

Winning Edge #63 – Focus on what you can control

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Politics is never won or lost forever in a single election. We've lived through one of the most dynamic 25-year stretches in modern politics.

It really started in 2000 with the Florida recount and the hanging chads, followed by a brief moment of national unity after 9/11.

Then came another close race in 2004. At the time, pundits were writing about a “permanent Republican majority.”

Two years later, Democrats took back the House and Senate in 2006, which Bush called, “The thump’n”.

Then President Obama won during the Great Recession. Now the headlines flipped, Democrats were poised for a decade of dominance.

- 2010: Republicans roar back with one of their biggest midterm wins ever.
- 2012: Obama is re-elected.
- 2014: Republicans reclaim the Senate.
- 2016: Trump shocks the world and wins.
- 2018: Republicans lose the House.
- 2020: Biden becomes president in one of the most closely watched elections in U.S. history.
- 2022: The Dobbs abortion decision blunts Republican momentum from inflation.
- 2024: Trump wins again, and Republicans keep Congress.

In 24 years, power has ping-ponged back and forth every two to four years.

That's the state of the game. No single win defines the next one, but there is always a next one.

So what do you focus on? The things you can control.

- You can control how many people you call and ask for a donation.
- You can control how much you prepare before giving a speech.
- You can control how well you connect with your voters.

With the 2026 election less than 12 months away, the best strategy is to expect the unexpected and focus on what we can control.

Or as Admiral James Stockdale once said, “Work with what you have control of and you’ll have your hands full.”

Sources:

Stockdale, James B. *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior* (Hoover Essays Book 6) (p. 7-8). (Function). Kindle Edition.