

Interviewee (00:00:00)

We can never let Donald Trump let us get to this spot again. We've got two years to get our act together. We have to coalesce around the fact that we want to win the White House in 2024 and it's going to take a serious-minded, policy-minded individual that truly wants to be a leader, not just to win a campaign and be a hero on Twitter.

Interviewer (00:00:18)

CNN's Manu Raju starts off our coverage today from Capitol Hill with more details on the Republican reckoning after another disappointing loss.

Interviewer 2 (00:00:27)

Senate Republicans are reeling after a disappointing election cycle, leaving them deeper in the minority, and now trying to figure out what went wrong.

Interviewee 2 (00:00:37)

It was frustrating. Clearly, I was optimistic that we would get a majority.

Interviewer 2 (00:00:44)

Herschel Walker's lost to Democrat Raphael Warnock in Tuesday's Georgia runoff, giving Democrats an additional seat and a slim 51-49 majority in the Chamber. It comes after Republicans also fell short in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Arizona, and Nevada, all states they had hoped to win. At the heart of the GOP criticism, the role of Donald Trump, who handpicked Walker and several other candidates who faltered in the general election, stumping late on the campaign trail for Republicans who ultimately lost.

Interviewer 3 (00:01:15)

Was Donald Trump a problem this year?

Interviewee 3 (00:01:16)

Democrats in many cases were able to kind of turn it into a choice election because of Trump's presence out there, because a lot of the candidates that had problems in these elections were running on the 2020 election being stolen. And I don't think independent voters were having it.

Interviewer 2 (00:01:33)

Utah GOP Senator Mitt Romney calling Trump's endorsement the kiss of death. And retiring Pennsylvania Republican Pat Toomey saying Walker's loss is another example that, "The Trump obsession is very bad for Republicans." Trump defenders pushing back.

Interviewee 4 (00:01:50)

No. I think we're losing close elections not because of Donald Trump. So if the answer to everything in town is this Trump's problem, then you're missing the boat.

Interviewer 2 (00:02:02)

Some directing their anger at Senate GOP Leader Mitch McConnell for refusing to embrace an election year agenda.

Interviewee 5 (00:02:11)

No agenda, no agenda.

Interviewee 2 (00:02:14)

I believe we ought to have a Republican agenda and give people a real purpose for how to vote -- why to vote for us.

Interviewer 2 (00:02:17)

And many blame Rick Scott's Senate campaign arm for staying out of GOP primaries in 2022, with GOP leaders calling on the party to intervene in primaries in the 2024 cycle, where Democrats are depending 23 seats and Republicans just 11.

Interviewer 3 (00:02:34)

Should you have taken a more active role and try to prop up the candidates who have been more electable?

Interviewee 2 (00:02:38)

Well, I think you've got to rely on the voters in the states, it's their states. I trust voters.

Interviewer 2 (00:02:43)

The additional seat now gives Senate Democrats more power to issue subpoenas and breathing room to confirm President Biden's nominations.

Interviewee 6 (00:02:52)

Turn left, Republicans. Or at least don't turn hard right.

Interviewer 2 (00:03:01)

Now, I just asked Raphael Warnock as he came back to the Capitol, whether or not Donald Trump had a role in helping him and by propping up a candidate who had turned out to be weak in the general election. He brushed that aside and said, "I think the people of Georgia deserve a great deal of credit for seeing the differences between me and my opponent." And as far as Trump and his future role in the Republican Party, Lindsey Graham told me today that it will be up to Trump to prove that he can win in order to win over Republican voters ahead of 2024.

Interviewer (00:03:28)

Okay. Manu Raju on Capitol Hill for us. Thanks. Joining us now to discuss, Congressman-elect Maxwell Frost of Florida, the first member of Gen Z ever elected to Congress, and hopefully not the last, I would hope.

Interviewee 7 (00:03:40)

Yeah.

Interviewer (00:03:40)

Thanks so much for being here. I know you campaigned with Senator Warnock in the days leading up to the election. After his win last night, you tweeted, "What's that about progressive values not being able to win the South again?" What do you say to critics who say, this really wasn't an endorsement of progressive values, it was that Herschel Walker was just a horrific candidate?

Interviewee 7 (00:04:02)

Yeah, well, I'd tell them to go out on the campaign trail with someone like Senator Reverend Warnock. You know, being out there feeling that energy, especially from young people, right? A voting block that traditionally has had trouble getting out to go vote. We see them going out voting in droves for great candidates, and the energy that we saw, we didn't do one event that wasn't standing room only. Young folks were really excited to hear the message from him. And what we found too from a lot of the research we did when I was at March for Our Lives is that young people want someone to vote for and not against. They're less concerned about people like Walker and more concerned about who is going to be our champion. And I think that's what we saw last night.

Interviewer (00:04:37)

On the other hand, you could argue that Reverend -- I'm sorry, Senator Reverend Warnock, he's definitely a progressive, but he ran as somebody who was in the center more. His pitch was kind of "Look at what I'm doing for veterans. I work across the aisle. I'm really into bipartisanship." His general election pitch wasn't about LGBTQ rights, although he did run a lot of ads about Roe v. Wade, so with that one exception.

Interviewee 7 (00:05:06)

Yeah, I think that what we saw was that he leaned into the values of our party and it wasn't about red versus blue, it wasn't about Democrat versus Republican, it was about the people versus the problem. For me, that is inherently what progressive values mean to me, right? Ensuring that we're all coming together to fight against these issues that we're up against - climate crisis, gun violence, protecting the right to safe and legal access to abortion. So that's what I meant by progressive values. I saw that on the campaign trail with him and it's really something that brings people together and doesn't divide our country.

