

Top Races to Watch This Fall 9.7.23

Steve Phillips [00:00:14] Welcome to Democracy in Color with Steve Phillips, a color conscious podcast about politics. I'm your host, Steve Phillips. And two weeks ago I was in Starbucks and I saw a big sign they had that was announcing that they now offered pumpkin spice, seasonal beverage. I took a picture and I posted it on Facebook saying, In all caps, it's still summer people. Well, it's now September and the fall is not officially arrived yet. Labor Day traditionally marks the start of the fall season, including the ramping up of the political season. On today's podcast, we will take a look at what to pay attention to in terms of politics over the next few months. And for that conversation, I am joined not only by my co-host Sharline Chiang, but also some will be diving into the numbers. We are also joined by our favorite data doctor, Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega. How are you both? Julia, you've been recovering from COVID and looking better than last time. What are you and are you both ready for the fall?

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:01:12] Thanks for asking, Steve. I am definitely feeling better. I'm not 100% really hoping and planning that I will be soon. So many friends suffering from long-covid or just extended cases that that's concerning. But I was at least before that able to enjoy some fun times over the summer, went to see DMC's Mexico City and had a fabulous time there. It's even more amazing that I remember it being and dropped off my son to spend his summer there. And I think I've now made another person who loves the city almost as much as I do, if not even more so overall. Good summer. Not a great way to end it with COVID, but I feel optimistic about next steps.

Sharline Chiang [00:01:56] It's so good to see you. I'm glad to hear that you're on the up and up and you're definitely not alone. I have a number of friends who also ended the summer this way unexpectedly, and we had different plans with them and they had to cancel. And so we know this is what's happening. So wishing you a steady recovery. And same for all our listeners. If they're out, they're also going through something similar. Wishing everybody that people are on the mend. Yes. The end of summer. I just can't believe we're here and beginning of fall and it's definitely back to back to school. Season is upon us. And we just wrapped up the long weekend with a camping trip that was brief and rainy and cold, but it was still pretty fun. So back in April, which I know seems like so long ago, we actually did do a preview of the 2024 presidential election cycle, and that's where we talked about the current slate of Republican presidential candidates, the potential nominees. And now it's September. So like I said, the summer's over where that much closer to being exactly a year out from Election Day. Hard to believe. So on this episode, we're going to be talking about some races that we're watching. We'll look at two gubernatorial races, both in the South, Kentucky and Mississippi. And we're also going to scan Virginia state legislature. Then we'll give a quick update on the Republican primary that officially kicked off its first debate last month on August 23rd. So first, let's start with Kentucky, where many people think of Kentucky and politics. They probably first think of Senator Mitch McConnell, who recently made bigger headline news because he froze up on TV. He has some apparently health issues that caused him what doctors say might have been a small seizure. And I will say, as much as I definitely don't like the man, I definitely feel like he has done incredible damage to our democracy. I don't like seeing anybody, especially an elder, suffer like that. But anyway, [00:04:01] the Republican nominee for governor is actually one of Mitch's proteges. Daniel Cameron is Kentucky's current attorney general and he's the first black man to win a gubernatorial nomination for a major party in Kentucky. So some of you weren't following this particular piece of news that carefully. You heard that right. He's he's black and he's in Kentucky and he's the first man to win a gubernatorial nomination for a major party in Kentucky. And that party is

Republican. So just let all that sink in. And Cameron is running to unseat incumbent Democratic Governor Andy Beshear, who's actually relatively popular among Republicans in Kentucky, according to a polling data from Morning Consult. [40.4s] So Kentucky is just much more interesting, that kind of complex and counterintuitive than I thought.

[00:04:48] Cameron, who's only 37, by the way, quite young. He's made a name for himself by suing Beshear's administration to enforce a 15 week abortion ban before the Supreme Court had overturned Roe. [11.8s] So Kentucky is shaping up, like I said, really interesting. Steve, can you talk about the political dynamics at play in Kentucky? And personally, I'm curious how Cameron would fare before voters in Kentucky. Kentucky is 83% white. I'm personally curious how Cameron would fare before voters in Kentucky. It's an overwhelmingly white state, and I'm just also curious and perplexed. How did somebody like Bashir, who ran as a Democrat, win in the first place in a state that's as red as Kentucky?

