

Tanya Domi:

Hi, this is Tanya Domi. Welcome to the Thought Project recorded at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Fostering groundbreaking research and scholarship in the art, social sciences and sciences. In this space, we talk with faculty and doctoral students about the big thinking and big ideas generating cutting edge research, informing New Yorkers and the world.

Tanya Domi:

Heath Brown is an associate professor of public policy at John Jay College and the Graduate Center CUNY. He studies policy process, interest groups, presidential transitions and education policy. He's the author of five books, including the forthcoming Homeschooling the Right: How Conservative Education Activism Erodes the State, which will be published by Columbia University Press in early 2021.

Tanya Domi:

Charles Tien is a professor of political science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center CUNY. Professor Tien is co-editor of Polity, Journal of Political Science. His research interest include American Politics, congress, quantitative research methods, representation of minorities and women in the US congress.

Tanya Domi:

Welcome back to the Thought Project Heath Brown and Charles Tien. So here we are in New York City less than one day after the final day of our election all the while during a pandemic, which is exceptional. A new president is yet to be declared and accounting continues in several states including Georgia, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. A red mirage dominated last night returns triggering democrats with PTSD as they watch President Trump pick up one state after another but not flipping any state from red to blue throughout the evening and into today.

Tanya Domi:

Vice President Biden actually flipped Arizona and Nebraska congressional district two. Biden has overtaken Trump in Wisconsin and expects to overtake him in Michigan too. The governor in Pennsylvania and the secretary of state gave a press briefing this morning advising the public that every vote will be counted. Last night, the president said he would challenge the count in Pennsylvania and just in the past hour, his campaign announced he would solicit a recount in Wisconsin costing him about \$3 million if he follows through.

Tanya Domi:

So here we are and I'd like to start with you, Charles. What are your thoughts about yesterday's events and where the situation stands today? And let's join in where you want to go with this Heath Brown.

Charles Tien:

So I think it reveals a polarized country that remains polarized. I think there were indicators that may be there would be a repudiation of Trump and Trump-ism, especially in the national polls. I don't think that happened. And so the country remains divided. It remains divided by gender. It remains divided by education. It remains divided race and ethnicity. And I don't see that ending any time soon as the country is projected to become more diverse in the next 20, 30 years. I think it's an indicator of where we're at and probably where we're going and it's also a country divided about COVID. How do we deal

with COVID? Are we going to have a mask mandate? Are we going to focus on the economy? And so there are clear divisions in this country and we saw the country splinter along those lines last night.

Tanya Domi:

And you, Heath, what do you think?

Heath Brown:

Yeah, it's such a pleasure to come back. I always look forward to your podcast and I'm always a little fearful coming on to anything because I know how closely you follow this and I'm [inaudible 00:04:24]. I always feel like I'm coming to be interviewed by Steve Kornacki about some county race in Wisconsin that you've studied in depth. And so that's-

Tanya Domi:

I'm not playing hardball here.

Heath Brown:

If you replace Chris Matthews on Hardball, I would be a watcher of that show. It's for that reason I'm so excited to be talking about this and I largely agree with Charles. I think that had you told me yesterday about this time that we're recording that this is where we would be at, I would say that sounds about right. I think that what we were told about the counting of ballots, the amount of time that it would take like under normal circumstances is exactly what is played out. It seems to me that what happened, what we learned last night is what we expected to learn, maybe not everyone expected it but generally, that was the expectation.

Heath Brown:

And the expectation about what has been playing out today, a day after and may even play out tomorrow in the following day is also very much what we would expect. This is a such a funny election because voting is happening in such different ways but the rules are on the books. Every state, every part of every state knew what they were looking at. And it seems to me that though I would agree that there are many areas of concern related to what Charles described in terms of the administration of this election day, things worked out pretty well.

