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# Opinion

## The Three Elections That Shaped Obama's Legacy

The first backlash election of the presidency of President Barack Obama's time in office was 2010 when Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives lost 63 House seats. It was the greatest loss of seats by a party in the House since 1938.

The second backlash election was 2014 when there was a 72-year low in voter turnout. In 43 states, less than half the eligible voting population voted. In New York the turnout was only 28.8 percent. One has to go back to 1942 to find lower voter turnout.

The third backlash election is obvious. It was the election on Nov. 8 of born-on-third-base reality TV narcissist Donald Trump. Trump's surprise victory arrives with the predictable edicts that "it had nothing to do with race" — even though Trump's boasting and scapegoating of immigrants and stereotyping of African Americans was an often repeated mantra.

Now we have swastikas written on high school walls. On Nov. 11 Black students at

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the University of Pennsylvania were targeted for racist harassment the day after it was reported that the Ku Klux Klan plans to rally in celebration of Trump's victory on Dec. 3 in North Carolina.

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil

Then, there was Nevada Senator Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon's talk of "law and order."

All of these policies pointed squarely in the direction of African Americans. America had seen it before.

After the Emancipation Proclamation there were Jim Crow laws and the "Black Codes" and other ways to attempt to place African Americans back in their place of second- and third-class citizenship.

The 2016 presidential election was a massive backlash

and created by Republicans on the night of President Obama's first inaugural to block his agenda is the same obstruction that created so much frustration and hatred towards the federal government, marketed so well by congressional Republicans.

It would be the product of that hatred of government that would lead 59 million Americans to select an unqualified, narcissist real estate investor from Queens to lead the federal government.

Just as no one believed eight years ago that a Black

**“Frustration and hatred toward the federal government led 59 million Americans to select an unqualified, narcissist real estate investor from Queens, N.Y. to lead the federal government**

Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, what followed was a backlash.

Soon there was the campaign of Alabama's proudly segregationist Governor George Wallace.

to Obama's legacy itself. One can only assume that Donald Trump will focus on dismantling Obama's policy achievements.

The irony could not be deeper: The obstruction planned

man would occupy the White House on Jan. 20, 2009, few will be able to believe what they're seeing when they watch a professional birther and serial liar taking the oath of office on Jan. 20, 2017.

## Democrats Could Lose Even More in 2018

The apprehension that I felt upon Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election has only increased as he has announced the appointments of his chief of staff, strategist, and cabinet members. As of this writing, he has mainly announced the selection of older White men, including the racist, Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions, to lead the Justice Department. The senator's use of highly inflammatory racial rhetoric (including describing the NAACP as an "un-American" organization, and expressing support for the KKK) prevented his confirmation to the U.S. District Court in 1986. Now, he will be charged with law enforcement in our nation.

Equally troubling has been the selection of Stephen Bannon, his campaign chairman, as chief White House strategist and senior counselor. Bannon is the Executive Chairman of Breitbart News, a news website that has been the home of the alt-right, the source of lies, hate, nastiness and racist rhetoric.

President Barack Obama had to walk away from Minister Jeremiah Wright because one of his sermons was considered racist by some Whites. Trump openly embraces racists and is applauded for it.

The position that Bannon will hold does not require Senate confirmation, while the position that Sessions will be nominated for does. With 54 Republicans in the Senate,

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Sessions is almost certain to be nominated. Hopefully Democrats have retained enough of a backbone to raise questions about Sessions' racism. Senate newcomers Kama-

**“Democrats must start now to educate and encourage people to turn out for the midterm elections**

la Harris (D-Calif.) and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.) may be among the first to raise the questions. Still, Republicans will have the votes to confirm anyone they want to confirm. Welcome to the age of Trump.

Will Republicans get more of an edge in the Senate when we go to the polls in 2018? Thirty-three Senate seats will be up for grabs then. Republicans hold eight of them. Independents Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Angus King (I-Maine), who caucus and vote with Democrats are both likely to be candidates for re-election. A whopping 23 seats currently held by Democrats could be flipped. If some of the states that went Republican in this year's election can be tilted, Republicans can widen their margin in the

Senate.

The Trump campaign (and its affiliated super PACs) have as much as \$60 million to spend, and can use it to build ground operations in states where Democrats closely lost this year. (Hillary and her affiliated super PACs may have as much as \$70 million to spend). Democrats lost Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina, and Arizona by less than five percent. In-

their seats. They'll make lots of visits back home, host town hall meetings, and make sure their voters understand what their contributions have been and what challenges they face.

If Trump and his team can brag of results, if his actions are perceived as "making American great again," then incumbent Democrats may be in trouble. Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, also on the ballot, has described Democrats in the Senate as the "emergency brake" on Trump's policy proposals. I expect the Democrats to vocally take Trump and his team on when they revert to the racist rhetoric and proposed racist, misogynistic, and jingoistic policies that Trump promoted during the campaign, but will they? They may not want to be perceived as obstructionists (though Republicans surely didn't mind being obstructionists with President Obama), and they will certainly need to pick their battles carefully, but they must speak out.

Midterm election turnout is always extremely low — it was just 36 percent in 2014, the lowest level in 70 years. Democrats must start now to educate and encourage people to turn out for the midterm elections. Voting rights organizations must begin now to reverse the voter suppression that kept millions from voting on Nov. 8. If Democrats don't get busy now, Republicans will, indeed, prevail in 2018. So, let's stop wringing our hands and moaning. Let's get busy!