

Talking with Republicans and Independents (10-02-2021)

Summarized transcript, paraphrased and edited by Louise Machinist. Not all the statements were by the panelists; discussion took place and every statement is not attributed directly to the speaker.

Anne Marie Keane, “Manasota Republicans & Independents Voting Blue” & former R activist

Do not argue with the Right Wing Trump supporters

Appeal to moderate Republicans and independents

We can only reason with those who are willing to be reasoned with.

Tell them what we believe.

Keep our conversations in the first person.

Use, I, not you; don't argue, be a good listener and have discussions, armed with facts.

Ask people what their information sources are

The best messengers are people that they trust: religious leaders, their doctors, family, other Republicans and friends.

Encourage them to listen to these trusted sources, rather than Trump.

Best messengers on social media are Republicans / X- Republicans speaking out

Communicate what Democrats stand for, why our candidates are better than Republicans, and how we can meet common ground.

Democrats stand for human rights, equal rights, social justice and equality, voting rights for all equal pay for equal work, environmental protection, good jobs and higher wages, affordable housing, women's rights, woman's right to choose, quality education; climate change is real, healthcare is a right not a privilege; there is no widespread voter fraud. In Sarasota: public education, balanced development

Florida has the worst covid record in the country. DeSantis is a leader we cannot be proud of. Biden's response: “If you aren't going to help at least get out of the way.”

Adam Kinzinger: “I urge all of my Republican colleagues, as well as the American people to unplug the rage machine and see the situation through clear eyes, America was attacked and we deserve to know why and how it happened.”

A former GOP chair: “I never thought I'd say this, but thank you to the Democrats for being good stewards of the Constitution when American needed them.”

Summary:

We have to one appeal to moderates in general.. We have to tell what Democrats stand for.

Why our candidates and ideas are better than Republicans

We can't continue to bash Republicans, we have to listen to them, always keeping in mind that our goal is to flip Florida Blue.

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Ron Filipkowski, X-Venice Republican Club Pres., SRQ R Party Gen. Counsel, Dem as of 1-7-21; Lincoln Project & Twitter activist

Goal: Persuade 1% of the most moderate Republican voters

In 2018, DeSantis won by less than 1%

We're not talking about a large number of people. Don't think, "I've got to convince all these Republicans." You don't.

Tell the Moderate 1% what the Republican Party has become

The Republican Party became radicalized; what's most persuasive is not to tell them what Democrats are saying, but to show them what the Rs they're supporting are saying

What are they saying in private--not what they're saying on Fox News. They don't say their most outrageous things on Fox News, but in small settings-- fundraisers and local meetings. Ron and colleagues track those meetings with their own supporters: their supporters are live streaming proudly what is said at those meetings, posting them on Facebook, posting them in chat rooms. We have joined anonymously. We take these crazy things that they're saying and we're posting them.

Show reasonable, educated, moderate Republicans: "Look, these are the people you're supporting. Hear their words for yourself."

Highlight Marjorie Taylor Greene, Lauren Boebert, Madison Cawthorn, Andy Biggs, Paul Gosar. Show moderate, educated, white collar Republicans "This is your party now; this is who you are. Is this who you are?"

Example: they're saying that 911 was an inside job; they have many conspiracy theories. Use words of their own leaders against them.

Focus groups are trying to figure out who these people are-- persuadable Republicans-- what they think, believe in. Who are these people, what do they like and not like about the current Republican Party. What do they like and not like about the current Democratic Party-- what are they uncomfortable with?

In the 2020 election: in almost every Congressional race, but especially in swing states, the local Republican candidates outperformed Trump. A lot of Republicans continue to vote for their local Republican candidates, but did not like Trump. There is a chunk of voters out there-- maybe only 5% - 10%, but enough to elect Joe Biden. And it's enough to defeat Ron DeSantis and Marco Rubio.

Who are these people and what do they think?

College educated, white collar professionals, conservative on foreign policy and national defense; moderate on budgetary issues, pretty liberal on social issues like gay marriage & abortion-- issues we can reach them on.

A lot of things have happened since the 2020 election: January 6 is a big one. A lot of Republican moderates never saw that coming, 'tho many of us did. They were shocked, couldn't believe their own people were capable of something like that. Trump has said many times that he brought in a lot of new people into the Republican party: blue collar, less educated, conspiracy theorists, never voted before 2016. Trump's right-- He brought in the people we see at the Trump rallies. Hillary made no effort to do what we're doing here today: to try and win over moderate Republicans. She felt she was going to win without them. (The fallacy of relying on computer analytics—per Robbie Mook. LSM) Her miscalculation: the new people that Trump brought into the Republican party who had never voted before.

