

Playbook

POLITICO's must-read briefing on what's driving the day in Washington

[Michael Crowley](#) 06/21/2017 06:46 AM EDT

GOP VICTORY LAP after Handel win -- HOUSE GOP now 4-0 in contested specials since Trump won -- UBER's KALANICK IS OUT -- CAROL LEE to NBC -- CHINESE EMBASSY shopping for new PR firm -- SPOTTED at U2 concert

Driving the Day

Good Wednesday morning and happy first day of summer. **THE FACTS** -- **KAREN HANDEL** quite easily beat **JON OSSOFF** in Georgia. House Republicans are now 4-0 in contested special elections since **PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP** won the presidency. That means Democrats have failed - - despite millions of dollars in spending -- to win a single race with a president who has a record low approval rating. Democrats are even further from the majority than they thought. Let's be clear: something ain't working for Democrats, party insiders privately tell us. The Ossoff race galvanized national donors and activists in a way that led many to believe House Democrats were en route to wresting control of the chamber from Republicans. That's not how they feel this morning. Caveat: this is a Republican seat. Being close is nice. But after six years in the minority, that's about all it is.

-- **REP. SETH MOULTON (D-MASS.) (@sethmoulton)**: "#Ossoff Race better be a wakeup call for Democrats - business as usual isn't working. Time to stop rehashing 2016 and talk about the future." ... "We need a genuinely new message, a serious jobs plan that reaches all Americans, and a bigger tent not a smaller one. Focus on the future".

-- **THE DCCC** is holding a Georgia-6 debrief and consultant call at 1 p.m. today.

NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN STEVE STIVERS (R-OHIO), the guy that some Republicans were sniping at a month ago, has run through the tape in Montana, South Carolina, Georgia and Kansas with four victories.

-- **STIVERS SENT US THIS TEXT MESSAGE** after the victory was announced: "Despite 30 mil spent and all the Democrat bluster, Republicans never took their eyes off the horizon. We were consistent focused on the issues and data that mattered and the results speak for themselves. Moral victories don't get a vote in Congress." **Rachael Bade on Stivers**
<http://politi.co/2rPV9Ip>

SURE, all these districts are GOP held seats, and Republicans just squeaked by. Fair enough. But if Democrats want to win the majority, they need to knock off some Republicans -- actually, lots of them. **REMEMBER THIS:** In 2011, Democrats flipped a GOP-held House seat in upstate New York -- so it's not unheard of for them to win these races. They just haven't done it in a long, long time.

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THERE IS A LOT OF BUZZ that this will help ease the passage of Trump's agenda. Eh, kind of. The same fissures still exist within the GOP on issues like tax reform, health care and big government spending.

GABE DEBENEDETTI, who was at Handel HQ in Atlanta and also dropped by Ossoff's election night event, sent us his takeaways: "Heading into the night, Democrats figured even a close loss would lead to a narrative about the party over-performing in GOP-heavy districts. That much is definitely true, but the recriminations started earlier than expected when Archie Parnell came closer than anyone anticipated in South Carolina's Fifth District earlier in the night.

"There were some awkward moments for Republicans on Tuesday even at Handel's party -- a blue blazer-and-khakis crowd with a few MAGA hats and Bikers For Trump t-shirts scattered in -- especially when she thanked the president without using his name. But no amount of GOP discomfort or polling numbers showing a nationwide swing to blue was enough to calm frustrated Dems.

"To Bernie-aligned progressives I've spoken with, the Ossoff loss was evidence that candidates need to be more liberal, more outspoken on economic populism. Others wondered why the party didn't spend much money at all in Parnell's race. But one Dem congressman texted me a question that summed up all the exasperation early in the night: 'Lots of 'moral victories.' But when do we get actual victories???"

-- **MORE DEBENEDETTI: "Lessons from the 2017 elections":**
<http://politi.co/2rTte5K>

NYT's JONATHAN MARTIN and **RICHARD FAUSSET**: "The apparent success of relentless Republican attacks linking Mr. Ossoff to the House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, and her 'San Francisco values' also affirmed the efficacy of tying Democratic candidates in conservative districts to their brethren in more liberal parts of the country. ...