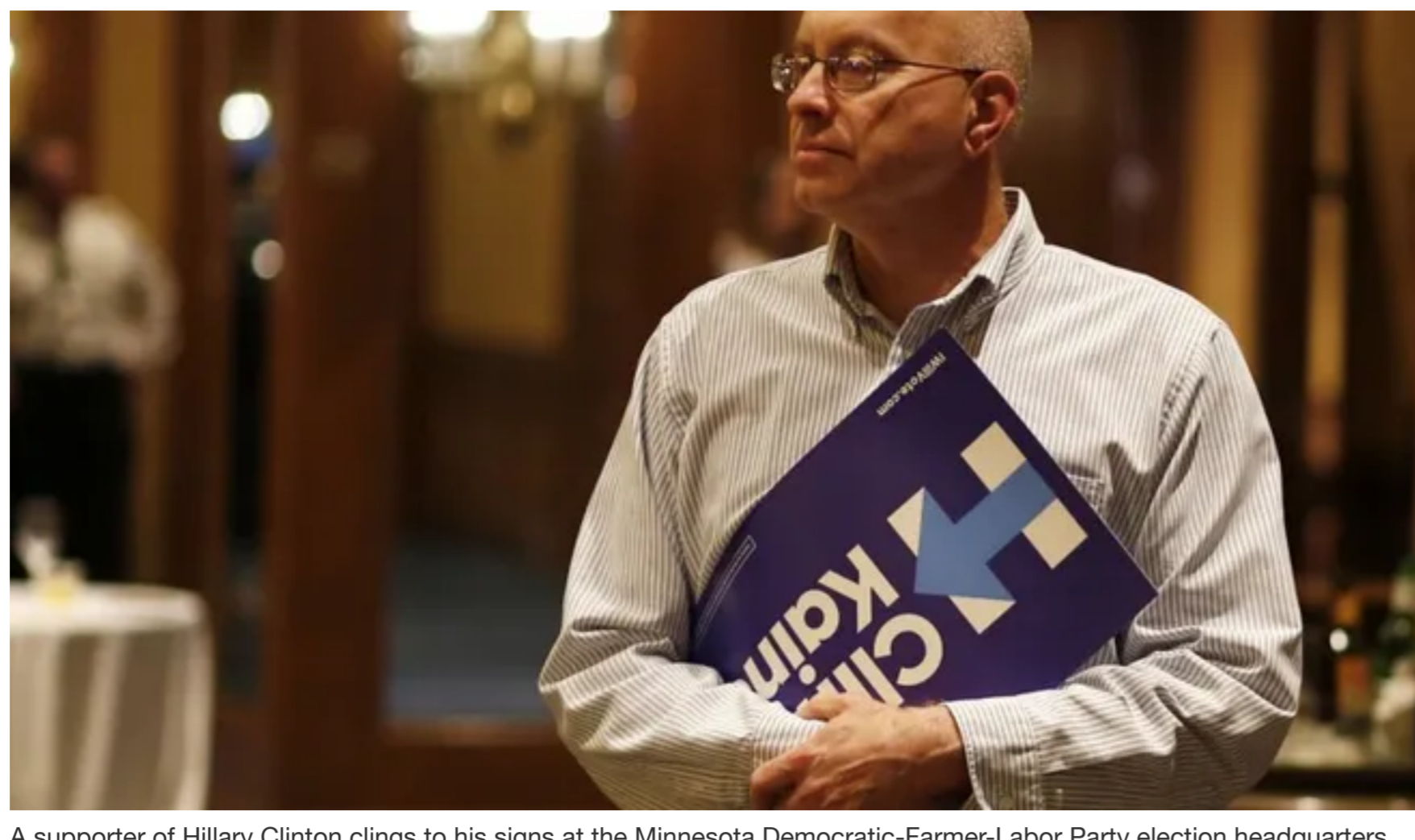


NEWS

Paul Stekler: For Democrats, What Now?

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A supporter of Hillary Clinton clings to his signs at the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party election headquarters early Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2016 in Minneapolis. (Photo/Andy Clayton-King) Austin American-Statesman

On the morning of the election, the narrative for Democrats couldn't have been brighter. Democrats were favored narrowly to retake the Senate and finally tip the conservative ideological advantage of the past four decades on the Supreme Court.

Those dreams are now gone and a stunned Democratic Party and their supporters who care about progressive public policies face a bleak future. For all of the talk of trying to understand what President-elect Donald Trump really wants to do, total GOP control of Congress means that the Supreme Court will go back to a conservative majority.

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With an increasingly conservative GOP in control of Congress, it probably also means the realization of their hopes in funding cuts, cutting back on social legislation, and the end of Obamacare, give or take the ability of 48 Senate Democrats to block any of this.

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There is a tendency to overstate the demise of parties that lose national elections. Two years after Barry Goldwater lost in a historic landslide in 1964, the GOP took back many lost seats in Congress and then elected Richard Nixon president two years later.

There's little solace that Clinton, in all likelihood, will actually win a plurality of the overall national votes. Given the total surprise among pundits, pollsters and experts that she lost at all, this was still a very close election.

So for Democrats, what now? For all of the talk that the Republicans were about to have an internal civil war after a Trump loss, do the Democrats have a Sanders/Clinton ideological battle of their own brewing?

For those Democrats who think a President Trump is guaranteed, by temperament and lack of experience, to be unpopular, remember that his blitz thru the Republican primaries was driven by the numbers he drew by being different and frankly much more interesting than his establishment opponents.

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So although it may be bleak for Democrats, they still commend the support of half of America. And this is a candidate-centric electoral system. Who knew a year ago that an orange-haired candidate with no political experience would be about to go to the White House.

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