Heath Brown:

People who wanted to vote, voted. People who wanted to vote last week could vote. People wanted to vote by mail, they vote by mail and it seems like all those votes are being counted. So a lot of things we talked about, a lot of things that are worrisome but the major worries about how things were just going to play out yesterday seemed to not have materialized. And we had a fairly standard American election in 2020. Standard, and what we would expect does not mean it's something that we should all be pleased about, but it's kind of what we would expect.

Heath Brown:

So I'm sitting here today thinking, this is kind of where I thought we'd be, not really knowing but having some kind of signs about where things are going to be heading over the next couple days with some big wild cards related to lawsuits that that will play out over a longer period than anyone wants. But again, this is what the rules set up. And so we know what the vote thresholds are and when a recount is

permitted and so those will likely happen in some places. I think that it's unlikely to change the outcomes but that's kind of the system we've got. So I think there's a lot of reasons that we should be confident in what happened yesterday and pleased that the administration of this election turned out pretty well.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah, I think the historical early vote, the energized early vote of people around the country was very, very inspiring I think from a democracy standpoint. But it's very interesting that the president of United States wants to gaslight those votes and say that they're fraudulent. So we'll see where that goes. It seems like his own campaign and maybe the people in the White House don't really like that dialogue. They're not really amplifying it, which is interesting to witness.

Tanya Domi:

I do want to say that Charles, I think last night democrats were despondent because I think they anticipated a blue wave and it didn't manifest. And not only that, the senate candidates that seem to be fairly competitive according to polls just did not get traction at all. And probably one of the greatest disappointments to the democratic party, I think today, just within the last like maybe 90 minutes, Susan Collins was declared the winner in Maine, a really beleaguered candidate. What are your thoughts on that? And on the polling in general, I'd like to hear your thoughts.

Charles Tien:

Democrats were talking about big gains in the house and the senate right leading up to yesterday, and so I think there has to be a re-evaluation about why that didn't happen. We're all kind of scratching our heads. Why were the polls so wrong? And polling is something really hard to do on election outcomes because you're dealing with a population of people that's a moving target. Meaning that right, you're trying to predict who's going to vote and then how they're going to vote. And so when you don't really know who's going to vote until it actually happens, you don't know how to pick people to be in your poll and then you don't know how to weight your sample-

Tanya Domi:

Yes, your right.

Charles Tien:

Once you have a sample and response rates are 10% or lower, and so it's just a really hard thing to do. Gallup stopped doing it after 2012 and there's going to be I think a re-evaluation of how polling is done. One solution was to average polls and they'll look only at high quality polls but those methods also led us astray this year. So it's something that I think the polling industry is going to have to evaluate and think about seriously and that's the media included because the media are sponsoring these polls or running their own polling shops.

Tanya Domi:

Right. Heath, what do you think about you were talking about process and that it went well and I think that's probably true. I mean all of us were watching people line up and stand in lines and did it in the early vote and all day yesterday. But one of the things that happened on election day was that a federal judge ordered the US postal service to sweep postal offices to make sure that ballots were delivered-

Heath Brown:

Which they ignored, I believe.

Tanya Domi:

Yes, and not only that but there was reporting today that mostly in the battleground state, this was a big problem for the US postal service. Like to hear your thoughts, Heath and then Charles, please chime in.

Heath Brown:

I don't know the magnitude of the problem. I don't think we really know that there's lots of reasons to be concerned and things that we might worry about but I haven't seen any evidence yet to show the magnitude of this problem. And I'd be curious about it. The differences that we see across some of these states to me is one of the things that I find most interesting. And I think the polling side of this is really interesting but also some of these changes in what's happening just in a place like Wisconsin, which at the time that we're recording this has been called for Joe Biden, which Donald Trump had-

Tanya Domi:

Oh Wisconsin has been called?

Charles Tien:

Yes.

