out, they vote on that issue and that issue alone. You're bad on guns, they don't care where you are anywhere else, versus -- at least seemingly until Parkland happened -- where people who are in favor of gun control, sure, it's nice, but where are they on healthcare, where are they on education, everything else. Was Parkland a changing narrative there? And if so, how do pro gun control people look to try to protect the people who vote for their measures, which is where I think the problem lie in passing gun control?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Thank you. So, is Parkland a watershed, and if so, why?

MS. KAMARCK: It's a very good question. I think Parkland might be a watershed only because this keeps happening. And if you look at -- for instance, think about last night's shooting. Who goes to a bar on a Wednesday night?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: It was a graduation party too I think.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, it's young people. So we weren't going out last night, right? (Laughter) It's young people. Bill wasn't going out last night. (Laughter)

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Let's not get ageist on this panel. That's ageism.

MR. GALSTON: Boy, this is a steady drumbeat.

MS. KAMARCK: And so this is becoming a disturbing trend that we're

seeing a lot of it. It used to be that you would have a Parkland or what happened in Colorado and it would be a one off. People would get concerned about gun control for a couple of months and then we'd forget about it. And, you're right, that pattern would fall back into place where the intense Second Amendment people would always vote and everyone else had other issues.

This may be changing, unfortunately, just because there's so much of this happening these days.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Of course we thought that Newtown would change it. But in that case the victims were little children. And in the case where the victims are high school children, Parkland has really shown the ability of those teens, voting age many of them, to mobilize.

MS. REYNOLDS: So this is what I would say -- and I would be curious if Vanessa, who has done much more work on organizing than I have has any observations along this point, -- but one thing that struck me about the issue among younger people is the way that it has become something to build organizations around. And, as you were saying, at the top so much of what happens in our elections now is not about persuasion, it's about mobilization. And so to the extent that this is an area in which we are building and people around the country are building organizations that might be the groundwork for all kinds of political action going forward.

I don't know if --

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes, I think that's a really critically important point. So schools and colleges are a natural organizing place and you really -- especially if you're going to go up against not just gun voters who feel strongly about the issue, but the NRA, which is a tremendously powerful lobby for the gun industry, you need real organization. So frankly sort of an old fashioned organization in terms of people who

actually know each other, who actually meet in person, not just quick meetings on Facebook, but actually holding events, going out, knowing their local legislatures, all those sorts of things. And I think that one of the things that was interesting about Parkland was watching that kind of organizing develop among much younger people than you normally see it in.

Relatedly, I'd say that one of the things to keep an eye on -- I mean basically the Republican Party has always been very good at that kind of organizing, partly because they tend to run a little older, so they've had experiences in their church groups and PTAs and that sort of thing. But the Republican Party is really smart about demobilizing groups that will oppose them. So a lot of republican legislation about making it hard for unions to organize, a lot of republican legislation against things like Planned Parenthood work in a very similar way. They're ideologically constant with conservative values, but they're also strategically smart moves.

So I think one of the things to watch for 2020 is definitely not just overall average opinions of demographic groups, but how organizations develop.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: I want to move on so we get more questions. Yes? This was the second hand I saw, right here.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. Most interesting. My name is (inaudible). I'm struck that foreign policy has not come up at all. One specific question in this area. Do you think there will be a Russia sanctions bill coming through?

Thank you.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay, great question. And I feel embarrassed; I'm a foreign policy person and I haven't asked that question. So you've really shown me up here. But I think it's because foreign policy was one of the lowest factors. When I look at the reasons people were voting, foreign policy was way down, possibly in the single

digits, Bill, but correct me if I'm wrong. I thought I saw something like 9 percent.

MR. GALSTON: I named the four issues that were in double digits. There wasn't much room for anything.

MS. REYNOLDS: And this is consistent with generally how we think about voters, as not paying as much attention to foreign policy, it doesn't have as big of an impact on their decision making.