Steve Phillips [00:05:30] So, it is an unusual constellation of factors and it reflects, I think, the flux of the surface level of where we're at in U.S. politics is that things that traditionally have been markers before that would imply certain things in terms of, oh, Black candidate wouldn't do this or a Democrat, etc., don't always necessarily play themselves out. And so there are a few different underlying dynamics that we should understand about Kentucky. So as you were saying, it is traditionally a fundamentally quite conservative state. Trump easily carried it in 2020 and 2016. Republicans have a supermajority in the state legislature, and they but they've overridden a lot of Beshear's vetoes. And every other constitutional office is actually held by a Republican. So two things happened in terms of allowing Beshear to win in 2019. First is that the incumbent that he was running against was very unpopular and had had a lot of different things go wrong and a lot of he had gotten on the wrong side of education, public education issues and teachers. And so he was extremely unpopular. So, yeah, that is one factor.

[00:06:39] And then the other is that Beshear has a good last name for Kentucky. His father had been governor back in a prior day when Democrats were actually stronger within the state. So he had that good that good name. So the combination of those two things, plus high voter turnout among Democrats and I think less enthusiasm on the Republican side tied to the unpopularity of the prior governor. So even with all of that Beshear, only one by 0.4% of the vote in 2019, a super close election, and it went on for weeks and weeks afterwards. And then finally, ultimately this year prevailed. So you have that issue in terms of that dynamic. And then you've got, you know, Cameron being open this way, Cameron having a fair amount of melanin in his skin. So but I think what we're seeing and you're seeing this a lot, you're seeing it. We'll talk a little bit more on the presidential race. We saw it in the Georgia Senate race right where Herschel Walker had no business even being in politics was, you know, almost won that Senate seat of overwhelming support from white people and white voters. [65.2s] And so [00:07:46] the fundamental issue is not the melanin, the skin of the candidate anymore. It's the loyalty of that candidate, whatever color they are to this concept of a should this be primarily a white country or not? And so we're finding a number of different people of color who are singing that Dixie song and then getting response from white voters. [26.3s] The other issue I was listening to a couple of podcasts in preparation for this one from Kentucky and from Mississippi. But yeah, give me a little more insight. [00:08:20] We did a podcast issue right on the reality of all these attacks on the trans community, etc.. And as they were discussing it, it became clearer to me that how this is being used in usual and U.S. politics today, and that the Trans community in a lot of ways are the Black people of today, and that it's not just the people, but it's the who they are a threat to. [24.1s] [00:08:45] So historically in this country, going back to the 17th century, certainly all these newspapers in after Lincoln was elected, there's all this concern for what is going to happen to white women in our black men going

to go after white women, and then they have to be fearful and you create this boogeyman and that becomes the driving force that's now worth doing. What chance to be clear about that. And so our our girls are at risk in that from these trans girls and women. And so it's the same underlying fear that they're trying to appeal to about we have to protect our our, you know, our girls and our women. [41.0s] And so that's. So I think that writ large, but also in terms of the these these these races. [00:09:35] And so both of these gubernatorial candidates in Kentucky and in Mississippi are running hard on these on these trans issues and on really trying to attract the trans community. So we see how that's also playing itself out. And I think the last trend in terms of the Kentucky piece, which benefits Beshear is the ongoing reality of the backlash that is happening because of the Republican and conservative overreach on the issue of reproductive freedom. [27.1s] So after striking down Roe v Wade, we talked about this some in our in our newsletter right in the Kansas election, the Ohio election, places that are not seen as terribly progressive have actually had strong, more progressive election results in terms of protecting reproductive freedom. And think in 2022. Kentuckians rejected Amendment amendment to the anti-abortion ballot measure that would have established no constitutional right to abortion. And that was defeated by a margin of four points. So those are the underlying dynamics. And I think that that sets itself up for a fairly hopeful potential outcome for Beshear for the Democrats.

Sharline Chiang [00:10:42] Thanks, Steve. I feel like that really helps my understanding. I think that a lot of us who grew up have this sort of single image of Kentucky and Kentucky. I should be clear. For me, somebody who grew up on the East Coast in New Jersey, New York, and having not been to Kentucky before. Just this image of what Kentucky is like, you know, in terms of it being a red state, predominantly white, which it is, but not necessarily as complex politically as some of the things that you just laid out. So I find it really interesting to understand how the nuances that it's more nuanced than some of us who don't have that much clarity in terms of the politics in Kentucky. Take the time to to look into or think about or read about. So thanks for that. Julie, what's the polling data showing for Cameron and Beshear? And how are you thinking about the potential for Democrats to maximize their chances in a state specifically like to Kentucky?

