

# Democrats' Rage Is Misplaced

March 31, 2026

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In case you haven't heard, Democrats are angry. It seems that the Democratic base believes its party leaders and members of Congress have not sufficiently stood up to President Trump, that the party needs generational change, pushing aside older candidates and elected officials, and finally, that the party needs to run more "authentic" candidates, particularly those projecting a working-class persona.

As for the generational change, it is already happening at about as fast a pace as American politics moves. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who turned 86 last week, and former Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, who is almost a year older, are retiring at the end of this Congress. On the Senate Democratic side, Minority Whip Dick Durbin is also retiring, and few believe that Minority Leader Chuck Schumer will stick around past 2028, when his current term expires.

This [column noted last week](#) that the 2028 presidential election will be the first since 1964 without a Nixon, Dole, Bush, Biden, Clinton, or Trump on a major-party ticket, and that 2024 was only the second since 1948 without a member of either the Silent or Greatest Generations on a major-party ticket. Nobody could stop this generational change if they wanted to, although if Democrats were really serious, they would adopt term limits for House Democrats as committee and subcommittee chairs and ranking members, as Republicans did in 1992, which explains the more regular flow of new blood into their ranks. Once GOP members lose their gavels, few choose to stick around.

That Democrats are angry should not be surprising, but is the focus of that wrath misdirected?

Democrats did not seem particularly concerned in the first year of Joe Biden's presidency, when his job-approval rating plummeted 14 points, from 56 percent in June 2021 to 42 percent in October, [never to exceed 46 percent again](#). And with that decline in public standing, as Biden's age and limitations started becoming even more obvious, Democrats in both the grassroots and leadership didn't seem that

agitated in April 2023 when Biden announced he would seek a second presidential term.

Some prominent Democrats such as James Carville and David Axelrod told “truth to power,” saying that Biden should not be running again. But from the Democratic base, we heard crickets. Even after his disastrous June 27, 2024, debate, the response from the base was cautious. It took three weeks for Biden to step away—only after Pelosi all but hit Biden in the head with a baseball bat. After the party passed the baton to Kamala Harris, most in the party were relieved, many even elated.

No, the Democratic base didn’t seem to get angry until after the election, after they not only lost the presidency to Donald Trump for the second time, but also suffered a net loss of four seats and control of the Senate and came up short of retaking the House. The progressive world’s “hopium” dealers, pretending that everything was copacetic, had not prepared the Democratic base for such an outcome. No one seemed to acknowledge or even notice that the emperor was riding in his carriage through the town naked.

But then opinion swung to the opposite extreme—holding that the election had been a resounding defeat for Democrats, with Trump even calling it a landslide. In reality, the presidential race was close, with a 1.5-point margin nationally. Going into the election, the [New York Times average](#) of presidential race polls in six of seven swing states showed the leading candidate at 49 percent and the trailing candidate at 48 percent. When the votes were counted, Trump had 50.8 percent or less in six states, with Harris at 47.5 percent in the same six. In Arizona, the seventh state, Trump won by 52.1 percent to 46.5 percent. The undecided votes broke toward Trump. Game, set, match.

Democrats did lose four seats in the Senate, three of them in the ruby-red states of Montana, Ohio, and West Virginia. Two of the losing incumbents, Sherrod Brown in Ohio and Jon Tester in Montana, were the last remaining Democrats holding statewide offices in their respective states, as was West Virginia’s Joe Manchin, who opted not to run for reelection. In the five swing states with Senate elections, Democrats won four (Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, and Wisconsin), losing only in Pennsylvania, where Dave McCormick unseated Bob Casey in what turned out to be the closest Senate result in the country. In the House, Democrats gained two seats. It was a disappointment, but not a loss.

What Democrats should be mad about is that they had all of the power, then blew it. Five years ago today, Democrats held the White House and a 52-48 seat majority in the U.S. Senate, along with a four-seat majority in the House. Today they have nothing, standing outside the White House fence looking in, with just 47 seats in the Senate (counting independent Sens. Angus King and Bernie Sanders as Democrats) and three seats down in the House.

But instead of trying to figure out how they lost power, how they enabled Trump to get back into office, Democrats aren't thinking about the underlying positions and policies that expedited their eviction from power. They didn't seem to notice inflation soaring as soon as the American Rescue Plan Act checks began hitting mailboxes and bank accounts, followed by interest rates being hiked to try to subdue inflation that had been largely dormant for four decades.

The rate for a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage had been 2.8 percent when Biden took office, but it climbed to more than 6 percent by the end of his second year in office, then to 7.4 percent by the time he left office, and it has [not dropped below 6 percent since](#), making home-buying impossible for many, particularly younger Americans.

A 48-month auto-loan rate was 5.1 percent when Biden took office, it was 8 percent when he left office, and it is around [7.5 percent today](#). The interest rate for credit cards averaged 14.75 percent when he took office and 21.37 percent when he left office, and it [remains around 21 percent](#). If Democrats want to get mad, maybe they should be mad at themselves for blowing it.

As for the working-class appeal, there is more to winning elections and attracting swing voters than having candidates wear L.L. Bean work boots and Carhartt apparel on the campaign trail. They ought to find authentic candidates who have successfully run for office before, and some who will make the campaign about something other than themselves.

Swing voters in 2024 were not voting to bulldoze the East Wing, decimate the vaccine regimen, take out the leader of Venezuela, bomb Iran, send immigration agents running amok in communities across the country, or take a chainsaw to federal programs. I doubt if many were thinking about renaming the Kennedy Center or minting coins with Trump's picture or adding his signature to dollar bills. They just wanted things to go back to normal. Actions have consequences, but some elements of the Democratic Party want to point fingers rather than look in the mirror.

*This article was originally published for the National Journal on March 30, 2026.*