In terms of the question about a new Russia sanctions bill, beyond kind of what the House democrats have indicated are their top set of issue priorities of the new congress, I don't -- item one is sort of campaign finance ethics reform type package. Beyond that I don't know -- I don't want to speculate too much about where their agenda might go. But one thing that will be true more generally in the new congress is that with a democratically controlled House there will be lots of things that the House passes and sends to the Senate that go nowhere.

But there may also be some things that the House passes that there's some interest in working on in the Senate, perhaps something like Russia sanctions, or other things where there's some bipartisan agreement, where Leader McConnell will no longer be able to use as an excuse, oh, we're not going to take up this bill because the House will never pass it. We saw it during the last two years because the House republican conference was more conservative than kind of the center of gravity of the Senate because of the filibuster. We saw this happen a lot. And that's an excuse he no longer has. He can no longer say I don't want to do this because the House is never going to pass it.

MR. GALSTON: Let me just add a quick word, and that is although foreign policy played no role whatsoever in the midterm election, I can promise you that things will be very different in 2020. President Trump has effected a major change in

U.S. stance in the world and the Constitution gives the President great power in that area. I can pretty much promise you that the democratic presidential nominee will take the President up on some of these changes.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And things like immigration are both domestic and foreign policy issues.

MS. KAMARCK: And trade as well.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And trade as well, domestic and foreign.

MS. REYNOLDS: And we did see that play a role in some individual races.

MS. KAMARCK: A little bit. I think, you know, trade is the most interesting thing to watch because we haven't yet seen the full effect of some of the trade policy on individual businesses. I mean the soybean farmers in South Dakota, we've seen those pictures. They've got mountains of soybeans going nowhere. So as this happens in other industries it's going to have political effects, but I think it was a little early for this election.

MR. GALSTON: Yeah, yeah.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Yes, there's not -- oh, right there with the yellow scarf.

QUESTIONER: Hi, Susan Irving. I wanted to get back to the voter access issue, because of course it's not just Georgia or the redistricting in North Carolina, but there's also the creative approach North Dakota took on requiring street addresses.

So what, if anything, do you think the congress can do and are in fact democrats and some republicans will to pay any attention to this? Because this is a pretty growing problem I think.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay, so on disenfranchisement. Molly, do you

want to talk about congress?

MS. REYNOLDS: Sure. And I feel like you probably have some thoughts on this too. So this is a place where I actually see if there's action to happen it's going to be at the state level. And we haven't talked too much about the results of elections in the states around the country. But we have -- excuse me?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: She's saying that's where the problem is.

MS. REYNOLDS: Right, right. But even in some states where -- so in North Carolina, you know there as a change in the North Carolina legislature. There are some states like Wisconsin that elected a new democratic governor. And so to the extent that we've seen some changes at the state level in favor of the democrats, I think that has the potential to do some work in this area. Because I'm not terribly optimistic about legislative progress on much of anything in the new congress, I don't think kind of voter access, voter suppression is a think that will see any real action out of congress. Although certainly if democrats in the House wanted to add that to the list of things they're planning on investigating, that would be in their purview to do so.

I don't know if you have anything else.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes. I think at a state level what we're probably going to continue to see is a divergence between states that are under republican control where they're concerned about losing that control in the future where you've seen a lot of moves towards voter suppression, and states under democratic control which are moving in the opposite direction, so passing things like automatic voter registration, for instance, expanded early voting, more polling places versus conservative states, which have moved in the direction of voter ID, large purges of the voter registration rules, and often fairly serious error rates, and also closing early voting, making it harder to register.

So have 23 states that since 2010 have put in place some new relatively

serious voter restrictions and then about 12 states have done automatic voter registration. So I think what we're going to continue to see is this divergence at the state level. And I don't think that there's much opportunity nationally, although it would be great if there were.