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:11:44] Yeah. [00:11:45] So as a starting point, I think we definitely do need to all understand that Kentucky is indeed a very white state. It's got 88% of their eligible voters who are white. And if you compare that nationally, it's 66%. Right. So it's it's a very marked difference in a poll conducted in early August by Public Policy Polling. It shows actually that current Dem Governor Andy Beshear is up by eight percentage points over the Republican challenger. Cameron Bashir's approval was also tested in the late June polls a little bit before that, and that showed 58% of the voters approved of the job performance of Bashir thus far, compared to 39% who disapprove disapprove. So, you know, well-regarded overall in general, which is surprising given those demographics, which Mr. Bashir also has more cross-party appeal than Cameron and was leading among independents in that June poll. And also in the June poll, we found that 15% of registered Republicans and 23% of Trump supporters said they would actually vote for Bashir, while only 5% of Dems and 2% of Biden supporters said they'd vote for Cameron. [79.8s]

Sharline Chiang [00:13:06] That's really interesting. It is fascinating to hear those numbers figures of how many what percentage of Trump supporters would vote for a Democrat and the 15% of the registered Republicans funding wise. Julie, what do we know about how Bashir and Cameron are doing?

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:13:23] [00:13:23] They're definitely spending very differently. So as of August 5th. Bashir's campaign, along with allied Democratic groups, have spent a total of 6.2 million pushing out messages pro Bashir, as well as attacking Cameron's record. And that's according to media buying. That's the latest thing that I could find on that. On Cameron's side, they're trying to tie Bashir to Biden as much as they can, and they're doing so with the 2.4 million spending advantage so far. [30.0s]

Steve Phillips [00:13:54] [00:13:54] So there is one other thing I want to also tie in for our listeners about this race, race where our last podcast episode was with Erin Haney of showing up for racial justice. And so they are heavily involved in this race in Kentucky, and they're particularly working on trying to engage white voters and get them to be better, more progressive, and be more responsive and build support among the white community. And actually, Julie has been working with them and trying to help them design methodological approach so that we can actually learn lessons from this race about how to what works best in terms of attracting white support. [33.7s] And so that's another aspect of what why this race that she is important for the whole country in terms of what we actually have to pay attention to.

Sharline Chiang [00:14:37] Okay. [00:14:37] Let's travel a little further south to Mississippi and look at and talk about another gubernatorial race in Mississippi. Republican Governor Tate Reeves is up for reelection. However, Reeves has consistently polled under 50% this year. And that's not a great place to be as an incumbent. The Democratic challenger is Brandon Presley, who. And I find this fascinating. He's a second cousin of Elvis Presley. [26.2s] Steve, this is a race I know you've been paying attention to. What do you find most interesting about Presley, the Democratic candidate? Besides the fact that he's the second cousin of Elvis Presley?

Steve Phillips [00:15:15] How did you know that I was a big Elvis fan? I was actually very sad when I was passed, when I was a little child and whatnot.

Sharline Chiang [00:15:24] Yeah, the king was big in our family when I was growing up to my dad was would do fantastic impersonations.

Steve Phillips [00:15:31] So writ large, [00:15:33] a couple of things about Mississippi that it is the I believe was the second worst state in the country for Obama in terms of white support, second only to Louisiana at that time. And then in one of the prior gubernatorial elections, the Democrat. This was maybe a decade ago, got about 12% of the white vote. So you have that reality. And it's also and this is not parallel, but very much related is the blackest state in the country that is the highest percent of its population. It's like 35, 36% Black, something in that range. That's the range. So it's no accident that the White support is so low in a state that that black in terms of the fear and the concerns of turns around African-American control, and that goes all the way back, you know, certainly the post-Civil War, if not 1619 itself. [59.0s] So you have that result. [00:16:33] So this was very hard for a Democrat, for a white Democrat, to do well within that state. And so it's interesting and I think not entirely irrelevant, frankly, that this is Elvis's cousin. And so it's like what you have to find, what advantage you can have with white voters and what are the different issues that you can actually have play out in ways that are not even just issues? What are the different factors that you can distinguish yourself in ways that can change the perception of some of the different voters and whatnot? [29.3s] And so that I think, is not irrelevant. I think it's partly why this race is more competitive than prior Democratic candidacies have been. And within Kentucky. And then I would just say this, that just well, two of the things about this race is that, you know, listening to this podcast, some of Mississippi reporters

