

LES RÉPUBLICAINS UNDER 5%: THE SHIPWRECK OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENTAL RIGHT

Posted on April 17, 2022



The key to the survival of the main party of the French governmental right used to be political, now it is financial.

Category: [NEWS](#)

Tags: [election](#), [France](#), [Les Républicains](#), [Valérie Pécresse](#)

In five years, Emmanuel Macron will have achieved a double performance: ending the Socialist Party, and then ending the Les Républicains party.

In the 2017 presidential election, the Socialist Party got only 6.36%. The bulk of the voters of this traditional formation of the French left, refounded by François Mitterrand at the Epinal Congress in 1971, had gone to the candidate Emmanuel Macron, a former minister of Socialist President François Hollande. The party of the governmental right, Les Républicains, were resistant and backed the candidate François Fillon, who had then received 20.01% of the vote.

The 2022 presidential election leads this time to the end of Les Républicains, since the candidate Valérie Pécresse only received 4.78% of the vote, which is less than enough to obtain reimbursement of campaign expenses by the state. The Socialist Party, for its part, sinks definitively with Anne Hidalgo, who received less than 2% of the vote.

The analyses of the vote transfers are enlightening to understand how things happened. Most of François Fillon's voters turned to Emmanuel Macron, and only a handful of them chose Éric Zemmour or Marine Le Pen. This transfer of votes can easily be explained by the fact that candidate Valérie Pécresse never succeeded in imposing the idea that she had a truly alternative programme to that of Emmanuel Macron's liberal and progressive centrism. Voters seduced by this segment naturally went to the one who embodied it most effectively.

Considering Les Républicains, their doom is foreseeable. The result obtained, under 5%, only allows the party a budget of €800,000—for a campaign that cost €15 million: a "major party" campaign, which therefore cost a lot of money, just below the maximum authorised ceiling, which is €16.8 million. On Monday, April 11th, the day after the election, she launched an appeal for donations. "The financial situation of my campaign is now critical," she explained to the press. "We have not reached the 5% that would allow us to get the €7 million from the state that we expected. Les Républicains cannot meet these expenses." She insisted: "I am personally in debt to the tune of €5 million." "I need your urgent help between now and May 15th to cover my campaign costs. The survival of Les Républicains is at stake," she concluded.

For the moment, her calls for help have not had the desired effect. Valérie Pécresse was the one who had the largest personal assets at the time of the declaration of assets to which all election candidates are subject. She's thus subject to mockery. Communist candidate Philippe Poutou offered to lend his Peugeot 308 to Valérie Pécresse for a while, while Jean Lassalle—who got 3.1% of the vote—staged himself writing a cheque for Les Républicains and quoting the poet La Fontaine in "The Lion and the Rat:" "One often needs someone smaller than oneself." An influx of cheques for €0 was recorded at Les Républicains headquarters, a stinging disavowal of the candidate and of the entire party.

The legislative elections are due to be held on June 12th and 19th. The task is therefore particularly difficult for Les Républicains. They have to present candidates in as many constituencies as possible, as the financing of political parties in France is based on the results obtained in the first round of legislative elections. But how will this be possible if the coffers are empty?

The key to the survival of the main party of the governmental right used to be political, now it is financial. Yes, this is not the first time that the party has been in trouble. Following the invalidation of his campaign accounts in 2012, Nicolas Sarkozy also had to call on his supporters to help him repay his debts—to the tune of €11 million. But Valérie Pécresse does not have the power to convince people that Nicolas Sarkozy had—after all, he had been elected.

Valérie Pécresse's two competitors on the right, Éric Zemmour and Marine Le Pen, will both have their expenses reimbursed.