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October 24, 2017: Ross Douthat Tries to Get the Democrats to Take Back Congress

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Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2017). October 24, 2017: Ross Douthat Tries to Get the Democrats to Take Back Congress. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/1117>

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Title: Ross Douthat Tries to Get the Democrats to Take Back Congress

Date: 2017-10-24T04:57:00.000-04:00

10/24/2017—Imagine my surprise on Sunday when conservative New York Times columnist Ross Douthat called on the Democratic Party to adopt some kind of winning strategy to save the country. (Democrats in Their Labyrinth) Maybe even more surprising was the opening paragraph, in which Douthat implied that there was really only one currently workable Party—the Democrats: “America has two political parties, but only one of them has a reasonably coherent political vision, a leadership that isn’t under the thumb of an erratic reality television star, and a worldview that implies a policy agenda rather than just a litany of grievances.” But then Douthat got to his main point—the Democrats are not doing what is necessary to win: “Unfortunately for the Democrats, their vision and leaders and agenda also sometimes leave the impression that they never want to win another tossup Senate seat, and that they would prefer Donald Trump be re-elected if the alternative requires wooing Americans who voted for him.” I saw Douthat’s complaint at work last week when I received a fundraising call from a candidate in a congressional campaign in the midst of a Primary. The candidate said Democrats should run “true blue” candidates for Congress in a national strategy. I answered that I don’t give money to Districts outside my own in Primaries because I believe the voters in those Districts should decide. (I still believe the decision of the Party to back McGinty over Sestak cost the Democrats a potential win over Toomey). In any event, I said a “pale blue” strategy in some parts of the country would work better in winning seats. This was Douthat’s argument. Douthat admitted he would like to see the Party move closer to his own social agenda positions on abortion and immigration. (Douthat said that Doug Jones’ support for unlimited abortion on demand could elect Moore, whom Douthat called “a Senate candidate manifestly unfit for office, a bigot hostile to the rule of law and entranced with authoritarianism.”) But Douthat then said even if the Democrats stay the course on a social agenda, the Party could come to the center on economic issues rather than ride the single-payer healthcare train to oblivion. More to the point, Douthat complained that the Party was failing to acknowledge any need to do anything to attract the working class voters who supported Trump and bring them back to the Party. He might have added—the country doesn’t need resistance. The country needs to vote these people out of office. But it takes some give by Democrats to accomplish that.