Heath Brown:

That's right. And Scott Walker has made public comments, former governor of Wisconsin has made comments, former republican governor of Wisconsin has made comments that the margin here makes it a pretty steep climb for Donald Trump to pursue a recount. But I think if you look at what happened in Wisconsin, you really see a story of the strategy of the Biden campaign knowing that winning Wisconsin and winning Michigan and winning Pennsylvania were the best path to 70. And you look to some of these changes from 2016 to this year and in some of the biggest parts of the state like Milwaukee and Dane county for instance, democrats in 2016 had a 47-point margin. Biden increased that to 53%, 53 points and similarly in Milwaukee increased the rate.

Heath Brown:

In large counties that Donald Trump won in 2016 like Brown County and Racine, Kenosha County. He consistently won by smaller margins and I think that sort of this what's going on at the county level at this point tells I think a much more interesting story about kind of what's happening in the country than some of these sort of state-level findings or the state level numbers ultimately would determine what happens in electoral college. They don't say as much about what's happening really among the electorate, among sort of the political changes in the electorate. And I think as we move ahead and as a final winner is declared over the next days, weeks, hopefully not months, I think that's where I'm so interested in where the analysis goes to see at this kind of county by county level where the electorate is changing in places like Wisconsin and Michigan and Pennsylvania and so forth.

Heath Brown:

So I'm very interested in sort of seeing how that plays out over the next couple of weeks because these state-level stuff will shake out and tell us some things but they tell us things mainly about the artifacts of the way the rules are set up, not as much about how the electorate is actually viewing politics and viewing candidates.

Tanya Domi:

Okay.

Charles Tien:

I guess I'm not as sanguine about the-

Tanya Domi:

Process.

Charles Tien:

... process and where we are as a country. I mean we have a president who is actively suppressing the vote. We have a president who appointed the head of the US postal service who was taking sorting machines out of service. We have a postal service that's underfunded and unable to delay, unable to deliver mail in a timely process. I mean we're looking at a failed state or close to a failed state in many regards and half of the country unwilling to do anything about it. We have a president who declared on the night of the election that that he had won when that was far from the truth. And again, you don't have a clear repudiation of a president who behaves that way and so-

Tanya Domi:

By his own party for sure, yes.

Charles Tien:

Yes-

Heath Brown:

And I agree but the RNC did in many ways. There were officials in the RNC rejecting what the president said last night and you know what, I guess I'm really interested in where you would look just to find the effects of those problems that you just described related to shutting down polling locations, delays in delivering the mail. How would you figure out the effect of that on what happened yesterday and today? Where would you look for those effects? [crosstalk 00:17:16]

Charles Tien:

Well, it's very hard to find those effects because when people have been discouraged to vote or they've been intimidated into not voting and the country has a long history of doing that. They stay at home. And so the black turnout we know was significantly less in 2016 than in 2012 but we don't know if that was because Barack Obama was no longer on the ballot or because of other tactics like voter ID requirements. And so it's hard to know but the fact that the president is actively calling for polling stations to be monitored, which is simply a signal to go out and intimidate voters. That's what I'm so pessimistic about in terms of our country.

Charles Tien:

We should have a president encouraging people to vote and not scaring them from voting.

Tanya Domi:

Right. I think-

Heath Brown:

The overall voter turnout in 2020 is up, is higher-

Charles Tien:

Right and it could have been even higher, we don't know.

Heath Brown:

Yeah. So that's I guess kind of the interesting question is how high could it have gone? It's remarkable given we have an incumbent president who has done all of the things that you've just described and yet still, voter turnout during a pandemic when simply leaving one's home to cast a ballot or even place a mail-in ballot delivered to a mailbox involves public health risks, even still turnout was higher than it's been really in a generation.

Heath Brown:

So I guess the question so what was the ceiling for turnout? And is there any sort of dynamic effect of the president's rhetoric on strategy to turn people out? So the give and take there is very hard to observe. It says very little about how pernicious the president is in his approach to the election. How voters responded then is pretty remarkable given all of these real, symbolic, rhetorical barriers that have been put in their way.

