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House Democrats need to reconnect with voters

By DAVID CAMPBELL

Tuesday's election was the most dramatic party realignment in the history of the NH House. In going from 225 to 102, the Democrats lost over half (55%) of the Caucus, with a new Democratic membership near historical lows. The State lost an extraordinary number of good, smart, dedicated and hardworking Democrats. The challenge is to win back the majority.

In order to regain the majority in the House, Democrats must *reconnect with the voters*, especially in Cities, like Manchester and Nashua, and in the Towns where we lost big numbers. (The heavily Democratic cities like Keene, Portsmouth and Hanover/Lebanon held their numbers pretty well.)

With veto-proof GOP majorities in both houses, and if the Republicans stick together, the Democrats will have no say in the outcome of legislation. Democrats will need to talk, through the legislative process, *directly to the voters*.

An anti-Washington sentiment set the stage for some Democratic losses in the House. In spite of this however, Governor Lynch was re-elected and Annie Kuster almost won her race. I believe that the overwhelming defeat of NH House Democratic candidates requires us, as a party, to consider a change in leadership.

Over the past four years Democrats made so many meaningful advancements, which will now be totally reversed, because we did not adequately address or message the things important to most voters: *jobs and the economy*. Most NH voters are moderate to liberal when it comes to social issues, but clearly our legislative agenda and emphasis did not resonate with them.

The recently elected *very* conservative Republicans, will most likely misread their lopsided victory as a mandate, instead of frustration with Democratic incumbents, especially with a veto-proof Legislature. If the Republicans pass an ultra-conservative social agenda, (and no one can stop them) the electoral pendulum will come rapidly swinging back toward the middle; and the majority of NH voters are in the *middle* of the political spectrum.

That is the challenge of the Democratic Party: to *reconnect* with the voters and to reestablish ourselves as *voices for reason and moderation*. To once again be recognized as the Party of the middle-class, Democrats need to effectively communicate to them with *better messaging* and new faces. When Democrats *regain the majority*, we need to put forth an overall Democratic legislative agenda that resonates with voters and pass legislation that doesn't last for just four years, but for decades to come.

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