But those people alienate people like me; we see these people and we're horrified.

And we say, "This is what our party is now." Show these moderate, educated Republicans, "this is who your party is now."

It's why I post crazy things they say, crazy signs that they hold.

What I want you guys to do is use the stuff I'm tweeting because you all have friends and relatives that are Republicans. Send what I post to them. I'm trying to convince your friends and your relatives, and my own kids who are Republican. I'm trying to give you the tools, to help you with information. Show this to them, they'll be shocked; many of them don't know that this is what their party has become. They go to work every day, they're raising their kids. They're not on social media, they're not paying attention. You got to put it in their face.

Trump's refusal to accept the results of the election has shocked them. They thought he would lose and go away. The audits of election audits questioning the integrity of the entire democratic system in this country shocks moderate Republicans.

The last three presidential nominees before Donald Trump get attacked every day: Bush, Romney, McCain.

They're called RINOs, they're called fake Republicans. The people we're trying to persuade love those guys. But now, Donald Trump's out there every day calling those them traitors. The Cheney's are "not real Republicans." Republicans need to know the positions of the leaders of the Republican Party.

Go to the moderate Republican. Say, "this is what the leadership of the Republican Party is saying about Liz Cheney. Do you agree with this?"

What a RINO WAS: They live in a heavily Republican area and they want to get elected. What a RINO is NOW is anyone who has ever disagreed with Donald Trump

Do you disagree with Donald Trump on X? Then you're not a "real Republican" anymore.

Re. extremists in Congress: People tell me "Don't amplify these people; you're giving them publicity; you're giving them what they want."

But moderate Republican candidates in swing districts hate that Marjorie Taylor Greene is now the face of the Republican party.

We have to amplify these people to break away educated Republican voters who are repulsed by these people.

The last few establishment Republican elected officials are going to be pushed out.

We're seeing that in Georgia and Arizona and Pennsylvania-- they're promoting very radical right wing candidates. The party is getting worse and will be much worse after 2022

What's helpful to us: January 6th, the audits, Trump, the attacks on RINOs, school board mayhem "This is what your party is now. It's a bunch of lunatics, it's a bunch of crazy people saying a bunch of crazy things." Are you proud of this? Do you want to be associated with this?

It's hard to let go of what you've identified with your whole life. But what you know of the Republican Party is dead. It doesn't exist anymore.

The **tough** part: What about the Democratic party are they uncomfortable with?

The border. It's got to get fixed. They see on Fox News: thousands of drug dealers, rapists and criminals pouring across the border, whether true or not-- we have to deal with it. If the administration doesn't get the border solved it's a major problem in 2022. **Afghanistan**-- the withdrawal. Most moderate Republicans talk about Afghanistan being a fiasco. 'You left the Americans behind.' But everybody that stayed behind did so voluntarily; they all had a chance to get out, but they didn't. The other issue--equipment that we left behind. I would say to them: "You know, Donald Trump wasn't planning on evacuating all of that equipment. His plan was to leave it in the hands of the Afghan military. He had the exact same plan. If Trump was still president, do you think the Afghan government would still be in power? I mean, come on-- it's easy to blame the guy. Does anybody blame Gerald Ford for how we pulled out of Vietnam? They shouldn't blame Joe Biden for the same reason. It wasn't Gerald Ford's war in Afghanistan; it's not Joe Biden's war.

Vaccine mandates: Although most support vaccines, many moderate Republicans don't support requirements, even though they're vaccinated.

Left wing **attacks on moderate Democrats.**

Attacks on moderates make my job harder; I'm just giving you the facts and the reality, whether you disagree with them or not.

2 big crossover issues that work for us:

Covid in Florida with seniors. Every time Covid goes up, it's an issue with seniors. The way they view it: "DeSantis is basically writing us off."

Abortion: politically, Texas did us a huge favor.

A lot of Republican women --25% 30% -- are pro-choice. If Roe vs. Wade is threatened, that's like a gift. Republican consultants were horrified when Texas passed that law. Ask Republican candidates: Do you support abortion being legal or not in Florida? Do they support vigilante justice with a monetary incentive to sue their neighbors?

Our **nominees** are important. Who the Democrats nominate makes it easier or harder to persuade Rs to cross over.

Re. the governor race-- Charlie Crist was a lifelong Republican. He polls well with moderate Republicans and Independents.

