

## Democratic candidates need new ideas if they're serious about unseating Trump

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May 24, 2018

If the Democrats are supposedly readying themselves to storm the Trump Bastille come 2020, it sure didn't look like much of a revolution Tuesday.

In a historically anemic turnout, even for a runoff election, Democrats straggled to the polls in embarrassing numbers.

The Texas Tribune noted that the turnout by Democrats on Tuesday was the biggest decline from primary to runoff since 1920. Barely more than 400,000 Texas Democrats went to the polls. This after much chest thumping was done after 1 million voted in March.

Runoffs historically attract few voters. But Democrats believe that there is a tidal wave of voters who are ready to turn out Trump and all of his kind. The people are ready to rebel, they believe. Well, this isn't much of a rebellion.

It may be that the low turnout reflects what The Economist noted this week: Democrats haven't learned much from the 2016 presidential defeat.

The writer of the magazine's Lexington column, which looks at the American scene, visited a Democratic Party confab and found very little new. The Economist, a center-right outfit, is no friend of Trump, but its columnist noted that the party luminaries seem to believe that no new political ideas are needed to defeat Trump and Trumpians (read Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Sen. Ted Cruz), just better political campaigns.

Have there been any new ideas in the 27th Congressional campaigns? If there are, I sure haven't heard them from either side.

There is a thread of a debate, to be fair, about the role of government in the campaigns of both Democratic nominee Eric Holguin and Republican nominee Michael Cloud. Both captured their party's respective banners Tuesday.

Cloud focused his whole campaign on restricting immigration by building Trump's border wall — "They just keep coming," one of his ads repeated endlessly — and Holguin supports a single-payer health system. Both would be immense intrusions into the lives of Americans and a growth

in the role of the federal government. Both would come as faith in the efficiency of government is decidedly in retreat. Just ask a Hurricane Harvey victim.

I would hope to see the two congressional candidates take on immigration, undoubtedly a big issue for both parties. Once you get past the Dreamers, which have wide public support, where should the country be on immigration? It was one of the most powerful weapons in Trump's campaign, even in its most incoherent form.

Republicans should understand that a wall is not a policy. How do we treat the nation's job needs, family reunification, our national legacy on refugees and even population needs?

The national birth rate in 2017 dropped to its lowest level in 30 years. At 60 babies per every 10,000 women every year, it is now half of what the rate was in the 1960s. The 3.85 million babies born last year was the lowest number since 1987. Who will pay for Social Security and Medicare as the number of workers drops?

What is the Democratic Party's approach to immigration? We just can't throw the bridge open at Laredo. There's no appetite for changing family-based immigration in the party, but Canada has a robust immigration policy that incorporates a merit point system based on skills along with family connections. It has the decided benefit of making immigration policy much more politically digestible to Canadians.

But Trump praised Canada's merit system which, I suppose, automatically makes it anathema to Democrats.

Democrats aren't the only ones stuck for ideas. The Republican Party, philosophically opposed to large government and supportive of fiscal discipline, is confused about what it believes. Take the recently defeated farm bill. The bill would cost \$867 billion over 10 years, even though the GOP congressional leaders passed a big tax cut that already promises to swell the deficit. New work requirements for food recipients was called "reform" by the bill's writers, but, in a show of hypocrisy, ladled out the usual farm subsidies to the tune of \$20 billion. Where's the reform?

Both sides seem wedded to same old, same old. As the Cato Institute noted, with unemployment at 3.9 percent, a decrease in food stamp costs to prerecession levels could have been considered by Democrats. But once you've drawn a line in the sand, well, both sides are incapable of backing down.

Both parties are stuck in old ways. But Democrats, who are out of power, are most in need of an argument as to why they should return to power. Just waiting for Trump to get nastier and more offensive doesn't seem like a strategy.