

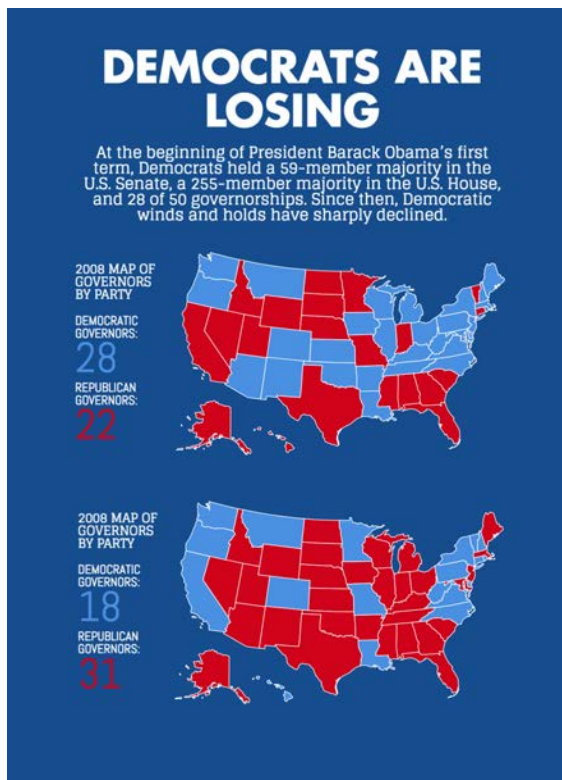


OPEN THE

BIG TENT

MAKE ROOM FOR
PRO-LIFE DEMOCRATS
AND ACHIEVE PARTY
GOALS NATIONWIDE

#OPENTHEBIGTENT



Gut Check: How Healthy is the Democratic Party?

At the beginning of President Barack Obama's first term, Democrats held a 59-member majority in the U.S. Senate, a 255-member majority in the U.S. House, and 28 of 50 governorships.

Today, Democrats hold just 48 seats in the U.S. Senate and 193 seats in the U.S. House, and **Republicans have unified control of the government (the presidency and both houses of Congress) for only the second time since 1954.** Democrat Harry Truman was the president from 1945 until 1953. Republican President Dwight Eisenhower had a Republican majority from 1953 until

1954. Democrats won control of the U.S. House in 1954 and kept it forty years.

The numbers are even worse at the state level, where a catastrophe has occurred: Democrats have lost a staggering 947 state legislative seats since 2008.

Furthermore, consider that **25 states—half the states in the country—are under total Republican control**, compared with only six states under *total* Democratic control. In 32 states, Republicans control both chambers.. In 2 states with a Democratic governor, Republicans hold a veto-override majority.

Republicans also control 68 of 99 state legislative chambers. In addition to eliminating any opportunity for Democratic Party initiatives to be advanced, this means that Republicans will control the redistricting of state and federal seats in 2020 and that Democrats will continue not to have the resources to develop new candidates.

In five states, Democrats are just a few seats away from losing the state legislatures. A shift of five seats in the Colorado State House of Representatives, one seat in the Connecticut State Senate, four seats in the Connecticut State House of Representatives, three seats in the Maine State House of Representatives, and three seats in the Alaska State House of Representatives

would give Republicans unified control over state legislatures in three-fourths of the states. This would give Republicans the power to ratify amendments to the United States Constitution.

In the South, where Democrats do not hold a single legislative chamber after losing the Kentucky State House in 2016, our party struggles merely to remain relevant, much less to compete with Republican super-majorities in many states. “We’re not even a national party at this point,” Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, said last month as he made a failed run at the House minority leader position. “We have some support on the coasts, but we’ve lost the support of middle America, and we’ve got to make some changes. So I’m pulling the fire alarm here, because the house is on fire.”

In *Politico Magazine*, University of Virginia Professor Larry Sabato recognized a similar trend, with a grim diagnosis:

“That increased power [of Republicans] at the state level has already led to serious consequences for Democrats, for their political future and for their goals.”

Prominent among our goals as the Democratic Party is making our political, economic, and legal systems fairer for the middle class and more humane for people who are vulnerable or in need. Republicans in power do not share this fundamental Democratic goal.

