



Trump has upper hand in 2020 race



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Regardless of which Democrat he may face next year, President **Donald Trump** holds big re-election advantages.

The latest economic data shine strongly despite polls showing the GOP tax cut impressed only a minority of voters.

Warnings about Trump's tariffs pale beside key positive trends — most notably a record-low unemployment rate.

Widening deficits and massive spending make for long-term concerns — but not the kind that are known to unseat presidents.

Also, Trump hasn't embroiled the United States in any new ground wars. True, Afghanistan and Syria still have U.S. troops in harm's way, North Korea still moves toward nuclear development, support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen remains controversial, and "all options" are said to be "on the table" in Venezuela. But Trump has no Vietnam, no Iraq. For all his careless language, he does not earn the badge of warmonger. That is a positive.

Dissent is muted and sporadic within his Republican Party. Despite chafing over several major issues, the Senate's GOP majority enjoys significant power from Trump's incumbency.

That's significant because presidents when denied re-election lacked full party support. President George **H.W. Bush** faced internal GOP static in 1992, then saw votes siphoned to inde-



President Donald Trump during a rally Saturday in Green Bay, Wis.

pendent candidate **Ross Perot**. President **Jimmy Carter** drew outright hostility from Democrats in Congress and a primary challenge from Sen. **Ted Kennedy** before losing in 1980.

Just how Democrats and independents might coalesce against Trump remains in question. The moment's perceived front-runner is former Vice President **Joe Biden**. Vice presidents from previous Democratic administrations have bad karma. **Walter Mondale**, for one, was crushed by Republican President **Ronald Reagan** in 1984. Veep **Al Gore**, for another, won the popular vote in 2000 but lost the electoral college with help from a Supreme Court ruling on the Florida ballot count.

Sen. **Bernie Sanders** has a consistent platform, like it or not, that could conceivably help him win the Democratic nomination and perhaps create a Trump-like surprise of 2020. Or, for all we know, Sanders could become a left-wing version of **Barry Goldwater**, the avatar of a movement branded "extreme" and roundly defeated in 1964 by incumbent **Lyndon Johnson**.

Consider too the recent inves-

tigative report from special counsel **Robert Mueller**.

Still the subject of fierce debate, the Mueller probe report fell short of either accusing or "exonerating" Trump. For 2020 purposes, its issuance hasn't shifted opinions of the president on either side of the partisan divide.

These days, Trump collects insider campaign money with the clout of a swamp incumbent. He began his re-election effort early and never stopped running.

For sure, the most recent ABC-Washington Post poll turned up an eye-popping figure: 55 percent of those surveyed flatly rule out a vote for Trump next year.

That may be an accurate snapshot, but it takes someone to defeat someone, and turnout will be key. Given Trump's vocal fan base, right-wing media chorus, and success in smearing detractors with **Joe McCarthy**-style charges, widespread alienation might not dash his chances.

The last three presidents won re-election. For that reason alone, the race must now be considered Trump's to lose.

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SPINCYCLE

GUIDE TO POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Judge rejects write-in bid

A state Supreme Court justice has thrown out Republican **Linda Kabot's** bid to wage a write-in primary for the Independence Party line against Suffolk County Legis. **Bridget Fleming** (D-Noyack) for lack of valid petition signatures.

Justice **John Leo** ruled that 45 of the 172 signatures Kabot filed on her nominating petitions were invalid because signers either did not live in the district, were not members of the minor party or other reasons, said **Lawrence Silverman**, attorney for the Democrats. That left Kabot five signatures short of the 132 she needed to wage a write-in primary.

The ruling came after a bipartisan panel at the county Board of Elections found 38 of Kabot's signatures were ineligible. Republican and Democratic election commissioners split on seven other contested signatures that, if valid, would have left Kabot on the ballot.

Kabot, a former Southampton Town supervisor and town board member, has the GOP and Conservative ballot lines in the No-



Linda Kabot

vember election. In 2011, she got some 4,000 votes in an unsuccessful write-in bid for supervisor. Fleming got 1,129 votes on the Independence line when she won re-election in 2017.

Kabot said she would not appeal the court ruling. But she called Democrats "political bullies" for "attempting to block my efforts to let the people decide at the ballot box."

Said Fleming: "It's troubling that Kabot would attempt to undermine the democratic process by swearing to and filing these petitions, when more than a quarter of the signatures were no good."

— Rick Brand

Agreement on early voting

Democrats and Republicans in Nassau have reached a cease-fire over early voting locations, agreeing to open 15 sites for nine days before Election Day this year.

The parties had been squabbling over the total number to open. Each party will pick seven sites, and the Board of Elections in Mineola will serve as the 15th, Democratic Commissioner **David Gugerty** said.

In Suffolk, the Republican and Democratic election commissioners have agreed to open an early voting site in each of the 10 towns. Officials have nine tentative locations and are trying to pick one for the Town of Shelter Island.

The Suffolk and Nassau early voting sites will be open from Oct. 26 to Nov. 3.

The state will determine reimbursements to the counties for costs associated with the state's new early voting law, passed in January after annual county budgets were set.

The state has \$24 million to distribute, and as of Thursday, only 28 of 58 county election boards had made submissions, a state BOE spokesman said.

Counties can designate at least one early voting polling place for every 50,000 registered voters, or 19 in Nassau's case. Counties cannot be required to open more than seven sites.

John Ryan, counsel to the Nassau Republican elections commissioner, confirmed the agreement for 15 early voting sites in the county.

— Scott Eidler and Rick Brand

The 1600 is Newsday's daily inside look at the Trump presidency

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