

NATIONAL DEMOCRAT MEET-UP PROVES AGAIN THAT DNC IS A DISORGANIZED BAND OF HIPPIES

Centrist Democrats for months have nudged the party's left flank to avoid the kind of strident partisanship and outright provocations that Donald Trump could seize on to whip up Republican voters in the midterms.

The response from the progressive base this week? Shove off.

Arriving here Thursday for the annual progressive gathering Netroots Nation, several thousand activists and organizers teed up a program laced with presentations on Trump's ties to Russia, "warmongering and

bigotry” and “protecting the Mueller investigation.” They depicted Trump’s immigration policies as racist, cheered efforts to block his border wall and plotted next steps for “fighting the global right” — all while amplifying calls to impeach Trump.

“The winning strategy is not chasing after Trump voters or moderating our message,” said Aimee Allison, president of the progressive advocacy group Democracy in Color. “Democrats need to be holding Trump accountable. ... They need to be up in arms every day talking about Trump, and they’re too timid. They’re too quiet.”

The three-day gathering, which will draw several of the Democratic Party's top 2020 presidential prospects to New Orleans this week — including U.S. Sens. Kamala Harris, Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren — is a stark reminder of the ideological and tactical rifts within the party barely three months out from the November election.

Morning Score n

Your guide to the permanent campaign mornings, in your inbox.

While Democratic leaders in Washington push forward with a midterm campaign agenda focused on health care and the economy, activists are embracing sanctuary cities, gay rights and other social issues igniting the Democratic base.

The conference opened with a panel calling explicitly for a “litmus test” on Democrats supporting abortion rights — a direct rebuke of Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Ben Ray Lujan’s comments last year that

the party would impose
no such test.

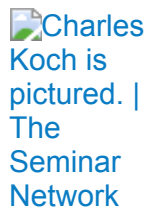
Decrying Trump's
immigration policies,
Angelica Rubio, a
Democratic state
representative from New
Mexico, described
herself to a small crowd
Thursday as "someone
who feels incredibly
saddened at times, with
even my own political
party, when it comes to
issues of militarization
of the border."

And, invoking former
first lady Michelle
Obama's 2016 campaign
message, "when they go
low, we go high," Monica
Roberts, a transgender
rights advocate from
Texas, told fellow
progressives, "The
Democratic Party needs
to get some balls ...

There are some times in political life that you have to go World Wrestling Federation on people.”

In the conference’s early stages and on its sidelines, Trump is everywhere. Rallying about 400 supporters at a town hall meeting on the eve of the conference, billionaire Democratic donor Tom Steyer, a potential presidential candidate who’s spending millions to rally voters behind impeachment, said, “The powers that be in Washington, D.C., do not want us to talk about this ... They want us to stand down. They think it’s bad politics, or they just don’t want to talk about the truth.”

Steyer, who took the microphone hours after Trump called on Attorney General Jeff Sessions to halt special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 election, said, "We think that talking about saving the country is more important than somebody's guess about what's going to happen in November."

Charles Koch is pictured. | The Seminar Network

RNC warns
By ALEX ISENSTADT

Dean Obeidallah, a progressive radio host sharing the stage with Steyer, drew cheers when he added, "I don't care what riles up Republicans at this point

... Nov. 6 is not Election Day. It is judgment day.”

Even with Trump’s low public approval rating nationally and signs pointing to a Democratic wave election, many centrist Democrats have warned that calls for impeachment and, more recently, abolishing the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, could boost Republican prospects in conservative-leaning districts. Prevailing in suburban areas that Trump carried in 2016 — and where Republicans still support him — is critical to Democratic efforts to retake the House.

Republicans in competitive states have seized on Democrats’

enthusiasm for the Russia investigation to paint them as ideological extremists incapable of governing. And Republicans are rallying around immigration, too. This week, as Trump weighed the prospect of a government shutdown over immigration and border security, the president told conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh that the subject is a “great campaign issue” for the GOP.

In response, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other Democratic leaders have encouraged Democrats to adopt a more measured tone in their resistance to Trump — infuriating

progressives who distributed stickers here reading “All Against the Wall.”

In New Orleans, conference-goers read program notes on “transgender etiquette” and “creating safer spaces,” including an admonition to use inclusive language and “respect people’s privacy and boundaries.” But attendees still chafed at an episode last month in which Pelosi appeared to rebuke Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) for urging Democrats to protest members of the Trump administration at restaurants, department stores or other places they encounter them. After Waters’ remarks, Pelosi advised Democrats to “conduct

elections in a way that achieves unity from sea to shining sea.”

Ryan Donohue, western regional director of the liberal group

MoveOn.org’s state and local program, said, “I

would never tell

somebody not to be

involved in whatever

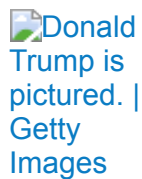
way they think is best ...

I think everybody should

resist in whatever way

they think is the right

way.”

Donald
Trump is
pictured. |
Getty
Images

ELECTIONS
Trump rallie
By JAMES ARKIN

Donohue said

Democrats need to

promote an agenda that

is “more than just being anti-Trump.” However,

he said, “Being anti-

Trump opens people’s

eyes ... You can be opposed to Trump and talk about the issues that are important at the same time.”

Trump’s widely panned, conciliatory news conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin last month appeared to give Democrats a wider opening to campaign on Russia. But it is unclear the issue will be persuasive in November. According to a Quinnipiac University Poll last week, Democrats hold a 12-point lead in generic matchups in House races. But a majority of voters oppose Democrats trying to impeach if they win the House.

Progressive Democrats acknowledged the electoral advantages of focusing on the economy and health care ahead of the midterm elections. Cenk Uygur, founder of the progressive radio show “The Young Turks,” said on Twitter recently, “This is the only thing Democrats should say in 2018 elections: ‘Corporate shareholders and executives got \$700 billion from the GOP tax cuts. How much did you get? Well, now you know who the Republican Party is working for!’”

But the activists at Netroots, while advancing themes related to jobs and health care, lobbied the party to also campaign on social issues — and

going aggressively after Trump.

“This president makes Richard Nixon look like a choir boy,” Kevin de León, the Democratic state senator from California who is mounting a long-shot bid to unseat Sen. Dianne Feinstein said in an interview.

De León, who is scheduled to speak on stage Saturday, has faulted Feinstein, a more centrist Democrat, for her skeptical view of single-payer health care and for her suggestion at a public forum last year that Trump, given time, could become a “good president.”

De León called Trump a "clear danger to our

values and democratic traditions” and griped that the Democratic Party’s handling of the president “has been very tepid, at best.”