Charles Tien:

Right. More than just rhetorical barriers, so yes. We could have 100% turnout and we could make election day a federal holiday. We could have the early voting across the board. We could have same day registration all across the country. There are a lot of things that we could do to increase turnout and there's no interest in doing that by a lot of people in the country, not just of one party but at both parties.

Heath Brown:

Absolutely.

Tanya Domi:

Well, I would just say just based on reporting for example in Texas, which has always been a state that couldn't vote. There's the oppression of voters. They're indicating like 67% of people who actually voted early were new voters. I mean, so because people just weren't allowed to vote there make it so difficult for people to vote. That's an anecdotal example of perhaps new people coming into the electorate and I would also say reporting indicated and I saw it, people were interviewed. Trump or the president's trying to stop me and I'm going to go vote. This is my right. I'm going to exercise my franchise. What do you think about that? I do think it was a motivation for a lot of people to vote.

Charles Tien:

Absolutely. I think the electorate was energized on both sides and in Texas, the voting by car in Harris County, which republicans tried to throw out all those votes. That was a sign of innovation and something that that the voters responded to.

Tanya Domi:

Right, yeah. There's over 100,000 votes casted in that venue. Let me just say as a former congressional staffer, I have a bit of an insight because I used to work for somebody who ran the US post office oversight investigations committee when I was in the house and-

Charles Tien:

Pete Visclosky.

Tanya Domi:

Yes.

Charles Tien:

The person I worked for served on that same committee, post office and civil service.

Tanya Domi:

I'm talking about Frank McCloskey. Visclosky was on it too, the two guys from Indiana. Anyway, I just would say I think that has to be investigated. That's why you have congress to do some oversight on what happened and of course, we know that that oversight has really been impeded and it's not been followed through if there has been investigations. And maybe if Joe Biden is president in this next congress, republicans will feel more able to carry out their responsibilities without Trump in the White House. We'll have to wait and see for that to take place but it's just a thought I have today.

Heath Brown:

Are you suggesting that republicans losing control of the White House would make them regain their passions for the checks and balances built into our constitutional system? This would seem a headline for most newspapers that republicans regain their faith in the constitution and their belief in the separation of powers. I think you're absolutely right. This is this is what happens. And one of the great risks that a potential Biden administration faces is whether they are willing to back up their faith in congress with a change in the direction of the presidency. Are they willing to give back control? Are they willing to sit for hearings? Are they willing to send their members, their cabinet up to actually answer questions? Or would they see that in essentially the same way the Trump administration saw, which was an impediment for carrying out their agenda?

Heath Brown:

You can see it cut either way. Joe Biden, Kamala Harris or creatures of the senate and their commitment to the power of the senate and house to check the executive branch is deep and strongly felt. But when you're sitting in the White House and you're trying to pursue an agenda, you start to lose some of your faith in the positive role that the senate and house might play in helping you carry out your goals. So we will see if that happens whether they remain committed to checks and balances.

Tanya Domi:

I agree. That'll be interesting to see how that happens or not and what kind of relationship is going to be had. I mean Biden has deep ties in the senate. And so he knows McConnell and it's going to be interesting to see what's going to happen. And I think that he has been warned by the left in the party that he can't give away the house, so to speak. As an expression, he can't give it away but he's not going to have a senate. And he's not going to have senate majority.

Tanya Domi:

I just want to go back to that. In the intra-party aftermath of this washout on the senate where you had almost a dozen competitive seats according to the polling, obviously that was not correct but is there going to be some ramifications within the party and maybe for Chuck Schumer? I'd like to hear some thoughts on that about what happened, just a really big missed opportunity. Any thoughts by either of you?

Charles Tien:

So what? Tens of millions of dollars was spent in Kentucky and McGrath lost [inaudible 00:26:18] really essentially, right? Tens of millions of dollars were spent on the South Carolina race, also the main race, which you're saying now is going to Collins. Could the outcome have been different in maybe just a couple of those races if right resources have been marshaled to focus on a handful of races? The Texas race also wasn't even close. So I think democrats wanted a prize from Tuesday night and they didn't get it.