MS. KAMARCK: Can I just interject? There's a new aspect of voter suppression that we don't really talk about. And that is -- we saw it in 2016, we saw it with Russian interference in the 2016 election. It is clearly proven that they targeted two groups, they targeted African Americans and they targeted Bernie Sanders voters with barrages of messages designed to suppress the vote, designed to say the two candidates are exactly alike, designed to say that -- spew out all the false stuff about Hillary Clinton, fake African American groups like Blacktivists, that were Russian creations, they were not African American voters. So we've got another aspect here. And while I don't at all feel that we should ignore the more traditional ones, I think there's a new avenue opening up here in voter suppression, and that is --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: External, cyber.

MS. KAMARCK: -- external, it's cyber, it will eventually be artificial intelligence, as the artificial intelligence gets so good that you can take a candidate and send out a video tape of the candidate saying something that the candidate --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Deepfakes. Well, deepfakes already exist.

MS. KAMARCK: Deepfakes. Yeah, but it's going to get good and it's going to get cheap. And then I think we're just in real trouble. And so I think as bad as the voter suppression is now, I think it's only going to get worse unless we can get a handle on the cyber aspect of it.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Is there any member of the press out there who wants to get their question in? Okay, yes. And please identify yourself and your outlet?

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is (inaudible) from the *Ilta-lehti* newspaper, Finland. I wanted to ask a question about the House oversight fight that you predict will come next year. What will happen if the House democrats want to see, for example, Donald Trump's tax returns and he refuses to cooperate? I mean are the rules clear what will happen? Will we really see the tax returns or not?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay, good. And then there was one other press question in the back there that I saw. The man in the red shirt. And we'll combine them.

QUESTIONER: Dave Katross, LRP Publications. My question is, I did not see as much as I had in 2016 anti-government deep state, that type of emphasis. I mean it was mentioned, but it did not seem to be as important. I was just wondering what your takes are. And, given that, do you think that some of the things like government reorganization actually might be able to escape some of the political traps you've been talking about and maybe some work can be done there.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay, thank you. Who would like to address the question first about oversight and where it goes.

MS. KAMARCK: So I'll take the tax returns question, to the extent that I can. Which is just to say that it wouldn't surprise me if we end up in some sort of litigation between the President and congress on this. It frankly wouldn't surprise me if we end up in litigation between the President and congress on any number of things. But we have clear signals from the prospective incoming chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Richie Neal, that this is a thing that they intend to do. It's clearly on the democrat agenda, and I think that they're sufficiently committed to the idea of accessing the tax returns as kind of a clear oversight product, if that makes sense. Like it's clear to Americans what we're talking about when we say congress is going to do oversight that involves getting Trump's tax returns. Americans understand what that is. Vanessa

knows more about how Americans think about taxes than anyone. But that's not necessarily the case with other kinds of oversight. Then we get into kind of explaining these documents and it gets very confusing for just the average person paying attention to politics.

So I think democrats are committed to this and I expect them to pursue it aggressively, and that may well involve litigation.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Does anyone have an answer on the other question about less of an anti government, anti state message and how that might play out?

MS. REYNOLDS: I think it was interesting to hear that question, how the nationalist themes sort of pushed the anti government themes off the page in this campaign. Because so much of what was happening out there had to do with who we are as a nation, not letting the immigrants in, not having people who don't look like us in, the characterization of the caravan as an invasion. It seemed to me that those themes took over the anti government theme. And I suspect as long as Trump is president we're going to see that for a while, because Trump is sort of changing -- you can see he's changing the conversation of the Republican Party.

And, you know, we talked earlier about entitlements. I think he's changing it on the government as well.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Quickly, yes.