and they were so baffled was actually some I listen to a podcast of Georgia reporters looking at the Georgia election data as well. And it's [00:17:27]they're these reporters are so baffled by this seeming contradictions in the polling data in the Mississippi race. [7.6s] Right. There's one of the big issues is the grocery tax. And so if you poll people, they want to get rid of the grocery tax and that very you know, it affects them and weekly level, etc., etc.. Presley is making a big deal on the on the grocery tax and really you're on a basis campaign on that as well as on Medicaid expansion in terms of making health care, which is like 70 plus percent of people in the polls. What are people really into the Medicaid expansion? But he's did doing nearly those numbers in terms of the polling. [00:18:08]And his supporters are completely perplexed and they're like, well, just doesn't make sense in that how the there's you know, [7.0s] [00:18:15]people say, oh, in Mississippi for some reason in Mississippi that there's a, you know, disconnect between the issues and and the candidates. And it's like we're in a civil war still people. That's the issue. And it's just fascinating to me how much they overlook that even in the blackest state in the country, and even in the state with one of the lowest supports of whites for Democrats, that doesn't come up at all in the analysis. [23.4s] [00:18:39]And so that's the fundamental underlying driving reality of this race and that it's only of interest or it's only competitive because partly because Presley is doing better among whites than some other previous folks have done. [15.1s] And it does also raise this question about because it's so black, you don't need a ton of white people. And if there's a very large black mobilization, you can also make it competitive. And so we will learn a lot in this race from those factors.

Sharline Chiang [00:19:10] Steve, [00:19:11]as you mentioned, Mississippi is the blackest state in the U.S. and maybe the most racially polarized. Mike Espey, who is the former US secretary of agriculture and former House rep from Mississippi, who went on to run for Senate twice in 2018 and 2020, and he lost both times. He recently told Vox that in Mississippi the difference, quote, The difference between winning by a little and losing by a little really depends on the strength of the black vote, which is basically what you just said. I thought it was interesting, you know, just to hear from somebody like him who actually ran twice for Senate and he came close ish, but he didn't win. But Democrats haven't won a mississippi governor's race in this century, which is, you know, interesting context for this race. [46.0s] Julie, what does the data show in Mississippi? And I'm curious if you can share some data to explain what do we mean when we say Mississippi is the blackest state?

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:20:08] So it's been consistently easy in. [00:20:11]Recent years, at least for Dems to get up to about 45% of the vote here. Dems, meaning a combination of the African-American voters and the white voters. But it's been nearly impossible for them to top that 50%. Roughly 37% of the population in Mississippi is African-American, and those Mississippians are almost invariably vote for Democrats. It's a really, really high share of the black vote that goes down. Donald Trump won the Magnolia State by a 16 point margin in 2020. That's a lot. And exit polls showed that 81% of the white voters supported Trump with only 5% of the black voters. If you look at the map of the state, you can very clearly see the divide where black voters are clustered, Democrats can and do win. And where they aren't, they don't. One poll back in January showed Reeves with only a four point lead over Presley. So, you know, it's early days in all, but there does seem to be some reason for optimism about Reeves chances going in at this point, at least in the race. [74.8s]

Sharline Chiang [00:21:27] And what do we know, campaign finance wise, Julie? How is it looking for Reeves and Presley when it comes to raising money and spending money so far.

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:21:35] [00:21:35] According to the most recent campaign finance reports? REEVES This campaign has more than five times as much money on hand as Presley's, and that's 9.6 million versus 1.85 million. So it's a very meaningful difference in terms of fundraising. [16.4s]

Steve Phillips [00:21:52] And [00:21:52] that fundraising difference is playing out in terms of these issues. Which, which I was just talking about before. Right. And so in the past few weeks, the incumbent, the Republican right, has run three different ads and the whole trans issue and really trying to whip up fear and hysteria. And so he has a combination of the money advantage to be able to saturate the airwaves with this fear and hate mongering. That's how the the financial advantage does play itself out. One other interesting data point from the poll, one of the polls that I looked at was kind of fascinating in that 60% of the people did not want Reeves to be reelected, and yet he had like an advantage among when you put the actual choice between the two different candidates. But I do think that that another point that came up one of the polls, too, that there's a fairly high "Don't don't have an opinion" number for Presley. And so that provides some level of opportunity for growth as we can either introduce him on his good position on the issues or at least let people know that he is the cousin of the king. [65.2s]