Tanya Domi:

That's right.

Charles Tien:

In all these races-

Tanya Domi:

And then they got kicked [crosstalk 00:27:11] Mark Kelly-

Charles Tien:

Right, which weren't terrible surprises and-

Tanya Domi:

Right.

Charles Tien:

Those weren't the prizes they were looking for, right? They were looking for Lindsey Graham and they were looking for Mitch McConnell to go down to clearly repudiate what's been going on in the senate for the last two to four years. And so I mean it speaks to the power of incumbency, I think and we all know that incumbents win. So what 73, 75% of senate incumbents win, over 90% of house incumbents win? And so it's just really hard to beat an incumbent and I think we saw that play out again. There was

no blue wave and Trump did much better than what the polls were saying but presidential incumbents tend to win as well.

Charles Tien:

And the last time we've seen a party lose after just being in power for four years was Jimmy Carter. If you count Bush's lost to Clinton as Reagan's third term then then you have to go back to the early 1900s before you see a party lose after just being in power for four years. And so that I think speaks also to why Trump did so well last night. And if he loses and it looks like he is going to lose, it's going to be a historic election just because of first term incumbent losing.

Tanya Domi:

Sure. I will just throw it out here, guys and say it'll be interesting to see if Chuck Schumer is the minority leader in the senate in the next congress. I think that there's going to be probably some maneuvering for that position. I do think so.

Heath Brown:

Yeah, I don't doubt that. I mean I think Charles's point about the power of incumbency, I think can get very caught up in these landslide elections that overwhelm this strong power to become incumbent, which holds up election after election after election. And I think in defense of Chuck Schumer who needs no defense from me, the question is where would you have spent your money differently? The Trump generated enormous fundraising potential for the democratic party and Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Where would you have shifted that money assuming that you like the candidates that you have?

Heath Brown:

And I haven't heard anyone say Jamie Harrison wasn't a good candidate. He isn't a candidate they wouldn't have to spend-

Tanya Domi:

[crosstalk 00:30:14] he was actually a great candidate for-

Heath Brown:

Oh yeah. And so I don't think saying it was a poor decision to spend the amount of money on Jamie Harrison's race knowing that it was always going to be an uphill battle. I think that in Chuck Schumer's defense and I think that the money spent in Kentucky and the money spent in South Carolina and Montana and elsewhere serves the long-term party building goals that are different than the immediate winning back of the senate for the democrats. And I think that if you look back at 2020 in four years or eight years from now and you look at the democratic party in South Carolina, it's going to look much more vital, much better organized and the same thing for Texas. And it's hard to take the long game when you're an elected official but I think if you were to ask Chuck Schumer what happened, he would say now, "Let's revisit this in four years or eight years and see how the democratic party looks in those states and whether they're healthier, more competitive than they are now."

Heath Brown:

And I think you would say, "I'll offer a bet that they will be," because of enormous spending that didn't result in electric electoral win in 2020 but set things up for future campaigns. That's a defense but I think

that when you're sitting on a lot of money, what do you do? You have to spend somewhere and they were faced with an electoral map that someone outside of their control. And I think that the party building benefits is something that we can't underestimate.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, I don't, absolutely not. And knowing people down in South Carolina, Jamie Harrison won in their view. I mean the way he carried himself, the way he carried out the campaign, he inspired a lot of people. And in many ways, he won without winning, as a person who's really been engaged in politics for many years in South Carolina. But I do bring up Chuck Schumer because there was Patty Murray had considered challenging him for majority leader when he was elected and then she chose not to. So I'm just throwing it out, sometimes this happens. It just sort of happens and it's just something that happens when there's a loss, when people lose. There can be changeovers and leadership.