MR. GALSTON: This underscores the broader point that limited government conservatism is one thing and nationalist populism is a very different thing. And nationalist populists are frequently not in favor of smaller government, but a government that does things that previous conceptions of big government didn't do, and vice versa. And entitlements is one example of that, but there are lots of others, including

the fact that this President is willing in effect, to deploy up to 15,000 troops to our southern border. That doesn't sound like small government to me.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: That's right. All right. We're going to take a lightning round of questions. This gentleman here first.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much. I'm Garrett Mitchell; I write the Mitchell Report. I want to ask a kind of Mad Libs question. There were four sets of elections on Tuesday, the senate, the House, governors, and state legislature. I'm interested to know how the panel feels about the relative importance of those, first as it affects 2020, and then a slightly longer term.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay. And the second question? Here, this gentleman with the beard.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. We started this morning talking about the fact that we're looking -- some of us have been thinking about this election since November 9, 2016. Now it's time to think about 2020. President Trump yesterday mentioned that if the democrats try and investigate too much it's going to fire up his base, it's going to be good for him. How much do you think they'll temper that with expectations and hopes for 2020?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay. All right. And we have -- so there are so many people. Okay, let's take the last question over here from this side of the room. Sorry.

MR. ROTHER: John Rother. The question I have is about money. I thought there were records amounts contributed this cycle. I think the tax reform bill was more about campaign contributions than it was about voting. Any observations about the role of money?

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay. All right. So who would like to take Gary

Mitchell's question, the Mad Libs? Bill?

MR. GALSTON: I'll take that one and dispose of it as fast as I can.

MR. MITCHELL: Same cohort.

MR. GALSTON: Yeah, right. Right. So let me just take a piece of it.

What happened at the gubernatorial level was important for a number of reasons, the obvious ones. But in addition, governors are a very important part of the reapportionment process. If a government says no to a map, that map doesn't go anywhere. And when you couple that with the fact that democrats made significant, though not monumental, on the state legislative front, and there are more states under unified control now than there were before the election, that's further piece of evidence that that really matters for reapportionment.

Secondly, governors really make a difference in presidential elections. If you have the governor, the governor's team, and the governor's network on your side, as democrats now will in the upper Midwest, that could be a game changer, particularly in states that were decided by very narrow margins.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Okay. Who would like to take the question on should democrats be tempering expectations for 2020?

MS. KAMARCK: I mean I'll take that. First of all, let me just say, Garrett, I've worked in several presidential campaigns. Give me a governor that's on my side any day over congressmen or senators. That's what you want, you want governors. They're really important.

I don't know how to answer the question of democrats tempering expectations. And the reason is that we don't know what might come out in the Mueller report and we don't know how the population will react to it. So there's a lot of unknowns here. You know, if the Mueller report says look, Donald Trump, didn't talk to Vladimir

Putin in the course of the campaign, but he got a lot of Russian money over the years, you know, people may not care, it may have no difference at all. On the other hand, if we have something akin to the smoking gun from Watergate years, which many of us can remember in this room, then it's a different story.

So I think it's very difficult for democrats to do anything but put their nose to the grindstone, do the investigations that make sense to do. I've publicly said in Brookings writings here that I think Tom Steyer has done a terrible disservice to the Democratic Party by turning impeachment into a political issue. It's a much more serious issue than should be one that's between the parties. And so I think that the Tom Steyer's of the world would be well advised to be shut up on this issue and just let the legislative process take its course naturally, as well as the Mueller process. And then, you know, we'll know. I mean we'll know when we see it whether this is something that is really horribly serious, or whether we've elected a guy who's got kind of a murky past and maybe impeachment is not worth the trouble for the democrats.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: So the Tom Steyer is a good segue into the last question, which is the role of money in politics and whether it's more than it ever has been and where we go from here.

MS. REYNOLDS: Sure. So what I'll say on money, there was a lot of it (laughter). To me, the most important, or one important story line of this point is the way that fundraising by democratic congressional candidates helped democrats take advantage of favorable national conditions. So something that democrats -- part of how democrats were able to pick up what we're expecting is going to be about 35 seats is by recruiting good candidates to run in districts and then making sure they had the money they needed to win.

In the third quarter, for example, there were 91 republican incumbents in

the House who were outraged by their democratic challenger. That's a big number. And so if -- again, for me, the biggest story line on the money side was the way that democrats' fundraising efforts meant that they were well positioned to take advantage of what was generally a good election for them.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Did you have anything to add?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes, if I could just jump in on that. So I wrote a report on why the republicans prioritized the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and the most plausible explanation was I think the campaign financing reason, because it wasn't very popular with voter and it wasn't going to stimulate the economy much going into a midterm year.