Sharline Chiang [00:22:59] Yeah, I wonder if that'll weigh in his favor, especially among the fans out there. All right. Before we talk about the Republican primary, what I like to think of the primary zoo for the presidential race. Let's make our way back to the East Coast and discuss the Virginia State House races, which are happening this November. Steve, Virginia's a major point of focus in both your books, and correct me if I remember correctly, I should know as your editor, The book is The Birthplace of the Confederacy.

Steve Phillips [00:23:32] It was the capital of the Confederacy.

Sharline Chiang [00:23:34] Capital of capital of the Confederacy. I knew I was close and I know you think you talk a lot about Virginia in that it shapes a lot of, you know, your thinking. And when you talk about the progressive movement. Julie, can you give us a high level overview of what seats are at play in Virginia and how the numbers are shaking out.

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:23:54] [00:23:54] In 2021, Republicans flipped control of the governorship and they also, at the same time gained a 52 to 48 majority in the House of Delegates. So that's where things stand right now. Democrats need to flip just three of those seats to take back the majority in the Senate, which has 40 seats in it. Democrats have a 22 to 18 majority, meaning that Republicans could gain control of the chamber by flipping two of those seats so close in each chamber. Only three of Virginia's 40 state Senate seats and eight of the 100 House of Delegates seats are considered to be competitive. That's according to the Virginia Public Access Project. [46.5s]

Steve Phillips [00:24:41] So let me just add to that, too. I had a chance to talk to our friend Tram Nyguen of New Virginia Majority last week, and she was giving me the latest updates on where things stand there. And so there are two overarching or maybe three overarching realities in terms of understanding where Virginia's at and where it's actually heading. [00:24:58] It's still fundamentally a progressive and trending progressive state. Overall, nine of the past ten statewide elections have been won by the Democrats. The state, like the country, is increasingly. Racially diversifying, which is making his politics more progressive. Now, he lost the governorship in 2019, largely on low turnout and low investment in turnout of progressive voters and voters of color and the Youngkin the

governor and really inflamed white fears and resentment with all of his attacks on critical race theory, trying to model that for the other Republicans were out there, which is another aspect of the backdrop of this Virginia is and why it's also important from a national standpoint is Youngkin wants to be president. And so he's looking at this gubernatorial election as a chance for him to audition for the Republican primary and as a way of showing how Republicans can be successful and to position himself so that if Trump stumbles or the support falls for Trump, that he can be waiting in the wings, they could kind of turn to him. So that's the backdrop of this race. [67.9s] And apparently [00:26:07] he even has until late November. I think Youngkin does, the governor to get into some of the Republican primary elections. So he's trying to demonstrate his appeal. So that's important. I think part of this backdrop and as a result of that, he's investing large sums of money into these individual races because they are independently wealthy himself and they can raise great amounts of funding. So that's affecting the competitiveness and the potential there. And the other reality and why that's so important in terms of the fundraising imbalance is that they just went through redistricting after many lawsuits and court cases, etc.. They redistricted all the different seats. And so then a lot of the candidates are also new who are actually running and so people don't know them. [47.0s] And so the fundraising advantage becomes even more important in this context of introducing people to the voters. And so Youngkin going on early with TV ads defining the race, explaining to people that's one of these important big backdrops.

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:27:10] [00:27:10] So on the House side in Virginia, we have more competitive races, more races in play than we do On the Senate side, it looks like about 48 of the seats are most likely going to go Dem. They definitely lean D and 46 lean R, which leaves since there are 106 seats that are sort of the toss ups or you know, sort of in the middle. Those seats are all statistically evenly matched at present. And so there's really 6 races to focus on where we're going to see all the attention and all the resources really being funneled once we shore up those 48 and 46 seats. Of course, one thing to note is that some of these House races are layered under Senate seats. An interesting thing about Virginia and the way they're sort of jurisdictions are laid out is that Senate seats directly align geographically to House seats, which is unusual because most places around the country do it differently. And so you've got these competitive Senate seats in similar places as in same places as you have competitive House seats. And that really gives a lot of opportunity for a great deal of focus and resource allocation in those places. [76.4s] And then another thing to point out is just that House members people are running. The candidates right now tend to be more progressive on the House side, and that also gives a lot of opportunity for really being able to reach out and motivate base voters that we're going to need to have show up in order to get to victory. So in the Senate side in Virginia, there are paths to get that seem very feasible to get to 20 in the Senate, 20 out of those 40 seats. So that would put us at an even 50/50 split. The swing state that we'll be focused on goes through moderate areas that are also very competitive historically. And so that's going to be that's very much a toss up district. And, you know, all eyes are going to be there.