Tanya Domi:

The other thing I just want to bring up is that last night, republican women did well in the house. I'm not on top of all those who did it but just make a note that Susan Collins becomes the longest serving woman in the US senate as a republican woman in being elected to the fifth term. And she was really endangered. Any thoughts about that, Charles? I mean the republicans have not had hardly any women in the house if you just look at the house floor. It's just so white male. It's going to be striking to see some women on that side.

Charles Tien:

Yes, largely that's driven by who runs and it's been really hard to get women to run for congress. We saw in 2018 a large number of women on the democratic side run and I guess republicans were successful in recruiting women to run in 2020. But one of the challenges I think for both parties in getting more women elected is to getting them to run because once they do run, I think they do just as well as men or pretty close to it in terms of fundraising and then in terms of how they do at the ballot box. So the challenge is candidate recruitment and that's where the Chuck Schumer's and the party leaders have a big role to play.

Tanya Domi:

Speaking of process, I just wanted to bring up one other thing. I mean in the house, Heath, Nancy Pelosi has held on to her majority although she's lost a few seats it looks like. As of this afternoon, the Ds had elected 193 and the Rs had elected 185 and the count continues. I think this continues to basically reaffirm her leadership. And it'll be interesting. What are your thoughts about her going into this next congress given that she's going to have to negotiate with McConnell between the house and the senate?

Heath Brown:

Yeah, don't cross Nancy Pelosi. She's the most effective speaker, in multiple generations as effective as any speaker that one can think of. I think she will continue to play that role. She is a lightning rod but so incredibly effective at in that role as speaker that there's nobody's that is in place to replace her anytime soon. And I think the democrats would be foolish to try to replace Nancy Pelosi as speaker. Her record of success is just too solid for them to look elsewhere. And of course there will be people who put their hand up and try to move to the front of line but I don't see it. I think she is as successful a leader of the democratic party in the house as they've had in a long, long time.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah, any thoughts there, Charles?

Charles Tien:

I think she has a firm grip on her caucus. She was responsive right to the caucus's desires for another stimulus at the end. She worked hard with Mnuchin to try to get a stimulus passed maybe that was more for show but I think she was driven to the bargaining table by her caucus at least by the first term freshmen who felt that they needed something when they went back to the district's campaign. And so she did the best that she could for them and you're right. She is going to have to the bargain with McConnell. And this time though, she'll have a partner in Joe Biden. So she may have better luck bargaining with McConnell with Biden as president. But who knows?

Charles Tien:

Trump wasn't much of a presence I don't think in negotiations with the hill. And so he sent his surrogates up to do that work and I think that's why you didn't see much produce legislatively by Trump. He got his tax cuts and that was about it but mostly out was because he was working with a divided government. And that's what we're going to see with Biden should Biden win and republicans maintain the senate. It's going to be more divided government, more stagnation and it's not another two years of getting things done but another two years of status quo, I think.

Tanya Domi:

So what do you think ... The last question and we're looking at the counts are continuing, what do you expect? There's been announcements about asking for a recount in Wisconsin and the count will continue in Pennsylvania. And probably they should have it done within the next day or so. How do you think the rest of this week looks? What are your thoughts about that, Heath?

Heath Brown:

I think they they will play out in the way that all these election officials have indicated they will. I think they have been pretty forthright in explaining in a state by state, in a county by county level when they expect to have the various final counts done. And I think the same thing will happen with potential challenges in the court. I do think that Donald Trump has strongly overplayed his hand thinking that the supreme court is there to bail him out. I don't think this is going to end up in the supreme court but I think that his view of politics, which is skewed in so many ways in such a peculiar way in which he sees Washington working has convinced him of something that is truly a mirage and it's just not going to happen.

Heath Brown:

I don't think the supreme court has any interest in getting involved in this election. I don't think they have any interest in hearing the type of case that Donald Trump imagines them welcoming that would tip the scales in their favor, which is not to say that there isn't some possibility that it winds its way and ends up at the supreme court in some aspect of this. But his rhetoric and his vision for how the supreme court will play a part in this I think is foolish. The supreme court would not play along with any of that in the way that I imagine he imagined 2000 working.

