



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 20, 2018

## Why Orange County Went Blue

The recent midterm election, in which Democrats regained their majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, has many stories. Among the most important, and discouraging, to Americans who believe in free enterprise, limited government, and traditional values, is the swing of Orange County, California, to the Left.

While Republican politicians are far from reliably conservative, they are generally more so than their Democratic Party counterparts. From the years following the Second World War until recently, Orange County was the heart and soul of conservatism in California. The county was populated with middle-class homeowners, Christians, and anti-Communists. In fact, the county was sometimes referred to as “Birch” county due to the large number of members of the John Birch Society (an anti-communist and limited government organization that is the parent organization of *The New American*) residing there.



For example, the county was the home of American movie icon John Wayne, known as a conservative, and Congressman John Schmitz. But in recent years, right-wing firebrands such as “Bullet” Bob Dornan, whose loss in 1996 to Hispanic challenger Loretta Sanchez was a harbinger of things to come, and Dana Rohrabacher, who lost this election after 15 terms, have become extinct in Orange County.

Demographic changes have flipped Orange County from fire-engine Red to a sea of Blue. It is not so much that the longtime residents and their children (and children’s children) have switched from staunch conservatives to Bolsheviks, but rather that the county is now filled with large numbers of individuals who do not share the characteristics of those post-war residents that made Orange County the bastion of conservatism that it once was.

“Sitting back in the 1960s, I would have never believed this would happen,” remarked Stuart Spencer, a Republican Party strategist for the past half-century. Spencer said demographic changes are the culprit.

First, as we have seen in some other parts of the country, the very success of stable, middle-class neighborhoods with good schools and multiple churches attracts newcomers, such as more liberal Americans from elsewhere in California and other states, and increasingly, immigrants from China, Vietnam, Iran, and Latin America.

Certainly, other factors have played into changing Orange County from a conservative bastion into a left-leaning county. Midterm elections are always difficult for the political party controlling the White



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House. Matthew Beckmann, a politics professor at the University of California-Irvine noted that, had Hillary Clinton won the 2016 presidential election, “these seats would still be Republican.” Another factor was that the tax overhaul passed by a Republican Congress and signed into law by a Republican president was resented in high-tax California. Many Orange County residents were adversely affected by limitations of their federal deductions for state and local taxes. Democratic Party strategists saw an opportunity in Orange County, and dumped millions of dollars into the congressional campaigns in the seven seats on the ballot.

Despite these reasons, which were all important, the single biggest reason that Orange County was lost to the Republicans was the flood of Hispanic immigration into the Golden State over the past several years, including Orange County. Then-Governor Pete Wilson, a Republican, warned that this was coming several years ago, and proposed Proposition 187, which would have curtailed government benefits to illegal aliens. He also challenged the erroneous idea that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment makes anyone born on U.S. soil automatically a U.S. citizen, even if that child is not born under the jurisdiction of the United States (because his or her parents are in America illegally). Wilson’s concerns were largely ignored. Today, the state that elected Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Pete Wilson, and many other Republicans statewide, boasts 45 Democrat-held U.S. House seats out of 53 statewide.

And all of Orange County is now blue.

A similar surge in the Hispanic vote in Texas almost elected Democrat Beto O’Rourke in the U.S. Senate contest with Republican Ted Cruz. In Texas, 70 percent of Hispanics pulled the Democrat lever, even over a Republican senator named Cruz.

Many Republicans blame the failure of the party to attract Hispanics on the immigration issue, arguing that if the party would just come out for more immigration, suddenly Hispanics would start voting Republican. The facts do not bear this out, however. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation granting amnesty to some three million illegal aliens. But, after Reagan took 34 percent of the Hispanic vote in 1984, the next Republican candidate, who was even more pro-immigration, George H.W. Bush, only mustered about 30 percent. One would think that if immigration were *the* issue among Hispanics, Bush should have been rewarded with a majority of the Hispanic vote in 1988.

Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute calls this the Republican’s “Hispanic Delusion.”

She explained in 2012, “It is not immigration policy that creates the strong bond between Hispanics and the Democratic party, but the core Democratic principles of a more generous safety net, strong government intervention in the economy, and progressive taxation.” In short, the reason Hispanics are Democrats is because they are Democrats.

And in California, “U.S.-born Hispanic households use welfare programs at twice the rate of native-born non-Hispanic households.”

Democrat politicians have taken note, and the primary reason they support more immigration is that they see these immigrants as restocking their coalition. If they succeed in doing to Texas, with immigration, what they have done in California, the Republican Party can pretty much forget winning presidential elections.

Conservative-libertarian author Tom Woods summed it up by asking whether we will “be more or less free after even two more generations of immigration the size and composition of recent decades. That immigrants and the American bureaucracy that serves them will become yet another pressure group,



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clamoring for privileges and benefits in Washington, can scarcely be doubted.”

Woods concluded, “A facile advocacy of open borders gives the central state exactly what it wants; the chance to supersede the preferences of property owners, and to provide the pretext for further encroachments of local and individual liberty.”

With the example of Orange County, we can safely predict the future of America if these present trends continue.

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