Sharline Chiang [00:29:18] That was definitely a lot of great insight into what's happening in Virginia. I know this is already a data packed episode, but let's before we wrap up, let's talk about the current Republican presidential primary, which kicked off with its first debate recently. Julie, what's the data showing in terms of who's leading in the polls?

Dr. Julie Martinez Ortega [00:29:36] [00:29:36] Several polls published last week showed former President Donald Trump leading in Iowa with 42% compared to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is 19% and South Carolina Senator Tim Scott's 9%. In New Hampshire,

Trump is at 50% versus DeSantis at 11, and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy is at 10%. And then over in South Carolina, Trump's at 48% versus 14% for both DeSantis and Scott. So Trump is far, far ahead in the polls at present. In the national polls, Trump currently has the support of 50% of GOP primary voters, and that's actually a slide of two percentage points since last Wednesday's GOP primary debate. But it's still a commanding lead over any of the opponents. Trump is currently at 50% in the average of the national Republican primary polls. DeSantis, who's his closest competitor, is in a very distant second place with 15%. So 50 versus 15. Not good. Ramaswamy is currently enjoying a bit of a bounce. Post the debate, I suppose. Over the last month, he has risen from 6 to 10% in the national polls. [81.1s]

Sharline Chiang [00:30:58] Still, based on what you're seeing so far. What do you feel are the implications of this Republican primary on the upcoming presidential election?

Steve Phillips [00:31:07] So I think [00:31:08] there are a few kind of big picture things that we should be watching terms of this race. Right. And so one clearly is the undiminished strength of Trump. And that, you know, I try to reference this in my book how we won the Civil War in that [18.5s] [00:31:27] we continually, consistently underestimate the political appeal of white nationalism in this country [6.1s] [00:31:34] and that in when David Duke ran for governor and then senator in Louisiana in 19, early 1990s, and actually of very one of my very first podcasts, Tim Wise, came out and talked about that everyone was like, "Oh, no, of course he's here. I'm sorry. David Duke, a literal former grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, ran for governor and senator in Louisiana. And everyone's like, "Oh, he's a KKK. You know, he's not going to have any chance." Blobbity blah, and he almost won and he almost certainly almost won the we did or he did far better than people expected and shocked everybody, showing the strength, the political appeal and strength of white nationalism. People discounted Trump in 2015 and 2016. He's too extreme, is too radical. He's you know what? You. ET cetera. And so, you know, we see how that has played itself out. And so for criminal indictments in a party which prides itself on being the party of law and order, he continues, he continues to lead and to dominate. So nothing it's what he was what he discovered in 2010 in the primaries is that I can stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any support. And what he left out of that, as long as he is still seen as the champion of white nationalism in this country, he wouldn't lose any support. And that is playing itself out in a big way. [79.5s] So you have that. I do feel in terms of the general election that it makes. Yeah, [00:33:00] it's a very odd situation where in terms of the short term general election, if it were just Trump versus Biden again, and even particularly Trump with all these different issues, Biden's a stronger position and there are some small number of Republicans who cannot tolerate Trump may or may not vote for Biden but wouldn't vote for him. And we've seen that a number of different elections in a bigger threat to democracy and humanity standpoint, Trump is an extraordinary existential threat. And so we have this kind of dilemma about how do we how do we approach this? So anyway, Trump's persistent strength, the strength of white nationalism, that's one major factor to watch. The second is the rhetoric that is unfolding within the primary, particularly with Ramaswamy and what the things that he's proposing because he has no, there's a very good podcast episode, The New York Times Daily on him. [57.4s] [00:33:58] He's like worse than Trump in 2015 and 2016 because he does not care about what he says at all. In all he's saying is what? Just to try to position himself as the most radical, the most, to distinguish himself by saying things which could be cataclysmic in terms of their actual. [16.6s] [00:34:15] He wants to send the army into Mexico. He wants to abandon any relationships with Taiwan. He wants to get rid of almost all federal government civil service protections so they can get rid of everybody, the federal government. And so he's just spouting all of this stuff. But the danger of that is it

