



Hobby Symposium Series

Triple Play: Election 2018, Census 2020 and Redistricting 2021

December 7, 2018

Given the importance of the 2018 election, the 2020 census and 2021 redistricting on future national and state public policy, the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston is convening a symposium to explore the 2018 election results and their likely impact on the direction of American politics. Topics include the implications of the midterm results on the census process as it ramps up for the 2020 count and what this means for the remapping of America in 2021. Featuring leading academics and journalists, the symposium will be held at the University of Houston-Downtown on Friday, December 7, from 9AM-4PM.

The symposium is free and open to the public, however registration is required. Go to <http://www.uh.edu/hobby/community/symposium/election2018.php> for more information.

BACKGROUND

Candidates facing an imminent election often describe the upcoming contest as the most important in their lifetime. That is usually self-serving hyperbole, but not always. Heading into the 2018 midterms, there were good reasons to believe this year's race will be one of the 3 or 4 most consequential non-presidential elections in American history. A combination of rapid demographic change, extreme partisan polarization, an 18 month investigation of President Trump's 2016 campaign, and the bitter battle over Judge Brett Kavanaugh's elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court Justice drove public interest and voting in the midterm election to record levels in states across the country.

The 2018 results have important immediate consequences in areas such as congressional leadership, executive-legislative relations, the course of Mueller's investigation and its impact on the Trump presidency, tariffs and trade relations, immigration policy and funding a border wall to name a few specifics. More broadly, the vote rendered a partial verdict on one of the most controversial presidencies in American history. Donald J. Trump was not on the ballot, but his dominance of the current political environment coupled with aggressive presidential campaigning meant voters across the country were affirming, rejecting or expressing mixed feelings about the direction President Trump is taking the country. And the midterm results will set the stage for what promises to be a long, bitter campaign for the White House in 2020.

These implications of the 2018 vote are evident. Less visible is how the results will feed into two related policy areas — the handling of the 24th decennial census in 2020 and the redrawing

of legislative and congressional district lines that will follow the release of the population data in 2021. The run-up to the next census suggests there is a real possibility that this process could well become a major political issue in our highly polarized environment. The next headcount has been significantly underfunded, and the Trump administration is pushing to add a citizenship item to the questionnaire, which has not been used on the long form since 1950. The implications of these actions are not yet clear, but they could have important consequences in a nation experiencing rapid demographic changes and a shift in partisan coalitions based much more on race/ethnicity and rural/exurban voters opposing central city and inner suburban residents.

With Democrats winning the House of Representatives in 2018, their congressional leaders will push to fully fund the 2020 census and delete the citizenship item while Republicans and the Trump administration are expected to resist such adjustments. How this plays out is of great importance in a nation experiencing a slowdown of overall population growth since 2010 with a much larger share of that growth being directly accounted for by immigration and indirectly by natural increases among immigrant populations residing in the United States. The bottom line is that the 2020 census could be weaponized in this toxic political climate in the aftermath of a midterm election that resulted in a return to divided government.

Additionally, since it is now clear that the federal courts are not going to intervene in most states' redistricting processes for the foreseeable future, how America's political boundaries will be reshaped for the 2020s was, to considerable degree, decided by voters in 2018. This midterm election decided 36 governor races. Several of these were in states that executed extreme partisan gerrymanders in 2011 (by Republicans in Texas, Georgia, Florida, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina; and by Democrats in Illinois and Maryland). The chief executives elected this year (as in Virginia and New Jersey in 2017) will still be in office in 2021 and will often be able to advance or stymie partisan maps.

AGENDA

Counting Americans in 2020: The Challenges of the 24th Decennial Census and the Consequences for American Politics

9 – 10:45AM

The combination of Congress underfunding preparations for the coming census and the Trump Administration's insistence on adding a question about citizenship status has created unusual uncertainty about conducting the national headcount in 2020. In an America with a slowing birth rate among non-Hispanic whites (and upticks in white male deaths), overall population growth is more and more accounted for by international immigration (the majority of which is legal) and natural population increases among non-white immigrants and their children. Even without President Trump doubling down on his commitment to sharply reduce legal and undocumented immigration, the 2020 census was going to be a bigger deal than usual in American politics.

