

Democratic Party's Left-Wing Candidates May Struggle to Expand Support in Battleground States Ahead of Midterm Elections

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As momentum grows for the left wing of the Democratic Party ahead of the U.S. midterm elections, Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, a think tank associated with moderate Democrats, discussed the party's prospects in an interview with The Mainichi.

Interview by Mitsuyoshi Hirano

Given the current political environment, Democrats have a good chance of winning back the House of Representatives in this year's midterm elections. However, I do not expect a landslide victory like the one seen in 2018 during President Trump's first term.

Democratic and Republican voters have become increasingly entrenched, and there are fewer seats that can realistically change hands.

The biggest reason for the growth of left-wing groups such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is frustration within the Democratic Party itself.

The party's defeat in the 2024 presidential election was a profound shock. Faced with President Trump pushing laws and democratic norms to their limits, Democrats have felt powerless to stop him. As a result, left-wing populism has gained strength, and demands for maximum resistance and confrontation have grown louder.

However, the United States is not fundamentally a left-wing country. For Democrats to build a majority, they must win support from independents and moderate voters.

The DSA represents the most uncompromising resistance to Trumpism, but it has not yet proven that it can attract voters in battleground states and competitive districts.

Moderates have also failed to present the kind of bold ideas that the moment requires.

Educational attainment has become a major dividing line in American politics. The question facing Democrats is how to build a coalition that cuts across class lines and once again become the party of ordinary working people.

Many positions associated with the left, including a universal health-care system, more extreme versions of the Green New Deal, and views on immigration, race, and gender, are pushing working-class voters away from the Democratic Party.

We must reverse the drift of non-college-educated Black and Hispanic voters away from the party.

What working-class voters want first and foremost is action on the rising cost of living. They also want immigration to be properly managed.

On energy policy, they want fuel to remain abundant and affordable. They do not like politics that sorts people into categories based on identity.

The Biden administration placed heavy emphasis on college education and student-loan forgiveness, but those policies offered little benefit to people who did not attend college. Working-class voters want stronger vocational training, apprenticeships, and other alternatives to a four-year degree.

I do not believe the Democratic Party should seek to incorporate every force on the left. There is no need to accommodate committed ideological socialists.

As for the party's next generation of leaders, I generally look to governors. What matters most is finding leaders who understand the importance of building a coalition that spans class divisions and who can reach out to both white and nonwhite working-class voters.

It is easy to criticize Republicans. What Democrats really need is the courage to say that they disagree with ideas that are incompatible with the party's traditional values or with the goal of winning working-class voters back.