Accurate Brexit, Trump Pollster: Polling Industry at a 'Crossroads' Between the 'Beltway Bubble' and the 'Painful Truth'

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The Democracy Institute's Dr. Patrick Basham — who correctly predicted Brexit and the U.S. presidential election— described the polling industry as being at a crossroads after Donald Trump came out on top of Hillary Clinton, which conflicted with many polls that had forecast a Clinton victory.

"The polling industry is at a crossroads. It can continue down the 'beltway bubble' path of a too-cosy relationship with respective media sponsors, too often unable to see the electoral forest for the data-driven trees. Or, it can venture along the 'painful truth' path, admitting that any good poll is a blend of science and art," Basham explained during an exclusive interview with Breitbart News.

He continued:

> The former is necessary, but insufficient, in today's world of anti-polling cynicism, privacy concerns, very low response rates, and 'shy' conservative respondents. Polling artists are necessary, for they inject some realism, some balance, into the raw number-crunching. If pollsters candidly revealed more about the inherent limitations of their craft, it would restore some of the public's faith in the inherent utility of their profession.

Basham, who referred to himself as a free market guy and who previously worked at the Cato Institute, credited voter turnout as to why he was able to predict both the Brexit and Trump victories accurately through his polling.

"Both Brexit and the American election were always going to be about turnout. It was as important — if not more important — to know who was going to show up, than to know exactly how they were going to vote," he stated.

He went on to explain that voters who supported leaving the European Union (E.U.) and Trump voters were both more enthusiastic and determined to show up and vote than the opposition.

"We knew that the turnout model that many of the media pollsters were using was going to overestimate the vote to remain," he added, noting the enthusiasm from voters wanting to leave the E.U.

"There was a shy Brexit voter just like there was a shy Trump voter," Basham also explained, noting that both people who supported leaving the E.U. and people that supported Trump would identify as undecided instead of disclosing their preference to a pollster.

Basham explained about Brexit, noting it was similar to how people didn't want to identify as a Trump voter during the U.S. presidential election:

> What we tried really hard to do, and I think we were successful, was to ask people a lot of questions about their attitudes to all kinds of things in order to figure out how likely they were if they were telling us they were undecided, were they really undecided, or were they reluctant to tell us they wanted to vote to leave. We used the same methodology in terms of the way that we asked all these other questions, what we were looking at the U.S. election, and we reached the same conclusion that there were a lot of shy reluctant Trump voters. They were telling pollsters that they were undecided.

He said the "shy" Trump voter, who would identify as undecided to pollsters, accounted for anywhere from two to four percent nationally.

Basham's analysis is exactly how Trump campaign pollster Adam Geller explained the campaign's success to Fox News's *Fox & Friends* on Saturday morning.

"We had a smart team of people who are really diving into the data. You can't just look at the top lines," Geller explained about how the Trump campaign analyzed the polls, adding that it is important to figure out "who is most likely to show up."

"What the top lines don't tell you is how are undecideds going to break. One of the most important lessons we can all learn from this is we have to go beyond the top line numbers," Geller declared, adding that with polling, there will always be undecided voters, but figuring out exactly how the undecided voters will break can provide a more accurate prediction of the election outcome.

Basham said that with both Brexit voters and Trump voters, there was a general frustration with politics as normal and that is what drove those voters to the polls. He also applauded the *International Business Daily* (IBD/TIPP) tracking poll and the USC Dornsife/*Los Angeles Times* "Daybreak" poll, which both consistently showed Trump with a lead over Clinton.

"The IBD/TIPP poll — [with] who the media sponsor is — that poll was never designed to lead or create a narrative," Basham explained, alleging that other media polls may have been "designed to lead the coverage."

"The *LA Times* … that poll is an academic poll. It's the USC people who do it," he noted, referring to it as an experiment and pointing out that it also factored in enthusiasm and intensity of voters.

Basham said that other polls got it wrong for one of two reasons: either they never adjusted the expected Democratic turnout to be lower than President Obama's numbers, or the media sponsors may have influenced the pollsters.

Most pollsters, according to Basham, "began their polling overestimating what the Democratic turnout would be, assuming that Hillary could replicate the Obama coalition…but they never learned from what was going on," with the enthusiasm from Trump supporters.

Basham added that although most pollsters are smart, "Anyone with any sense and exposure to just an average voter would know that this year was going to be different."