2019 was a bad year for Senate Democrats.

They failed to recruit top tier candidates.

They failed to clear primaries.

They failed to expand the map.

And they blew tens of millions of dollars in the process.

National party endorsements failed to clear the field in Colorado, Maine, North Carolina, Iowa, Georgia, Kentucky and Texas, forcing Democrat candidates in swing states to salivate over Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, packing the Supreme Court and abolishing the Electoral College. Some just locked themselves in Chuck Schumer’s basement, refusing to take a position on, well, anything.

Senate Republicans, on the other hand, had an incredible 2019. The GOP majority pushed through historic trade deals, remade the federal judiciary and repealed overreaching government regulations, all of which resulted in the strongest economy in a generation and the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years. Our candidates built strong campaign teams and raised the resources necessary to be successful in November.

Given all this, Senate Democrats were left with no choice but to embrace that which they have long claimed to be the scourge of electoral politics: dark money. Liberal outside groups have spent over $30 million on Senate races to date, all while their candidates simultaneously decry dark money in politics and fret over a wine cave. You really have to admire such brazen hypocrisy.

Democrats now find themselves in quite a pickle as they obsess over impeachment and deal with a culture of corruption and divisive primaries across the map.

There’s a long ways to go, but it’s better to be us than them.

Here’s the rundown:

**THE IMPEACHMENT ALBATROSS**

Recent data shows that Democrats are way out over their skis on impeachment.

NRSC surveys conducted in January in battleground states, including Arizona, Colorado, Maine, and North Carolina, show that 62% of voters agree that Congress should be focusing on top issues like
health care costs, trade deals, and keeping the economy on track instead of trying to remove Donald Trump from office. This includes 63% of independents and 61% of women.

Furthermore, 58% agree that Democrats should let voters decide for themselves in next November’s elections instead of trying to impeach Trump and remove him from office, including 59% of independents and 55% of women.

In Maine, which has given the collective media a nosebleed as they attempt to put Susan Collins in a box, 59% of voters agree Congress should focus on top issues instead of impeachment and 55% agree that we should let voters decide in November.

Perhaps most telling, a whopping 62% of independents in Maine say that we should focus on other issues instead of impeachment, and 58% of independents think we should let the voters decide at the ballot box in November.

And these numbers aren’t unique to Maine. We’ve seen similar numbers in Colorado, North Carolina, Arizona, and other battleground states. Across the board, voters recognize this for what it is: a partisan sideshow. 68% say that impeachment “is all about politics” and that “Democrats should be more concerned about addressing issues of the day like the cost of health care, fair trade deals and keeping the economy on track.”

Meanwhile, not nearly enough attention has been paid to the fact that Democrat senators are put in a tough spot on impeachment. In Alabama, a state Trump won by 27 points, Democrat Senator Doug Jones is in the unenviable position of either bucking his party and attempt to cling on for dear life, or voting to remove Trump and all but sealing his fate.

So while Republican Senators continue focusing on lowering health care costs, creating jobs, and securing the border, Democrat Senators are obsessed with impeachment, which is turning out to be an albatross around their necks.

**FIRED UP BASE**

GOP Senate campaigns have seen a huge swell in grassroots support across the country. Low dollar donations have increased 214% on average from the second to the third quarter. Even more telling, from the third quarter of 2013 to the third quarter of 2019, campaigns have seen an average increase in grassroots donations of a whopping 943%.

On top of that, the NRSC’s historic fundraising in 2019 was driven in large part by grassroots donors. The NRSC mail program has seen a 245% increase from the total raised in 2017, while digital has seen an increase of 312% in the same period.

WinRed has allowed the NRSC, our candidates and campaigns to capitalize on key moments and maximize support. With every 2020 Senate campaign on the platform, we’ve seen not only increased direct contributions, but also a huge uptick in campaign to campaign support. Senate campaigns raised $1.6M from other campaigns on the platform in the fourth quarter – and this is just the beginning.
DEMOCRAT FAILURES

On the other side of the aisle, Democrats have repeatedly failed to do what they need to do to capitalize on a very friendly map. On top of their constant obsession with impeaching the President, their culture of corruption and divisive primaries are causing them headaches all over the country, putting their ability to take back the senate at risk.

Culture of Corruption

Chuck Schumer’s top recruits have faced scrutiny for their previous shady dealings and history of ethics issues.

In Colorado, “star recruit” John Hickenlooper has been dogged by ethics problems. Not only did he take free rides on a private jet and take other gifts from donors during his time as Governor, he hired a campaign contributor as his lawyer to defend him – on the taxpayer dime. It gets worse. Hickenlooper paid his donor out of a 9/11 economic recovery fund.

In a unanimous ruling, the Maine Ethics Commission ruled that Guilty Sara Gideon committed egregious campaign finance violations. Now, Gideon claims she will eschew corporate contributions to her campaign – which is, you guessed it, a primary source of funding for her state LPAC responsible for the violations.

And Hickenlooper and Gideon are not alone. Democrat candidates across the country have come under fire for their dark money hypocrisy. Mark Kelly and Cal Cunningham's hypocritical stance on dark money and corporate cash have gotten them both in hot water.

Primary Watch

One of the untold stories of the 2020 election so far is Chuck Schumer’s inability to clear primaries for their preferred candidates. In race after race, the national Democrats have attempted to put their finger on the scale only to be burned by the progressive left. From Colorado to Maine, Iowa to Texas, North Carolina to Kentucky, it’s the same story.

And it appears the fight with the DSCC has gotten personal. In North Carolina, African American State Senator Erica Smith, who is putting up a tough fight against the DSCC endorsed candidate, put out a video saying, "Sen. Schumer, for whatever reason, did not want an African American running for Senate in North Carolina."

THE BOTTOM LINE

While the Democrats have failed to do what they need to do and continue to obsess over impeachment at their own peril, our campaigns are quietly putting in the work and building the strongest operations possible. While we’re still a long way away from November and there are a lot of factors at play, we’re focused on controlling what we can control, and so far, it’s paying off.