

Covering the 2026 Campaigns (Part 8)

The Democratic Party

By

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Democratic Party History

"The Democratic Party is the oldest political party in the United States and among the oldest political parties in the world. It traces its roots to 1792, when followers of Thomas Jefferson adopted the name Republican to emphasize their anti-monarchical views. The Republican Party, also known as the Jeffersonian Republicans, advocated a decentralized government with limited powers. Another faction to emerge in the early years of the republic, the Federalist Party, led by Alexander Hamilton, favored a strong central government. Jefferson's faction developed from the group of Anti-Federalists who had agitated in favor of the addition of a Bill of Rights to the Constitution of the United States. The Federalists called Jefferson's faction the Democratic-Republican Party in an attempt to identify it with the disorder spawned by the "radical democrats" of the French Revolution of 1789. After the Federalist John Adams was elected president in 1796, the Republican Party served as the country's first opposition party, and in 1798 the

Republicans adopted the derisive Democratic-Republican label as their official name.

From 1828 to 1856 the Democrats won all but two presidential elections (1840 and 1848). During the 1840s and ’50s, however, the Democratic Party, as it officially named itself in 1844, suffered serious internal strains over the issue of extending slavery to the Western territories. Southern Democrats, led by Jefferson Davis, wanted to allow slavery in all the territories, while Northern Democrats, led by Stephen A. Douglas, proposed that each territory should decide the question for itself through referendum. The issue split the Democrats at their 1860 presidential convention, where Southern Democrats nominated John C. Breckinridge and Northern Democrats nominated Douglas. The 1860 election also included John Bell, the nominee of the Constitutional Union Party, and Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the newly established (1854) antislavery Republican Party (which was unrelated to Jefferson’s Republican Party of decades earlier). With the Democrats hopelessly

> split, Lincoln was elected president with only about 40 percent of the national vote; in contrast, Douglas and Breckinridge won 29 percent and 18 percent of the vote, respectively." Britannica

That's a brief history of the Democratic Party. You can read the entire Britannica article to learn more about the party. It has continued to be one of the most powerful and influential political parties in the United States during the past century.

[As a reminder, I am and always have been a political independent. That used to be a requirement for journalists when I began my career in the 1960's. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. Too many journalists wear their political leanings proudly, which casts serious doubt on their ability to cover elections fairly and accurately. No wonder trust in journalism is at its lowest point in Gallup's polling history (which began in 1972.).]

Covering Democrats

I recommend that journalists do their homework before interviewing candidates from any particular political party. You can find a lot of good information on party websites, in addition to talking with elected officials and party candidates.

Here are some of the top priorities of the current Democratic Party — in their own words:

- Democrats believe that every American deserves a fair shot at the American dream
- We're focused on lowering costs, improving healthcare, creating jobs, ending corruption, and protecting our democracy
- We will strengthen Medicare and Medicaid that have made tens of millions of lives better, instead of constantly threatening to shred their benefits like Republicans have done
- Trump's chaotic trade wars, his war of choice in Iran, and his disastrous policies have blown up the economy,

while wages fall behind and Americans struggle to find good jobs

- Democrats are fighting to bring an end to Republican chaos and incompetence, ensuring that Americans can comfortably cover their everyday expenses
- Republicans care more about billionaires and foreign investors than they do working Americans
- They're rigging the tax system so that corporations pay less than working people
- Democrats will make the rich pay their fair share
- We will go after corporations for price gouging and protect Americans from being nickled and dimed by unfair fees
- Donald Trump, his family, and his closest allies are openly getting rich off the presidency and selling America off to the highest bidder, while pardoning and protecting criminals
- While Democrats keep fighting to lower costs for working families, Trump is rigging our economy for his Mar-a-Lago friends and billionaire donors, who like him, are only in it for themselves

- Democrats are working to strengthen the justice system so that every person is treated fairly and equally, and that no one – no matter how wealthy or well-connected – is above the law
- As president, Trump doubled down on the trickle-down policies of the past, cutting investment in infrastructure and education, and rewarding big corporations that ship jobs and profits overseas. He vowed to bring new factories to communities across America, but left nothing behind but a string of broken promises
- Democrats are fighting to protect American democracy
- We believe in free and fair elections and equal representation for all
- As Republicans redraw electoral maps to rig elections, Democrats are countering the gerrymandering to even the playing field
- Republicans have turned their backs on their constituents, and know that they can't win without suppressing the vote
- Democrats believe that every state, district, and community in America should be able to pick elected officials who truly represent them