Interviewer (00:05:34)

So let's talk about what it looks like once you're in Congress. You'll be in a Congress where the Republicans have the majority. You recently told Vox this about your approach to legislating, "You have to get buy-in from your colleagues, and you have to sometimes work with people across the aisle as well." You're definitely going to have to work with people across the aisle to get anything done in this Congress. Have you reached out to any Republicans to talk about areas where you might be able to work together?

Interviewee 7 (00:05:58)

Yeah, actually during orientation, I had the opportunity to make connections with incoming Republicans from my own state of Florida. We shared some really good discussions. I mean, look, we have a lot of disagreements, but we agreed on things like offshore drilling in Florida, public transportation, which is a huge issue, especially in Central Florida right now in the housing. So I think there is room to work together, but I really want to make sure, I mean, we saw that after Republicans found out that they were going to take control of the House, the first thing they talked about was Hunter Biden. And I don't think that's what the American people want us to work on, right? I think they want us to focus on these issues that are impacting their day to day.

Interviewer (00:06:29)

Your top issues, according to your website, are Medicare for All, banning some versions of semiautomatic weapons, background checks for all gun sales, the Green New Deal, things that your party couldn't get passed when you had the majority.

Interviewee 7 (00:06:41)

Yeah.

Interviewer (00:06:43)

Is there another list of priority? Second priority items or third priority items that you think can actually get 218 votes?

Interviewee 7 (00:06:50)

Yeah. Well, the banning of assault weapons is actually under our platform of ending gun violence, which is a lot, right? There's a lot that we can do there I think in a bipartisan way.

Interviewer (00:06:58)

Like what?

Interviewee 7 (00:06:59)

Well, I think we can work together to get more money for community violence intervention. These are programs on the ground level that help end gun violence before it happens, getting kids off the streets, teaching them arts, boxing. In Orlando, we have one called Guns Down, Gloves Up. These programs are actually shown evidence-based to end gun violence before it even happens and really gives resources to the community. I think that's something that we can get bipartisan support on. So I think there's creative ways to work on all these issues where, look, we might not get our north star -- we aren't going to get our north star in the next two years, but we can work towards that. But my thing is I never want to give up on talking about the world that I believe in, right? In order to take a first step in a journey, you got to know where you want to end up. So I think there's a lot of room though to take those first steps.

Interviewer (00:07:42)

One of our correspondents in Florida, Leyla Santiago, did a piece on the red flag laws that you have in Florida and she did an interview with a sheriff I think of Pasco County, I might be getting that wrong. But a conservative sheriff who really was talking about how effective it was, especially in preventing self harm.

Interviewee 7 (00:07:58)

Yeah.

Interviewer (00:07:58)

But that's not been something that has been able to be brought before national legislators. Something to think about.

Interviewee 7 (00:08:05)

Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer (00:08:06)

How will you counter concerns from those across the aisle who look at you and say, wait a second, you're a congressman? You're 25 years old, wearing your new tie, that you don't have any government experience. Some of your fellow freshmen are going to be like 70-year-old former judges and that sort of thing. You know what I mean? How do you convince them, no, hey, man, I'm serious?

Interviewee 7 (00:08:29)

Yeah. Look, we sit down and we talk about the issues. We talk about where we want to get to. And every time I have those conversations, people are pleasantly surprised, they're really excited to work with me. I know there's a stigma I have to get over. I had to get through that stigma in my primary and my general election. And I'm used to being the youngest person in the room. I really hope that me even being in Congress can help challenge the caricature that we have set for our candidates. I think we need more working-class people, non-traditional candidates in Congress to really represent the country.

Interviewer (00:08:56)

Well, you're going to have to get one of those congressional pins, first of all.

Interviewee 7 (00:08:57)

Yeah, right.

Interviewer (00:08:59)

You might also want to talk to Senator Ossoff who I understand sometimes still gets stopped before he walks into the Senate Chambers because he looks very young.

Interviewee 7 (00:09:06)

Yeah.

Interviewer (00:09:06)

You talk a lot about the youth vote and how the younger generations are the future, obviously. I do wonder as President Biden considers what to do next, whether or not he should run for re-election. He just turned 80 years old. Do you think he's your party's best candidate for 2024?

Interviewee 7 (00:09:23)

Yeah. I think if he wants to run, he's signaled that he wants to run. I'm excited to support him. The largest youth voter turnout we ever had in our country was in 2020 for Joe Biden, right? And I think it's important to keep that in mind. So I'm excited to support him and we see a lot of other leaders coming up through the ranks on local office and statewide office and also the congressional level that I think are going to work with the President to bring up the youth vote.

Interviewer (00:09:46)

And you're going to have some new Democratic leaders in Congress.

Interviewee 7 (00:10:00)

Yeah.

Interviewer (00:09:48)

Now, Gen Xers, including Hakeem Jeffries who will be the Democratic leader and the first African American to ever lead a major American political party in the House or the Senate, that must be kind of cool for you.

Interviewee 7 (00:10:00)

No, it is really cool for me and it's exciting. And I think it shows that -- I mean, yes, I'll be the first Gen Zer in Congress, but we have a lot of firsts coming in, especially in this freshman class. So there's a lot to be hopeful for.

Interviewer (00:10:11)

All right. Well, congratulations ahead of time to when you get sworn in. Good to see you, Congressman-elect Maxwell Frost.