



**July 29, 2018**

TO: Interested Parties

FR: DSCC

RE: Three Trends Driving the Final 100 Days

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Three clear trends have emerged over the course of the Senate midterm cycle and will continue to drive the final 100 days:

### **1. Health Care is the Defining Issue of the 2018 Midterms**

As we wrote in [March 2017](#), the health care dynamics shifted early and aggressively against Republicans. Their platform of spiking costs, imposing an age tax on older Americans and slashing coverage for pre-existing conditions is toxic with voters of every persuasion and is being weaponized against Republican candidates. The DSCC's first TV ad, "[The Price](#)" showed how compelling this line of attack can be without even uttering a word.

Our [recent review of public polling](#) conducted over the last 18 months found that voter interest in health care and opposition to the Republican health care agenda has intensified, even as the issue faded from front pages and national news. Surveys show voters are overwhelmingly opposed to the GOP's health care policies, that they trust Democrats' approach more, and that the issue is driving their electoral choices.

Bottom line: health care is, as the Washington Post wrote, the "[midterm rallying cry](#)."

### **2. GOP Failed to Capitalize on Favorable Map While Democrats Expanded It**

The GOP failed to capitalize on a favorable map while Democrats expanded opportunities with candidates who are increasingly well-positioned in places like Arizona, Nevada, Tennessee and Texas.

- In state after state, top-tier GOP challengers refused to run against strong Senate Democrats. [Politico](#) wrote: "**There isn't a state on the Senate map where national Republicans are facing their dream candidate scenario.**"
- These recruitment failures spawned nasty, expensive GOP primaries. From [The Washington Post](#) last year: "**Republicans have struggled to recruit top candidates...a lack of a clear leader is leading to a bunch of lower-tier candidates jumping into the race, which means Republicans could spend the next year in potentially expensive (and, in some cases, divisive) primaries.**" These primaries crippled Republican Senate campaigns all cycle and are still raging in two key states: a "[bitter and costly](#)" battle in Wisconsin, and a "[divisive](#)" fight in Arizona.
- The candidates Republicans ended up with are failing to meet expectations (see this story about Josh Hawley: "[GOP golden boy mails it in](#)") or are embroiled in scandals (like Rick Scott, who has suffered over [215 bad stories in the first 100 days](#) of his campaign).

Make no mistake: each of these races is tough and will continue to be right up until the polls close but the trend line is clear: Democrats are expanding Senate pick up opportunities, while GOP targets are falling off the table.

### 3. Democrats Running Better Campaigns, Hold the Cash Advantage

The strength of Democratic Senate campaigns isn't just a process story: candidates are their own best messengers and can spend more efficiently in paid media. Democrats have outpaced Republicans all year on fundraising and the advantage is key at this juncture in the cycle.

From [The Hill](#): "Democratic candidates in 10 of the most critical races are sitting on \$75 million, while their Republican rivals hold \$33 million in cash on hand."

And [CNBC](#): "With a little more than three months left in the race, Democrats in eight of nine key battleground states have generated a substantial fundraising advantage, raking in far more cash than their GOP opponents, a CNBC analysis of the latest campaign finance data shows."

Democratic campaigns are utilizing this cash advantage to not only drive the paid media conversations in their races but also execute strong direct voter contact programs.

Meanwhile, the GOP's lackluster recruits and expensive primaries crippled their campaigns: Republicans enter the final 100 days with significantly depleted cash reserves and a hampered ability to raise more. They are increasingly reliant on mega-donors and Mitch McConnell's special interest money machine, which is a problem: spending from McConnell's organizations is less efficient than candidate rates and in many of these states McConnell is a potential drag on the candidates his allies are trying to bail out.

**The bottom line:** Republicans made this election about health care, failed to capitalize on a favorable map and now stand at a remarkable disadvantage to the strength of Democratic candidates in key races across the country in the final 100 days of the 2018 cycle.