I don't know the polling on Nicki Fried. I've been an early supporter of Nicki Fried.

Val Demings is a fantastic candidate to pull moderate Republicans. She has a great law enforcement background.

Re. Marco Rubio: All of his campaign people were here at the Sarasota Trump rally.

Not one person wanted to talk to them. Nobody would take Marco Rubio flyers and literature.

Rabid Trump supporters do not like Marco Rubio; many of them are not going to vote for him.

He has no principle. He doesn't like Trump; Trump doesn't like him; they're not supporting him.

Mingle with these people. And listen. Marco Rubio does have a couple of primary opponents

from the right and I promote the heck out of them, because they're crazy, and I want the

hardcore Trump fans to fall in love with them and when they don't get the nomination to stay home.

The Hispanic vote:

Marco Rubio is going to get an undervote. A lot of Trumpy Republicans are not going to vote for Marco Rubio; they're not going to vote for Val Demings. Sometimes you get a victory by getting somebody just not to vote. Trump did with me.

The Latino vote is broken up in about 25 pieces. The Cuban vote is one thing; a lot of the Venezuelans align with them over the so called socialism. Not a monolith; break them down.

Q: How to counter outright untruths, like "all Democrats are Socialists and Communists"?

We're tempted to say, "OK, define Communism" and get into an intellectual debate, but they're just going off some of the stuff that they hear on Fox News and other worse places.

The best way is not to argue with them. "Yes--some Democrats believe in policies like Social Security and Medicare. And believe in the post office. Some actually believe in Socialist policies, but that's not representative of the whole Democratic Party.

Example-- Joe Manchin isn't a Communist! Dems: You get Manchin or you get a very Trumpy crazy Republican senator, that's your choice. There is no other choice.

Former Republicans, Bill Krystal and George Conway and Rick Wilson are no longer Rs.

Q: How did the once moderate local Republican Party in Sarasota County change so radically?

A: South County.

That's it, South County. The traditional Republican Party of Sarasota was largely on the coast, south of the university Parkway north, west of the interstate. What has happened is a massive R influx -- we can thank Pat Neal and these master planned communities, golf course communities, almost all Republicans from Michigan and Ohio and Indiana and Illinois.

I'm not terribly optimistic about Sarasota for the Democrats because of this influx of Republicans

Democrats moving to Florida are going mostly to the east coast; we're getting the Republican in flux.

From 2008, we've just steadily moved Red. Seems like it's hard to recruit Democratic candidates, maybe because they feel they'll be defeated and a lot of effort and money went into the campaign.

We need somebody to go after the Zieglers and Gruters.

The way to start is on the local level, but if we don't do the work of the local level, we're not going to make any progress on any level.

Tie the January 6 insurrection to Republicans. Ziegler and Gruters organized buses; Christian Ziegler was there. We have the pictures and he was posting on Facebook videos live posting until the building was breached. Then he stopped and deleted them all.

Ask him at every public forum, "why were you there?" Why did you delete the videos. Aren't you proud of them? Why aren't you proud of them now? Gruters was a sympathizer.

I would ask local candidates with to condemn it.

So--We have to be out there mingling with Republicans-- go where we're going to meet them; not stay in our bubbles.

Be brave enough to speak up and start those conversations.

What Karl Sieg, former Republican activist, would have told us (if he could have been here)

Find the moderates, forget the right wingers, listen to what Rs have to say with respect. Find out what their issues are and engage around those common issues. If you want Republicans to want to talk to you, you will be more successful if you dress conservatively, like them.

To begin conversations with Rs, it's important for them to trust you and to want to listen to you

Jo Bloom, SCDP Activist & Voter Reg Chair

Opening a conversation depends on where you are-- if you're knocking on doors or if you're at an event. The best opener: "I'm interested in what you have to say. I'd like to listen to things that are important to you."

If somebody talks to you about something that you absolutely cannot agree with, just smile and say "thanks so much."

You can tell right away if it's somebody you want to maintain an interaction with and when it just is not worth your time.

A good conversation opener is, "What's your major concern?"

When people say, "I don't really know the difference between Democrats and Republicans" Did you get a 1400 dollar stimulus check? Yes. You got that because the Democrats gave you that.

Do you get child tax credit? Yes. You got that because of the Democrats. Are you up to your ears in college debt? Well, maybe you're going to get some help with that because Democrats believe in that. it's not confrontational it's educational.

Build Back Better infrastructure will improve our situation

The conversation with young people is very different; it's really important to listen to what young people have to say; help them understand where the Democratic Party is coming from.