Heath Brown:

I don't think this is how this election is going to play out. I think that there will be challenges in the courts and based on what we see in Wisconsin, those aren't going to go very far. These recounts don't generate that much of a vote change. They have it in the past. I think it's unlikely they will this year and so I think this is going to play out slowly but somewhat predictably over the next, let's say a week to 10 days.

Charles Tien:

I hope so. I breathe a huge sigh of relief when I saw Wisconsin and Michigan earlier today with Joe Biden leads, not because of my partisan leanings but because what that meant is that the Trump supporters would want the county counting of ballots to continue. My greatest fear was that with Trump in the lead by slight margins in those states, he would call on those his supporters like he was doing last night to essentially stop the counting. And so I was fearful of vote suppression or the stopping of counting by republican activists charging into ballot counting sites like they did in Florida in 2000.

Charles Tien:

And so that's not going to happen I don't think, but hopefully for the rest of the week, there's peaceful counting of the results and both parties agree that the outcome was determined fair and square. And hopefully we have one side conceding. That's best case scenario.

Tanya Domi:

Best case scenario.

Charles Tien:

Worst case scenario is it's close and nobody has 270 electoral college votes yet. And you have a contested count in one of those states maybe and you have a court challenge to invalidate some votes and then you have a challenge of the seating of the electoral college.

Tanya Domi:

The calendar, yeah.

Charles Tien:

Yeah. And state legislatures to make the final determination in which electors are seated. So I think in Michigan, I think in Wisconsin and I think in Pennsylvania you have a republican-controlled state legislature.

Tanya Domi:

That's right. You have democratic governors but you have-

Charles Tien:

Right, democratic governors and republican state legislatures. The constitution says the state legislatures determine who the electors are. And they don't have to pay heed to the popular vote counts. So if the popular vote is contentious, disputed, you could have republican legislatures saying the electors in this state are going to be for Trump. And when you have that scenario play out, that'll be longer than a week probably but then I think the rules also require that the democrat ... I'm not, sorry.

The governor in this case, a democratic governor has to validate the electoral votes and send them to the congress. And so maybe you get two sets of electoral votes from one of these states.

Charles Tien:

So this is wild worst case scenarios. And then the process plays out in congress right because then as you know, the house determines who the president is. And you could have a challenging of the electoral votes in congress also on January 6. So you could have if one senator and one house member challenges any of the state's electoral votes, both of those chambers then have to investigate and make a determination. And if the house is controlled by democrats and the senate is controlled by republicans, you could have different outcomes in terms of which ballots are counted. So then it gets kind of interesting.

Tanya Domi:

Well, I hope they're all exhausted by the elections but nonetheless, thank you so much for coming today, the day after this election that's holding the whole country on the edge of their seat. So I want to thank both of you, Heath Brown and Charles Tien.

Heath Brown:

Yeah. So thank you so much. I can't believe we've gotten through this whole conversation and haven't talked about a former CUNY president losing an election last night. Donna Shalala lost her race in in Miami.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, sorry. Thanks for bringing that up.

Heath Brown:

No, and I predict Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are ultimately successful. She will be named appointed secretary of Health and Human Services-

Charles Tien:

Human services like she was before.

Heath Brown:

Coming back into her job that she held 25 years ago just like Donald Rumsfeld had a break in his positions by 25 odd years. Donna Shalala will do the same and so she will be back in Washington, back in the executive branch if all those things happen. So that's my prediction.

Charles Tien:

Brown, thanks for that. I did not know. You get the last word. Thanks for tuning in to the Thought Project and thanks to our guests Professor Heath Brown of John Jay College and Charles tan of Hunter College, both distinguished faculty at the Graduate Center.

Charles Tien:

This transcript was exported on Nov 05, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

The Thought Project is brought to you with production, engineering, and technical assistance by Kevin Wolf of CUNY TV. I'm Tanya Domi. Tune in next week.