

Wasserman Assesses Political Landscape & Impact of Debates on the Election

WASHINGTON, DC — With Election Day drawing near, The Ripon Society held a virtual discussion this past Friday with respected political analyst Dave Wasserman, who, among other topics, assessed this year’s political landscape and shared his thoughts on the impact of the debates on this year’s campaign.

“We’re headed for a record turnout,” Wasserman stated. “I would estimate that we’re going to see 150 million to 160 million ballots cast in this election compared to 137 million or so that were cast in 2016. There are bound to be problems when it comes to our election infrastructure’s capability of handling that deluge and demand for ballots, both mail and in-person.

“We have had record turnover in our polling workforce because in 2018, let’s face it, 60% of the nation’s more than 600,000 election workers were over the age of 60. And we are also seeing polling place closures and relocations that add to that confusion. The real risk of the shift to vote by mail is not fraud, it’s a combination of voter and administrative errors that could lead to lengthy litigation up until the election — and beyond.”

Wasserman serves as House Editor and Political Analyst of The Cook Political Report. In this position, he has earned a reputation as one of the leading political observers in America. He has also become known for his encyclopedic knowledge of congressional districts across the United States.

“In heavily Latino districts,” he observed, “we’re seeing Trump come close to, or potentially exceed his 2016 numbers. This time around, he’s running a significant Spanish language campaign, which I think is an underrated factor in why we are seeing a difference in Republican performance among that demographic.”

“On the other hand,” he continued, “we’re seeing Trump underperform his 2016 margins by more than 10 points in some suburban districts, where I think the number one problem right now for House Republicans is what I would call ‘second-order suburbs.’ These are suburbs of traditionally Republican metro areas that did not flip blue in 2018, but where Trump’s standing today is much weaker than it was in 2016.”

Following his opening remarks, Wasserman also took a number of questions, including one about Presidential and Vice Presidential debates and whether he believes they will have an impact on the election.



Dave Wasserman

“I just don’t think they have much potential to move votes.”

“I just don’t think they had much potential to move votes,” Wasserman stated bluntly. “Voters are probably not going to be heading to the polls on November 3rd and thinking, ‘Well, you know, my choice was really crystallized by that first presidential debate.’ Look, if you haven’t been thrown off by Trump’s behavior by now, there is nothing that will throw you off from voting for him and that temperament – that demeanor – that’s been on display before.”

Wasserman was also asked about the implications of the President’s COVID-19 diagnosis and how he sees this changing the dynamic of the race going forward.

“Trump’s going to have an awful lot of time on his hands over the next few weeks,” he stated. “I think a sidelined Trump is a more unpredictable Trump. I think we’re going to see escalated attacks on mail voting beyond what we’re already seeing. The media is going to have to do a better job of watching out for the amplification of election and administrative errors by the Trump Campaign, because there are bound to be many this time that get virally turned into something nefarious. I think that the overarching strategy we saw in the debate was to convince more voters that mail ballots can’t be trusted, and that the entire 2020 election is a train wreck – to the point where more people simply turn away and don’t participate in the election.”

The Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange, a non-profit, non-partisan public policy organization which has promoted enlightened, balanced, and unbiased international policy discussion on major international issues for over 30 years. The Franklin Center also hosts bipartisan events with Members of Congress on a variety of topics here in Washington, D.C. and across the country.

For more information on the organization, please visit its website at www.franklincenter.us.

FC