Written by **Steve Byas** on November 25, 2019

Democrats in Swing Districts Fear Impeachment Backlash

According to *Washington Post* reporter Rachel Blade, speaking to CNN on Sunday, "behind the scenes" an increasing number of Democrats in swing districts are getting "cold feet" about going through with an impeachment vote on President Donald Trump.

As the Democrats in the House of Representatives have held impeachment "inquiry" hearings concerning Trump, his poll numbers are rising. A YouGove Survey has found that an eight-point increase in Trump's approval rating since the public impeachment hearings were launched, with support for impeachment falling.

While most of the Democrat concerns are about "swing" independents, the party is losing some long-time segments of the Democratic Party coalition. A recent Rasmussen Poll found that 34 percent of likely black voters approve of President Trump's performance in office, with 26 percent *strongly* approving of his performance. If even a tiny amount of this support for Trump transferred to Republicans in House races, the results could be very significant. Attacks upon Trump, if perceived to be unfair, could cause a loss of support for a Democrat House member making that shrill attack.

Republicans have about 55 congressional seats on their target list, but the 31 House districts that are presently held by a Democrat, but were lost to Trump in the presidential contest of 2106, are at the top of the list. Republicans are especially hopeful that they can carry 13 districts that Trump won by six or more percentage votes in 2016.

Republicans need to pick up 21 seats to regain control of the House, which they lost in the 2018 elections.

An example of a seat that the Republicans are eyeing is the 5th congressional district in Oklahoma, which takes in Oklahoma City and some suburbs. Democrat Kendra Horn won an upset over incumbent Republican Steve Russell in 2018, the first win in that district for a Democrat since 1974. Republican Mickey Edwards won in 1976, and three more Republicans have won the seat in the past 44 years. Trump won the district by 13 points in 2016 in a state that has not had a county go Democrat since 2000.

The Democratic Party takeover of the House in 2018 was not surprising, as the party that controls the White House usually loses seats in the president's first mid-term. Various theories have been put forth as to why this is so common, but historically it is the case. For example, presidents who were reelected, including Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all saw their party lose seats in the House in either the first or second mid-term, or both.

Many political scientists think that the most logical explanation is that the energy is with the party out

of power. Those who are content with the president in office are less likely to vote in a mid-term, but are more likely to vote when the president is up for reelection. Presidential election years and mid-terms are simply different types of elections.

Attempting to remove a duly elected president via the impeachment process tends to energize the members of his political party, unless the other party can unearth some solid reasons to impeach.

All polling indicates that has not so far been accomplished by the Democrats with Trump, as the process is increasingly seen as heavily partisan by Republicans and a majority of independent voters. Average members of a president's political party are willing to remove a president if it can be proven that he has actually committed an impeachable offense. For example, when Republicans lost confidence in President Richard Nixon was the point when he was forced to resign to avoid actual impeachment and removal from office.

The party that does not control the White House can serve a valuable "watchdog function" in our political system, pointing out scandals and policy differences. A good watchdog barks when something is actually wrong, and is silent when there is nothing amiss. But when the dog barks all the time, the incessant barking just becomes noise. In this instance, it appears that voters may have just tuned out the rantings of Adam Schiff and other leading opponents of the president.

Democrats who win in closely contested districts understand this. That is a huge reason as to why they were able to win in the first place. In contrast, Democrats sitting in districts where almost anyone could get reelected as a Democrat tend to have less understanding of this, and instead play to their more rabidly leftist base.

And that is why Democrats in those 31 districts that Trump won in 2016 are getting worried. One suspects that if Trump was able to win a district in 2016, and the economy is booming now, then he not only will win that district in 2020, he will pull in some new Republican members of Congress with him on his "coat-tails."

Photo: AP Images

Steve Byas is a university instructor in history and government and the author of History's Greatest Libels*, a book which challenges what he considers some unfair charges made against historical figures like Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, Marie Antoinette, Warren Harding, Joe McCarthy, and Clarence Thomas. He may be contacted at byassteve@yahoo.com*

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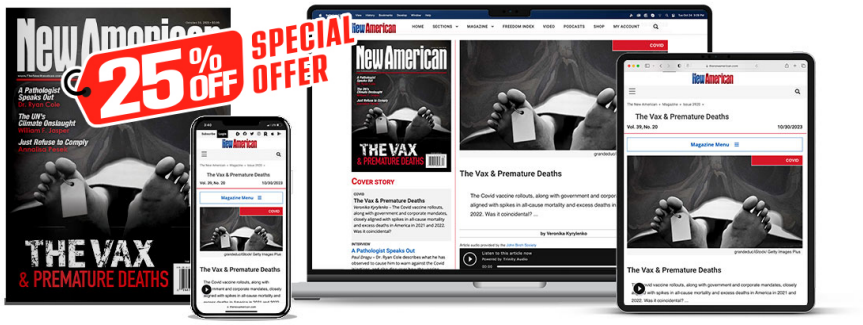

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