

## Let's Get Started

by Michael Cantwell

Democrats are accustomed to cleaning up Republican disasters. We should be, we've been doing it since the Great Depression. But now we are facing the gravest threat to the Republic since . . .

Well, there really is no "since," is there? Next to Donald Trump, George W. Bush appears thoughtful and compassionate, Ronald Reagan appears coherent and focused, and Richard Nixon appears honest and forgiving.

When Barack Obama took office, 800,000 jobs were being lost every month, 45 million Americans lacked health insurance, the auto industry was on its knees, we were on the way to making the planet uninhabitable, and Republicans had us mired in a \$3 trillion war against a country that posed no threat to America.

When President Obama left office, nearly 11 million private sector jobs had been added, over 20 million previously uninsured Americans had gained health insurance, and the auto industry was back on its feet. We also made gains in the struggle against climate change, we withdrew from Iraq, and we entered a multinational agreement with Iran that prevented yet another manufactured war in the Middle East.

Now, every one of those gains is threatened. How did this happen? The principal villain is James Comey, with his unprofessional if not illegal suggestion, right before the election, that Hillary might be indicted (while remaining mum about an FBI investigation into Trump's contacts with and exposure to Russia). A close second was the corporate media, which largely ignored the issues, viewing the election as

entertainment rather than as a battle for the Republic if not the planet, and now is trying to make amends.

Yet a candidate as palpably unfit as Donald Trump should not have gotten close enough for that to have mattered. If we are honest, we must admit that some of the blame for "President Trump" lies with us.

Santayana's adage "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" is generally applied to the failure to learn from past *mistakes* but it is equally applicable to the failure to learn from past *successes*. We need to learn not only what went wrong in the run-up to 2016 but also what went right in the run-up to 2008. And to some extent, this can be reduced to three words: "Fifty-State Strategy."

During Howard Dean's tenure as DNC Chair, paid organizers were placed around the country, in red states as well as blue states. And that paved the way for Democrats to recapture both Houses of Congress in 2006 and, two years later, to the historic election of Barack Obama, an election in which Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, and even Indiana went blue. Not only did those states flip back in 2016, but Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania also turned red. The situation is even more dire at the state level, with 33 states now led by Republican governors and 32 state legislatures under full Republican control (versus full Democratic control in 13 legislatures).

If we are to take back Congress in the 2018 midterms, if we are to reverse the precipitous declines at the state level, we will need people on the ground *in every state*

to let all voters know that Democrats stand with them on the issues that matter to them. We need to be more than simply “not Trump.” We need to convince voters that Democrats stand with the people, not the plutocrats.

It should not be that difficult. Polls have consistently shown that the American people (including many Trump voters), support the

Democratic platform – providing affordable health care, protecting Social Security, Medicare, and the environment, raising the minimum wage, and restoring fairness to a system in which billionaires are taxed at a lower rate than their secretaries and the top 0.1% possesses almost as much wealth as the bottom 90%.

We need to get started now.