

Religion Is Declining In America. Here's How That Could Decide Elections For Years To Come



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The United States has become dramatically more secular over the past 10 years, a trend that has benefited the Democratic Party at the expense of the GOP, meaning Republicans must recalibrate their electoral strategy, according to religious advocates that spoke with the Daily Caller News Foundation.

The popularity of religion has been [declining](#) in the U.S. for decades, and data from the 2020 U.S. Religion Census has shown that as regions dispense with religion, they tend to lean more favorably toward Democrats, while religious Americans have sided more with Republicans, [according](#) to a Politico analysis. In light of this, religious advocates that spoke with the DCNF said that Republicans should stress issues that both mobilize religious voters and appeal to non-religious Americans to expand their base, as the electorate will increasingly be polarized along the axis of faith. ([RELATED: New York Bishop Says Top Priority Is Racial Justice, Slavery Reparations](#))

“We see parents concerned about the secular ideology being taught to their kids, whether it’s the transgender issue or whether it’s the stuff of surrounding COVID fear-mongering,” Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, a Christian research and educational nonprofit, told the DCNF. “These parents that object are equated to domestic terrorists. Clearly, the Democratic Party is making its future with a secular white suburban voter that is indifferent to religion, and even hostile to it, whereas the Republican Party, their future, if they

are to succeed, is going to need to be increasingly aligned with those who have an appreciation for, if not a participation in, religion.”

Census [data](#) found that areas such as Florida’s Miami-Dade county, where Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton won by 30 points over former President Donald Trump in 2016, saw an increase in religious communities by 12%. As a result, the county drifted toward Republicans in 2020, with President Joe Biden’s lead in the county clocking in at only seven points.

Texas, a border state with an increasing Hispanic population, has also seen a growing number of evangelicals. In Zapata County, the number of people who were a part of religious congregation doubled from 2010 to 2020, with Biden taking the county by only 11 points in 2020, in contrast to Clinton’s 44-point lead in 2016.

Perkins told the DCNF that he has been encouraging the Republican Party to reach out more to the Hispanic community, which tends to be much more religious, and that the GOP should focus on tapping into its religious base while expanding outreach to faith-based communities.

“I’ve spent time on the border states meeting with Hispanic leaders, and I knew intuitively, based upon that interaction, that those Hispanic voters are actually more aligned with the Republican Party,” Perkins said. “I’ve been telling party leaders, ‘Look, the connection point with them is faith.’ It’s quite instructive that the key to the fastest-growing political segment demographic in the Hispanic community is faith. This should send chills down the backs of Democrats that have embraced this hostility toward religious expression.”

On the other end of the spectrum, Democrats are making massive strides in areas that have grown more secular, according to Politico. The census found that states such as Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania have become significantly less religious over the last ten years, and in the past few election cycles, those areas have tilted toward Democrats, according to Politico.

In Michigan’s Oakland County, President Joe Biden won more than double the votes that former President Barack Obama did in 2008, as religious groups dropped by 2%. In Pennsylvania’s Bucks County, religious congregation attendance significantly declined by 18%, correlating with Biden winning by 5 percentage points in 2020, as opposed to only one point for Obama during his reelection campaign.

Logan Church, campaign director for CatholicVote, a religious advocacy organization, told the DCNF that these stats should not be surprising since the Democratic Party has moved “away from moral absolutism.”

“It should come as no surprise that they are gaining ground in these communities as their platform continues to shift drastically away from moral absolutism,” Church said. “When there

isn't a consistent moral code in a community, it only makes sense that those voters would seek a party that validates their choices."

Delano Squires, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Life, Religion, and Family, told the DCNF that parental rights and the protection of children may be an opportunity for the GOP to expand outside of religious circles since many Americans have pushed back against the increasing normalization of gender ideology.

"The left has become so radical, in terms of promoting [gender ideology], whether social, medicinal or surgical aspects of, quote on quote, 'gender-affirming care,' that there are going to be non-religious agnostics and atheists who would say 'I disagree with conservatives on nine out of ten issues, but on this one issue, I'm willing to vote for them,'" Squires said. "And I do think that leftist radicalism will ignite some portion of typically secular voters to consider voting for the other party."

However, rising secularism gives Democrats, who have appeared to embrace a post-religious America, an edge in elections if Republicans don't push these issues as religious communities continue to dwindle in the U.S., advocates told the DCNF.

Perkins and Church said that despite the uphill battle, they believed that religious Americans, in particular, would show up in full force to combat the "agenda of abolishing a moral truth."