Is Trump’s Rhetoric Counterproductive?

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It is often said that President Donald Trump’s rhetoric motivates his base, hence giving Republicans an advantage in election outcomes. Not so fast. Witness Tuesday’s electoral results in Kentucky and Virginia. Perhaps the President’s rhetoric is counterproductive.

With 99% of the vote for governor counted in the red state of Kentucky carried by Trump by over 30% in 2016, Democratic candidate Andy Beshear appears to have upset the incumbent Republican Governor Matt Bevin. Keep in mind that Bevin made his campaign about opposition to impeachment and support for Trump--and the President
came to Kentucky yesterday, saying "don't let that [a defeat for Bevin] happen to me." Ironically, Bevin led by 5 points in the last poll taken prior to Trump's visit to Kentucky.

In addition, Trump’s rhetoric may have cost Republicans in Virginia. Trump urged voters to “send a signal to D.C.” and make the election a referendum on his presidency by casting their ballots for Republican candidates. The signal was clear: the Democrats took control of the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate for the first time in the 21st century.

Perhaps it’s time for Republicans to admit that Trump is an electoral liability—and that impeachment discourse doesn’t help them. In fact, it might whip up enthusiasm among Democrats. It is now possible, therefore, that several Republicans in states like Arizona, Colorado, Georgia and even Texas could go down with the ship in 2020.

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