

Shape Congress & vote with your feet

Your future house can help determine the future House. Consider the promise of this simple premise. If you're moving, move where your vote matters – and shape the trajectory of our nation. Appealing – but can it work?

“Americans are increasingly fracturing as a people,” announced The New York Times recently, “and some are taking the extraordinary step of moving to escape a political or social climate they abhor.”

This observation may help us to understand our broken politics – because fracturing enables more extreme, compromise-averse officials to gain traction – but it's not really news that's fit to print. After all, 20 years ago, Bill Bishop was already describing Americans' practice of sorting themselves into alarmingly homogeneous communities, “the big sort!”

Yet, one recent Axios survey finding does demand our attention: more than a quarter of adults, 27%, said they were likely to move to a state where their voice and vote may have a large impact, like a swing state. Now, that is promising and newsworthy.

Furthermore, a majority of Americans, 54%, said they were likely to move if their state passed laws that negatively affected them. In short, people are prepared to move from states where they feel threatened and move to states where their voice will be heard. Our democracy will be made stronger because a critical mass of Americans are likely to move to a place where their ballot box choices can influence the direction taken by our nation – which means moving to purple places, not deep red or blue ones.

Can movers really make a political difference? The answer is a resounding yes. But precisely where these movers move makes all the difference

Approximately 30 million Americans move every year. Roughly, seven million of the movers are registered Democrats. If just one-tenth of 1% of those seven million simply add “the value of my vote” to their existing move priorities (yes, movers can have their cake and eat it too), that means 7,000 additional registered Democrats moving into swing districts every year.

Seven thousand may not sound like a lot, but consider this remarkable statistic: control of the House of Representatives in 2022 turned on a grand total of 6,675 votes. That was the combined margin in the five closest House races, which determined who held the speaker's gavel. And what do we know about these five? Well, in the most nail-biter House race of all, MAGA extremist Lauren Boebert won by a mere 546 votes out of 327,132 total

BE OUR GUEST

BY CHARLES SIMON
AND HEATHER WESTON

votes cast. How's that for close?

And, if you're moving, there are so many compelling reasons to choose a swing district, like Boebert's in Colorado. Not only is the skiing outstanding and the lifestyle well-balanced, but the state laws are progressive. Those progressive state laws are particularly meaningful for participants in a key migration wave within the U.S., driven by the hundreds of anti-LGBTQ bills recently introduced by state legislatures.

Unsurprisingly, many members of the LGBTQ community no longer feel safe in these states. This community is big (approximately three million LGBTQ adults live in the 10 states with the most harmful policies for the LGBTQ community) and ready to vote with its feet (27% – approximately 800,000 people – have indicated that they are considering a move).

If just a small percentage of LGBTQ movers choose swing districts (like Boebert's) in states where they will feel welcome (like Colorado), they will play a key role in potentially flipping the House, thereby protecting and expanding LGBTQ rights for the entire country.

It's no wonder that, as the Cook Political Report notes, “[o]n an exceedingly narrow battlefield, both parties are scrounging for every advantage they can get.” The “knife's edge race for House control” turns on two dozen toss-up districts.

For progressives, the stakes are particularly high. The Republicans' slim House majority has given ultra-conservative lawmakers disproportionate influence, as the defenestration of Kevin McCarthy and the belated coronation of Mike Johnson made clear. The result has been that House Republicans continue to pursue legislation that fails to represent the views of a vast majority of voters on issues like reproductive rights, guns and climate change, including the views of some of their own constituents.

Jamelle Bouie recently mused, “[t]he one thing that might get the Republican Party back on the rails is a major and unanticipated shift in the structure of American politics that forces it to adapt to new voters, new constituencies and new conditions. It's hard to imagine what that might be.”

We actually don't think it's hard to imagine. Your future house can help determine the future House. Simple, no?

Simon and Weston are the co-founders of MoveIndigo, which helps Democratic voters who are moving to discover desirable communities where their votes matter.