

Branding Democrats: A Top-to-Bottom Reimagining of Campaign Strategies

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All Democrats, from concerned citizens to party leaders, will benefit from Weber and Weber's tough love and practical, reasonable advice.

In their political science book *Branding Democrats*, Ken Weber and Daryl Weber explain why Democrats have such trouble winning elections, and suggest means of bringing more voters into the fold.

According to this book, Democrats have plenty of natural advantages that could attract new voters and swing voters. Yet they keep losing elections. Despite Joe Biden's 2020 victory and historic amounts of money flowing into Democratic coffers, Republicans continue to dominate local, state, and national races, and Democratic victories are far narrower than the book asserts that they should be. Dissecting specific examples of where Democrats have gone wrong, the text forwards suggestions for effecting the kinds of results that it says Democratic ideals merit.

Arguing that Republicans have controlled the US's political narrative for decades by homing in on a few key issues that people remember and react strongly to, regardless of whether claims are true or not, the book says that Democrats, in trying to present logic-based arguments and emphasizing grand but ambiguous goals, have been overrun by the emotional responses that the GOP inspires in voters. To remedy this situation, it envisions a complete overhaul of the Democratic campaign strategy. It shares actionable advice aimed at both individual candidates and the party as a whole.

The book's commonsense suggestions are compiled in short sections for easy reference. Such advice includes telling candidates to consider the careful use of professional directors or advertising agencies, focusing on building up the party brand rather than individual candidates, and touting Democratic accomplishments at every opportunity. The book encourages Democratic candidates to emphasize their devotion to protecting LGBTQ+ rights, for example. However, it still frames abortion as a "women's" issue, ignoring the trans men and nonbinary individuals who are affected by antiabortion legislation.

The blunt prose about what needs to be done and the consequences of not stepping up is a demonstration of the book's main point: being polite and "wimpy" does not win elections. It argues that Democrats must decide what they stand for and communicate that stance to voters in a clear, concise, and inspiring way, or they will continue to lose. Many of the suggestions are easier said than done, but they are all based on strategies that others—including those in the Republican Party—have used before, meaning they could be implemented if the right people put forth the effort. All Democrats, from concerned citizens to party leaders, could benefit from the book's tough-love approach, easy-to-digest format, and practical, reasonable advice.

Centered in extensive research and to-the-point in its delivery, *Branding Democrats* is a lively, accessible primer on the importance of memorable branding for Democratic candidates at all levels.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (August 5, 2022)

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