The accelerating demographic changes that have occurred since the 2010 census makes it more likely than not that the 2020 census process and its results, like so many other aspects of public affairs in America, will be caught up in the hyper-partisan environment that currently characterizes the nation. That being the case, with neither major party empowered by the 2018 results, there are major questions about how the census will be conducted and how the resulting data are interpreted. The implications of the census count will be of great interest to both the declining majority white non-Hispanic (Anglo) population and even more so for the fast growing Latino, Asian and Muslim communities.

Panelists

- Steve Murdock, Professor, Department of Sociology, Rice University, and former U.S. Census Director during President George W. Bush’s administration
- Thomas Burnell, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Texas-Dallas
- Francisco Pedreza, Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy and Department of Political Science, University of California, Riverside
- Richard Murray, Bob Lanier Chair in Urban Public Policy, Department of Political Science, University of Houston

Keynote Luncheon Address

11AM – 12:30PM

William Frey, Research Professor, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan; Senior Fellow, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institute

Dr. Frey specializes in migration, population redistribution and the demography of metropolitan areas. His latest book is *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America*.

The First Midterm Election in the Trump Era: What Do the Results Tell Us about the Future of American Politics?

12:45 – 2:15PM

With President Trump’s takeover of the Republican Party now complete, this election tested the degree to which the leader of the GOP is reshaping American politics. There were signs of classic political realignment in November 2016 with the Republicans breaching the Democrats’ Electoral College “firewall” in the Upper Midwest, while well-educated and affluent suburban voters shifted toward Hillary Clinton. The limited election results from Virginia and New Jersey in 2017 plus occasional special elections across the country suggested considerable voter movement since President Trump took office, but the nationwide election on November 6 provided much more conclusive evidence of an ongoing realignment in American electoral politics.

An unusually large number of House of Representative races were competitive in 2018, especially in affluent suburban districts represented by Republicans. While some GOP nominees held off their challengers, Democrats won sufficient seats to gain control of the House for the first time in eight years. Yet the Senate map was heavily tilted toward rural red states, and Republicans were able to expand their narrow majority by one or two seats.

Panelists

- Matt A. Barreto, Co-founder of Latino Decisions and Professor, Department of Political Science, UCLA
- Michael McDonald, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Florida
- Susan J. Carroll, Professor, Department of Political Science, and Senior Scholar, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers
- Daron Shaw, Professor, Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin
- Frank Bruni, Op-Ed columnist, New York Times

The Impact of the 2018 Midterm Elections on the 2021 Redistricting Process: Reports from the States

2:30-4PM

The last redistricting process in 2011 was substantially shaped by the 2010 midterm elections. Nationally, Republicans netted 63 seats in the U.S. House and halved the Democrats' Senate majority. More importantly, the GOP captured most statehouses and gained 675 state legislative seats and control of a majority of state legislative bodies. That set the stage for an extremely effective redrawing of congressional and legislative districts that gave the GOP a major advantage in the general elections of 2012, 2014 and 2016. But can those Republican friendly maps withstand the moderate "Blue Wave" in the elections of 2017 and 2018?

This panel drills down to look at the post-election landscape in individual states before the next round of redistricting.

Panelists

- Susan MacManus, Distinguished Professor Emerita, School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies, University of South Florida
- Bob Erikson, Professor, Department of Political Science, Columbia University
- Mark Jones, Fellow in Political Science, Joseph D. Jamail Chair in Latin American Studies, Baker Institute for Public Policy, and Professor, Department of Political Science, Rice University
- Jonathan Cervas, Research Assistant, School of Social Sciences, UC Irvine
- David Daley, Author of "'Ratf**ked' the True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy", Digital Media Fellow, Wilson Center for the Humanities and the Grady School of Journalism, University of Georgia, and Senior Fellow, FairVote