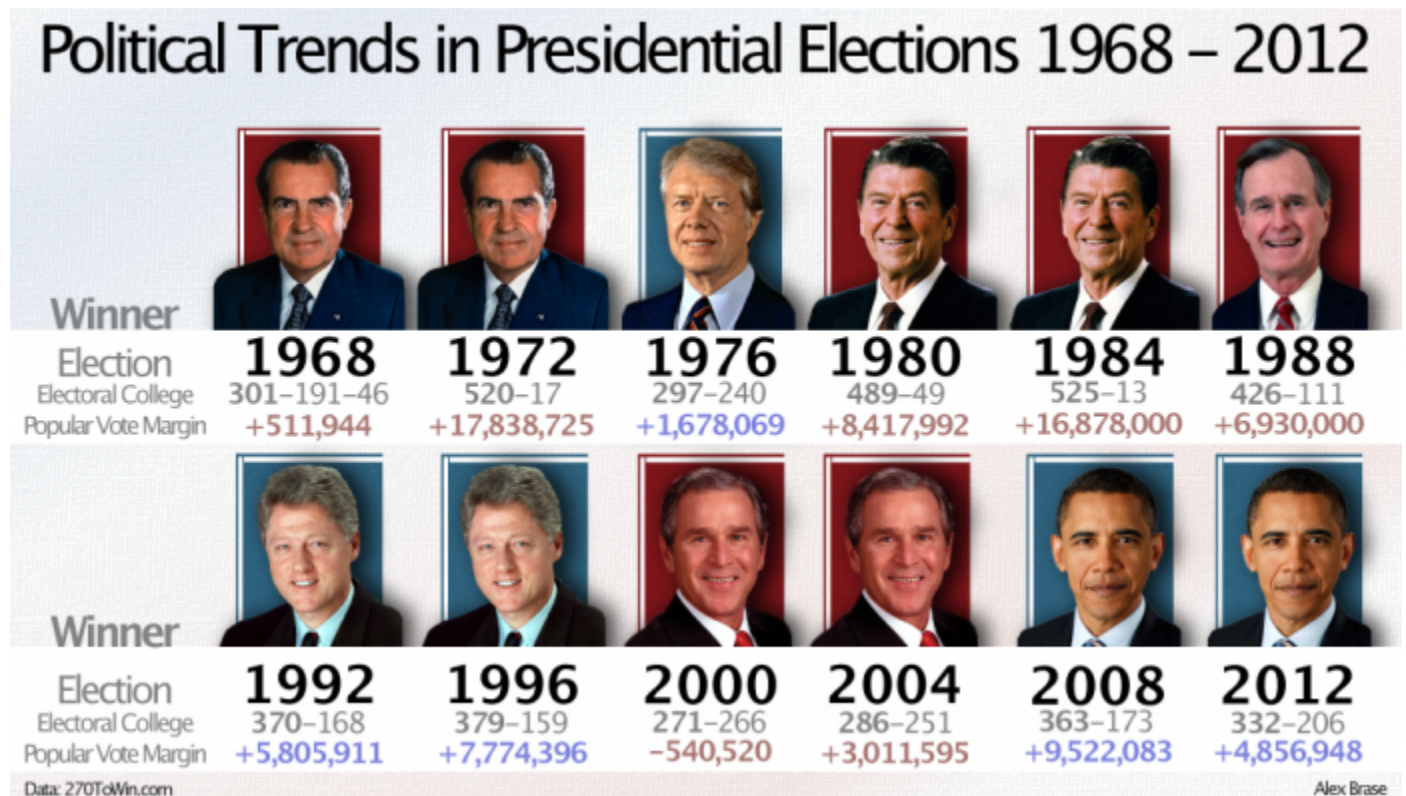


# OPINION: How low can the GOP's lopsided 23-year national election record go?

Oct 14, 2016



Graphic by Alex Brase. Photo credit: Alex Brase

For at least a generation, the Republican Party has had a crazy uncle problem – and sooner or later, voters still receptive to both parties will be prompted to cut familial ties.

The GOP is about to eclipse the presidential losing streak Democrats largely held throughout the back-end of the 20th century, and Donald Trump is not entirely to blame. This year's nominee has elongated the margin their present platform will likely lose by in contemporary American politics, evidently testing how low their gauche candidate can go every four years.

