



## **'He fights!' Cory Gardner tells GOP candidates to embrace Trump's pugnacity**

Philip Wegmann

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The president of the United States has the attention span of a tomcat in pursuit of a laser pointer and the belligerence of a pit bull. It's why he won.

"The people want you to fight," says Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., when asked about what lessons 2016 Trump has for 2018 Republicans. "The people want you to fight," he says repeating for emphasis. "Look at them every time I go home. People talk about Trump, they say 'at least he's fighting.'"

That's the message of the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee to his party's candidates. That's the advice of the man most responsible for making sure the GOP keeps its Senate majority: Throw more punches.

Trump has thrown several during his first year. He is as likely to attack Democrats, confront journalists, and provoke liberal celebrities as he is to breathe fire on members of his own party. Politics has become blood sport and the right loves it, even when their new champion over-pursues. Robert Mueller would still be in retirement and not at the head of a special counsel, after all, had Trump shown some discretion.

But the base doesn't care.

Gardner disagrees with the president plenty and Gardner cautions against firing Mueller. But he goes back to a repeated conversation with Colorado constituents. "You know the difference between the demoralizing tactics they used against President Bush and the demoralizing tactics they use against President Trump," Gardner says they say. "He is fighting back."

Oddly enough that raw aggression might be the cohesion holding the Republican Party together. It's one plausible thesis to explain the radically ragtag coalition that helped Trump beat Hillary Clinton.

An analysis of 8,000 voters by Emily Ekins of the libertarian Cato Institute split the Trump electorate into two groups: the conventionally conservative and the motley converts.

The first group looks and feels like what you'd see at a Republican Lincoln Day dinner: just under half were "free marketeers," who care about pro-business values but care little for social issues, and a larger number percent were "staunch conservatives," who also care about the economy but vote on social issues like abortion, guns, and the family.

But the second group, somewhat smaller but still significant, would be just as much at home as a Bernie Sanders rally or a right-wing Reddit forum as they would in their mother's basement: About 40 percent were "American preservationists" who fear changing demographics, and an identical number were "anti-Elites" who rage against the machine. Most of the remainder were politically disengaged but know Trump from pop-culture.

What holds all these different voters together? What has kept Trump at 41 percent approval, a dismal but almost miraculous rating considering the porn star scandal, the weekly policy flip-flops, and the overall general chaos?

Two words: "*He fights!*"

Trump doesn't have the finesse of Ronald Reagan or the political skill of Bill Clinton. Trump has a brute aggression all his own and none of the discretion of any of the other presidents. He starts bar fights and claims victory before their over. Winning or losing doesn't matter because raw aggression in and of itself is enough.