

Democratic campaign chairman declares willingness to fund anti-abortion candidates

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In another demonstration of the Democratic Party's further shift to the right, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) Chairperson Ben Ray Luján declared Monday that the DCCC would not withhold financial support from anti-abortion candidates in the 2018 campaign for the US House of Representatives.

"There is not a litmus test for Democratic candidates" regarding abortion, Luján said in an interview with the *Hill*, adding that "to pick up 24 [the number of additional House seats required for a Democratic majority] and get to 218, that is the job... We are going to need all of that, we have to be a big family in order to win the House back."

The Democrats' adaptation to the Republican right and anti-abortion sentiment comes amid factional infighting within the party after Hillary Clinton's loss in the 2016 presidential election. A substantial section of the party, based on the false narrative that white workers rallied to Trump because of his appeals to economic nationalism, religious backwardness, racism and other right-wing sentiments, is determined to compete with the Republicans by abandoning the party's previous advocacy, as limited and compromised as it was, on certain democratic issues such as abortion and immigrants' rights. In addition, Congressional Democrats increasingly recognize that their obsessive focus on supposed "Russian hacking" in the 2016 election has failed to gain popular support.

Luján's comments come after numerous Democratic Party officials have signaled an embrace of positions associated with the Republicans. In April, Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Keith Ellison, labeled a "progressive," made appearances to promote the mayoral bid of pro-life Democrat Heath Mello in Omaha, Nebraska, with Sanders stating, "If you are

running in rural Mississippi, do you hold the same criteria as if you're running in San Francisco?... I think you'd be a fool to think that's all the same."

Last week, Charles Schumer, the Democratic Senate minority leader, released the party's "Better Deal" economic program. Supposedly meant to benefit workers, the plan's chief features are trade war policies aimed at foreign manufacturers and tax breaks for businesses, which are presented as "job creation" measures. Significantly, the proposal says nothing about the defense of the right to an abortion, immigrants' rights, police brutality or opposition to discrimination against gay and transgender people.

Luján's announcement provoked opposition from pro-choice supporters. "Democrats don't need to choose between coal miners in Ohio, nurses in Georgia or home health care workers in Arizona. This isn't a choice Democrats need to make. It's a coalition we need to win," said Mitchell Stille, national campaign director for NARAL Pro-Choice America. "A small minority of voters vote strictly on an anti-choice platform. Those same voters just aren't going to vote for Democrats anyway--they fundamentally disagree with just about everything Democrats stand for," Stille added.

Both Democratic and Republican administrations have overseen attacks on the right to an abortion. "People understood the class of '06 was driven largely by the centrist candidates," said Pennsylvania Representative Jason Altmire to the *Hill*, a reference to the Congressional elections of 2006, the last time the Democrats gained control of both the House and the Senate.



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