Almost a quarter century ago, Republicans hit a watershed moment. 1992 marked the year that, between Crystal Pepsi's brief emergence and the insatiable consumption of flannel, affirmed domestic policy and forward-looking optimism's mount in salience to foreign policy's Cold War stature, according to Robin Tower in The New York Times' ["The Transition: The Republicans – Looking to the future, party sifts through past."](#)

Subsequent presidential elections were mostly apathetic to Republicans, who secured a definitive victory just once in the past quarter century.

Coincidentally, the presidency has also sidestepped the Democratic Party in modern political history. Omitting President Jimmy Carter's single term, a 24-year Democratic dry spell spanned President Richard Nixon's 1968 victory to President George H. W. Bush's 1992 defeat. Foundational change within the party was perhaps the integral key to making headway.

It's exceedingly obvious that something similar needs to occur in the Republican Party in order to win over a rapidly diversifying national electorate. Can that actually happen?

## **The Republican Bill Clinton**

By the 1980s, the Democratic Party was linked to actions that were out of Carter's control, including stagflation brought on from OPEC's repeated oil embargoes on the U.S. for supporting Israel and resurgent manufacturing competition from Japan and Germany that surpassed America's slumping worker productivity in the switch to the service sector. After routine election losses, then Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton was approached in 1988 to promote the Democratic Leadership Conference 501(c)(4) organization's developing platform to create a springboard to the Oval Office, according to DLC founder Al From in The Atlantic's ["Recruiting Bill Clinton."](#)

Democrats reinvigorated a withering electoral standing by appealing to its moderate party base that broadly reflected the interests of the country, according to Will Marshall's article, [“The Bill Clinton and DLC model for reinventing the Republican Party.”](#)

Republicans should be able to do the same thing, right?

Problematically for the GOP, their base is a cohort of demographically-shrinking loyalists and general electorate-snubbing ideologues, according to Marshall's article, eager to trip surviving moderates with remote inclinations to compromise with others to advance urgent and almost unanimously-sought legislation.

### **The shrinking party tent that refuses to widen**

In 2013, the Republican Party published the [“Growth & Opportunity Project”](#) to address Mitt Romney's election loss.

The GOP had to abandon their aging, white, wealthy, and insular identity, the warning said, and instead model the inclusive appeal that leaders such as Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback have used to enact [“meaningful changes in people's lives”](#) to attract minorities, women, and young people.

Once Trump reached for the shallow strategy instead of toilet paper, the party was flushed into the tea party and dressed-up Neo-Nazi “alt-right” contingencies, as Dante Ramos describes in The Boston Globe article, [“Donald Trump's alt-right problem.”](#)

Richard Patterson writes in The Huffington Post article, [“Dog Whistles and Hypocrisy: The GOP's Selective Birthers,”](#) how these factions were only pacified at arm's length for decades until now.

The Latino community has overwhelmingly bolted from the Republican standard-bearer and is supporting Clinton over Trump 58 percent to 19 percent in the latest [Pew Research survey](#), far above the 40 percent minimum Univision Noticias calculates as essential to winning. Trump coasted through the Republican primary, but the national electorate isn't conservative or lily-white enough to crank out a general election victory; Romney won the support of 62 percent of white men in 2012, but still lost by 3.5 million votes to President Barack Obama, according to David Bernstein in POLITICO's ["Donald Trump needs 7 of 10 white guys."](#)

Trump is the opportunistic culmination of resentment various GOP voting blocs have held toward "establishment" politicians. Long given lip service for their votes, these far-right factions came to the realization, with coaxing from The Donald, that they had been played, William Greider reports in The Nation's ["Why today's GOP crackup is the final unraveling of Nixon's 'Southern Strategy.'"](#)

The GOP may be sacrificing the increasingly formidable political influence of the growing populations of Latinos, immigrants, and the massive and notably liberal Millennial generation to retain a dwindling and nationally-unrepresentative electorate.

Among its other controversial dimensions, the Trumpian revolution's spotlight on the [collective economic security](#) of predominately white blue-collar voters will be ingrained in Republican orthodoxy just as Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential candidacy incited a decades-long conservative acceleration, according to Ronald Brownstein's ["Just like Barry Goldwater, Donald Trump's candidacy will have a lasting effect on the GOP."](#)

The Republican Party needs an overhaul to win at the national level. Its persistent drift to the far-right edges of the American political consensus, however, conveys a different aspiration.