- We are working to protect and strengthen the Voting Rights Act and break down the barriers Republicans have created for Americans to exercise their constitutional right to vote
- No president in the modern era has ordered more military strikes against as many different countries as Donald Trump
- On Trump's watch, American troops are dying, hundreds are getting injured, and veterans have lost access to the care and support they need
- While our troops die overseas, Americans at home are terrorized and killed on the streets by Trump's masked federal agents with impunity
- Democrats have a deep respect for American servicemembers and veterans, and believe they deserve better both while they're on duty and when they return home
- Republicans have sought to ban abortion and restrict reproductive healthcare for women
- Democrats are fighting to restore the protections enshrined in Roe and ensure that the right to choose is protected for every woman in America

- Democrats believe we need to call out the spread of false information that creates chaos and sows division in an information environment dominated by social media news and AI
- Democrats will put competent professionals at the helm of critical national security agencies like the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Justice
- We believe in secure borders, common-sense immigration laws, and fair enforcement
- We also believe in the humanity and dignity of every person
- Federal agents should not be able to take over your city, target children, or kill innocent people in the streets
- We will continue upholding the rule of law while enacting effective programs for crime reduction
- Democrats are dedicated to reducing gun violence and investing in public safety
- Americans deserve to live in a country they can afford, where if they work hard, they can get ahead

- We believe in keeping the American Dream alive – whether you're trying to afford college tuition, open a small business, or start a family
- Democrats are running on the promise that this future is possible, and it's our commitment to the communities who elect us to represent them

Democratic Party At Odds?

Two of the most powerful groups within the Democratic Party are the New Democrat Coalition (NDC) and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The NDC is viewed as a center-left caucus within the U.S. House of Representatives currently comprising 115 members. They view themselves as a 'solutions-oriented' group and desire to win back swing voters using more moderate positions that emphasize lowering costs (e.g. groceries, gas, housing), taxing the rich, and putting caps on utility prices.

- Pro-economic growth
- Pro-innovation
- Fiscally responsible policies

I wrote about the DSA in the previous newsletter, so you can click on this link to read specifics about what they would like the Democratic Party to become and do. Many in the NDC caucus view DSA members as too radical.

“Moderate Democrats looking for their party to take back control of the U.S. House in November are offering an alternative to the economic populism message peddled by their more liberal counterparts.

A new blueprint from the center-left New Democrat Coalition, shared exclusively with CNBC, lays out a road map for addressing affordability — top on voters’ minds — without splashy populist promises.

“Buzzy sounds good in a sound bite, but you often end up with unintended consequences or unworkable solutions,” New Democrat Coalition Chair Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Ill., said in an interview. “We’re hearing people saying they are frustrated with the bombast, but also the hollow promises, and they want to see their government coming up with thoughtful solutions.”

The new plan underscores a tug-of-war within the Democratic Party over its economic message ahead of the pivotal November elections, which could return the party to power after President Donald Trump and

his Republicans swept the 2024 elections. And with Trump's polling on the economy plummeting, picking a winning strategy could be the difference between making the president a lame duck and spending two more years in the political wilderness.

The New Democrats argue Americans want a more moderate approach that bridges the gap between big business and the average voter.

"I reject the idea that business is bad," said Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., one of the plan's authors. "This is a set of solutions, tangible, practical, doable solutions, and an answer to 'what are you going to do when you're in charge?'" CNBC

I think this final statement by New Democrats in the CNBC article is insightful as the Democratic Party looks for ways to bring everyone together on the points of most interest to the voting public:

> "The New Democrats, who count 115 U.S. representatives as members, insist their road map is not in conflict with their progressive counterparts.
>
> "I think this is an agenda that can and should unite our caucuses across both chambers and across the ideological spectrum," said Rep. Sarah McBride, D-Del., a member of both the New Democrat Coalition and the House progressive caucus. "The American people don't discriminate between progressive versus moderate; they're looking for solutions that are relevant to them." CNBC

You can read the complete NDC Policy Priorities document here.

AI Statement

I've been writing professionally since the 1960's — long before Artificial Intelligence was a 'thing' that might concern readers. However, since it has now become a 'thing,' let me assure you that I do not use AI to write any of my Substack or blog articles. I research material the old-fashioned way. I study the topic, confirm what I find from multiple reliable sources (usually at least 3-5 independent sources — known as 'triangulation' in the world of journalism), then report it while disclosing the sources and sharing quotes from some of the sources.

Substack does offer an image service where the writer can 'generate' an image. I have used that on occasion when appropriate and identified the image as AI Generated. I have also found a few AI charts that I confirmed as accurate and used them as well. I also identify them as AI Generated. If I ever share a direct 'quote' from AI (which is rare), I will also identify the quote as AI Generated. Otherwise, what you read on my Substack articles (and blog articles) is my personal

way of communicating — something I've done for almost 60 years. Hope that helps explain how I view and use AI.

Next Time

I'll look at the platform of the Republican Party as our series about *Covering the 2028 Campaigns* continues.



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