But I think this question about money, I think Molly has got it exactly right, because money in the campaign finance sense matters most for challengers. So that's you've got to get your name out there, you've got to build that first little bit of money to get yourself as sort of a respected candidate.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: But having money, like Beto O'Rourke did, didn't ultimately bring him over the finish line

MS. WILLIAMSON: Exactly. So that's the point, it's necessary but not sufficient to get the job done.

MS. REYNOLDS: Though the money that went into that Texas Senate race did help O'Rourke engage in a massive act of Democratic Party building in the State of Texas that we shouldn't dismiss because he did not win the race. The number of -- just how close he got and there are several democratic new members of the --

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, he swept in some democrats, members of congress, which was amazing.

MS. REYNOLDS: Democrats, House members, other things lower down

in Texas. So I think just because he didn't win, we don't want to dismiss the role of either his fundraising operation or his campaign activity in the state.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Elaine, you have one minute to answer my last question that hasn't been brought up. I was waiting for someone to bring it up. I thank you wrote that Trump overtly supported something like 57 candidates. Is that right? How did they do? I mean that in itself is a referendum on was this a referendum about Trump or not. That gives us an answer.

MS. KAMARCK: He didn't do particularly well. That's in all the data and the charts are on the Brookings website today, so I just draw your attention to that. He didn't do particularly well. The guy is not magic. Obama and Biden did about the same, slightly better.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Which is about how many in this case of the 57 that he supported?

MS. KAMARCK: You're going to ask me to look at the papers. So let me just -- here we go. I've got it right -- I did bring it right here. Let's see. So Trump endorsed about 80 candidates and about 20-some won. Mike Pence endorsed about 60, about 30 won. Barack Obama endorsed about the same as Trump and did slightly better, about 40 won. But, again, the democrats were winning. Biden endorsed slightly under 60 and about 35 won. Bernie --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Biden did better than Pence?

MS. KAMARCK: Yes.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And Obama did better than Trump?

MS. KAMARCK: Than Trump, yes. But it was a democratic year, so you'd expect that. And Bernie Sanders endorsed slightly over 20 and slightly under 20 won. But he was endorsing -- the other thing we do in this paper, it's a little complicated

to explain here, but Sanders was endorsing in mostly highly democratic districts. And Trump was constrained to mostly republican districts.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: And only 1 in 4 of the 80 that he endorsed.

MS. KAMARCK: Right. That's right. And so it was Pence, Obama, and Biden who were in the truly swing districts. Trump was not used in the swing districts, which --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: I'm surprised he did so badly in the republican districts.

MS. KAMARCK: Well, he was running --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: 1 in 4.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah. He was --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: I mean that's pretty bad.

MS. KAMARCK: About one-fourth. He does a little better among the candidates in the republican districts that he campaigned for. So we break it out by the ones he endorsed and the ones he campaigned for. But --

MS. LAKSHMANAN: 25 percent is a bad failing grade.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, but listen, we found this in our primaries research too. 50 percent of the republican congressional candidates did not mention Donald Trump in their websites.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: Wow.

MS. KAMARCK: And that's in a primary where they're appealing to republican voters. So as I've been writing all spring, the storyline that tends to be prevalent, that this is Donald Trump's Republican Party, I think is a little bit overstated. I think there's republicans who kind of distance themselves, because after all, you never know what the guy is going to say or what he's going to do. And in this year with the sort

of anticipation of a democratic wave, candidates were behaving smartly. And Trump was really relegated to his base in the same way that Bernie Sanders was relegated to his base.

MS. LAKSHMANAN: All right. Please join me in thanking all of these experts for an excellent panel. I really feel like I know a lot more than I did an hour and a half ago, and I'm sure you do too. (Applause)

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you.

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