puts it into the public policy debate as possible options of what should actually be advanced. And we don't have a comparable counterweight to that in terms of public policy options on our side that expand the debate. So that's a very dangerous reality and situation that's actually happening. [39.0s] [00:34:55] And so the meta picture of the Republican primary, I feel, is that everyone is positioning to see if Trump stumbles or falls, who can emerge as the replacement. I think it's pretty clear [11.9s] that the Santos is not going to be that he had been seen as the one. He's just a bad candidate. And even the Republicans are like he's just not very appealing at all. And I think those polling numbers Julie was talking about reflect that, but hasn't been that any of these other guys could not catch on, could not catch on quickly. [00:35:24] And that's the dynamic that they're all like positioning and hoping to see can they catch lightning in a bottle and become the one who will actually emerge? [7.4s] [00:35:32] And the person I'm most worried about, frankly, is Tim Scott in that who is is African-American. And I talking how we win the Civil War about I said I hope Tim Scott doesn't think he's in politics because he's smart or talented. He's in the Senate because he's black. He had never won an election more than like 6000 people prior to Obama getting reelected. Republicans saying, oh, no, we need we've got to get our black person. Let's take this person who is like a very small elected official within South Carolina and make them a U.S. senator from the there was an appointment that came open and that's how Tim Scott catapulted to the national prominence. And then he has the Oracle founder, Larry Ellison, as his big backer. So Scott doesn't need to raise any money. Ellison can put tens of millions of dollars into a superPAC for him. And then this is very perverse talk about African-American candidates, very perverse reality of if Scott were the Republican nominee, it would boost white turnout because they would be so absolved of any kind of guilt about the racism of their party. Say, look, see, we've got our own black guy and they'd be out in force. In a way, it would be very dangerous. [74.2s] And then [00:36:48] Scott is just kind of appealing enough and he's done a few, you know, tepid things about, you know, racial injustice, overreach, that maybe he could peel off one or two or 3% of the black vote in a close election, which could be very dangerous. So he's frankly, my most worried about, which would raise the imperative for the Democrats to clearly show how that we are with black people. And so there's not, you know, a defection by even in small numbers. That could be important, though, if they, in fact, get a black candidate. [34.7s] So those are what I think is some of the the macro trends, the trend of what we should be watching. It'll play itself out over the fall. They're going to have these Republicans, they a number of different debates and we'll see how this transpires. But that's really what's happening. Have a race to position to be waiting in the wings in case Trump is not nominee. But he's weathered whether it's someone that he he said apparently one more indictment and that'll put him over the top. And so this is pretty much, I think, how he's looking at it. And that's what the numbers are actually playing themselves out.

Sharline Chiang [00:37:58] So to be continued, as many things to keep our eyes on. Thanks, Steve. Julie, that was such a deep dive. It was like being in class and my brain is had to shift like that summer mode to, okay, there's a lot we need to do.

Steve Phillips [00:38:15] Is back in.

Sharline Chiang [00:38:16] Session to really pay close Yeah pay close attention to now because the election season is underway we're officially in the fall. It was like a big ol civics class, lots of numbers and lots of historical information and context. Political context. So stay alert and stay informed. And I just appreciate getting the chance to talk to both of you about it.

Steve Phillips [00:38:40] Yep. Great seeing you guys. Great. Kicking off the fall and we go, So that's all the time we have for today. Thank you for listening to Democracy in Color with Steve Phillips. Please help us get the word out about this podcast by subscribing wherever you get your podcast and sharing with your friends. Tweeting at Democracy, Color and at Steve, he tweets and finding is that democracy in color on Facebook or Instagram? You can also keep up with all things. Demko By subscribing to our newsletter at Democracy in Color Icon. If you listen to our podcast on iTunes, please leave us a rating, and a comment helps others to find our show. This podcast is a democracy and color production. Our producer is Olivia Parker. Fola Onifade is our staff writer and associate producer. Sharline Chang is our editor and co-host. Special thanks to April Elkjer for Quality Check, recorded virtually at the Sisters of the podcast studio San Francisco. Until next time, keep the best.