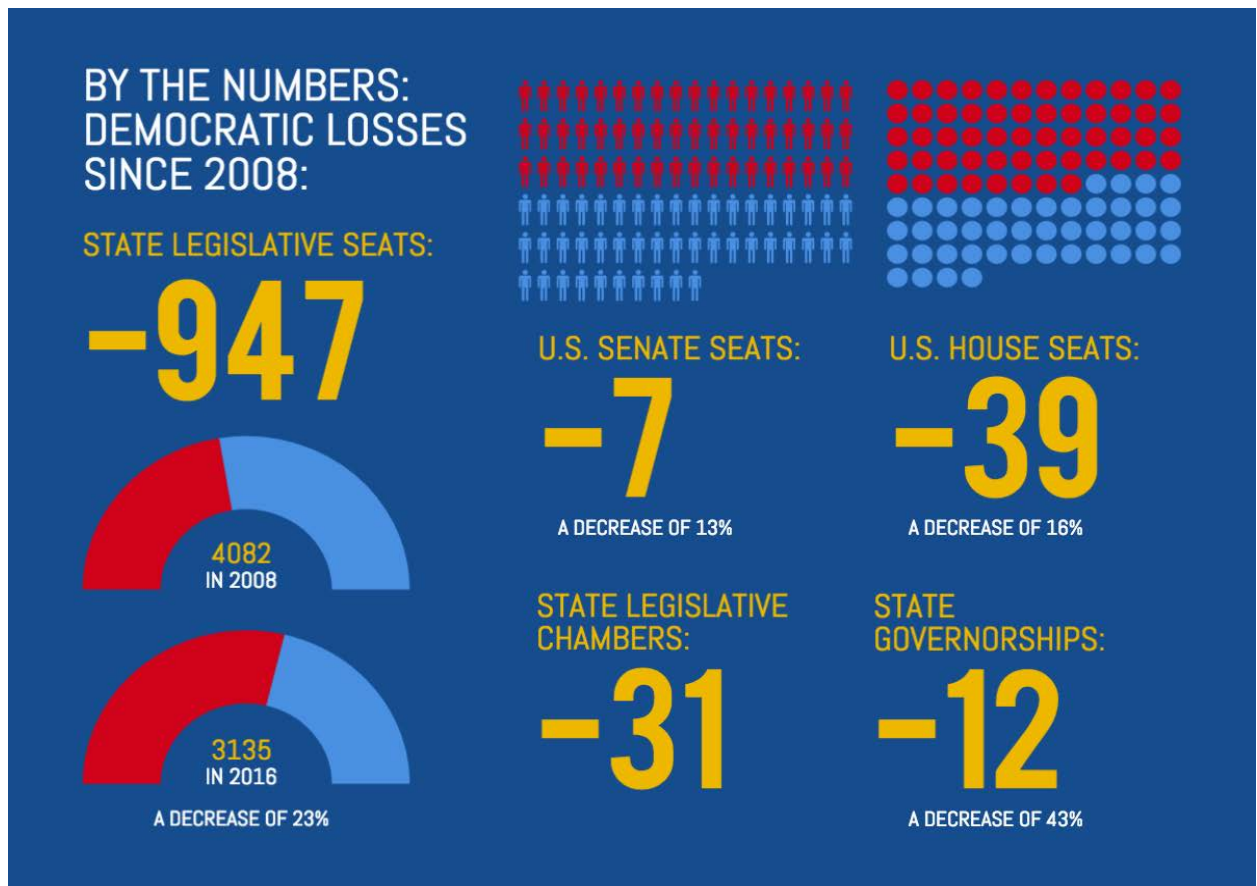
For example, in Alabama, the Republican majority has:

- caused a budget crisis resulting in deep cuts to services, including an already-underfunded Medicaid program in a state where 500,000 residents are living without health insurance;
- hastily passed a bill that prohibits cities, counties, and municipalities from establishing their own minimum wages;
- denied funding to the Alabama Housing Trust Fund, which provides housing solutions to the state’s homeless people; and
- increased the number of failing schools to 76, an increase of 10 from 2015.

A similar situation has developed in Kansas, where the Republican majority has:

- caused Kansas to drop from 13th to 41st in personal income growth;
- forced some school districts to close early due to lack of funding;
- limited the time a family can receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits to 24 months, even though this policy has proven to save no money but has **allowed Kansas to become the only state with rising rates of uninsured residents.**

In late 2015, Matt Yglesias of *Vox.com* outlined just how bad Democratic losses across the country have been:



“The presidency is extremely important, of course. But there are also thousands of critically important offices all the way down the ballot. And the vast majority—70% of state legislatures, 60% of governors, 55% of attorneys general and secretaries of state—are in Republican hands.”

Yglesias went on to say, *“The truly striking thing is how close to bottom the party is already and how blind it seems to be to that fact.”*

Yglesias’s words are even truer after the 2016 election with the loss of the presidency. Democrats are losing ground, and a new strategy is necessary to regain our footing and start winning again. We simply cannot allow the unpopularity of Donald Trump’s presidency to distract us from the larger trend taking place around the country.

Although Democrats were more competitive in the suburbs in 2016 than they were in 2012, we lost massive ground in rural areas in states such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, and Michigan that

used to support pro-life Democrats, including Kathy Dahlkemper, Steve Driehaus, and Bart Stupak. It was the dramatic shift of votes from Democrats to Republicans in places such as central Pennsylvania, upper Michigan, and Minnesota's Iron Range that elected Donald Trump to the presidency.

Local governments have also seen dramatic gains for the Republicans and dramatic losses for the Democrats. Many state legislatures are part-time and meet only once or twice every two years. In the interim, local governments are responsible for such things as administering food banks, running public hospitals, providing for public safety, and running public education systems. Democratic losses at the local level impede the delivery of public services that address poverty and grow our economy.

FACT: We have lost hundreds of races, dropping the Democratic Party to its lowest numbers since the Hoover Administration (in 1928)!

Where We've Been—Great Days in 2006 and 2008

Between 2006 and 2008, the Democratic Party secured a historic sweep of the White House and both chambers of Congress, along with major, widespread victories at the state level. How did we do it?

As the chairman of the Democratic National Committee at the time, Howard Dean was openly and unapologetically pro-choice. Yet he understood what it took to win and established a 50 State Strategy to build the infrastructure for the historic Obama majority that allowed Democrats to pass, among other things, the Affordable Care Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. This strategy identified candidates who could win in purple districts, and many of these areas had a strong pro-life presence.

Howard Dean spoke of the strategy:

"Where we really made a big difference was in states like Nebraska, where Obama won an electoral vote in 2008. He had a real party to work with... overall, Democrats either improved their results in the reddest states between 2005 and 2009 or, at worst, suffered only minor setbacks, which, given the obstacles the party faced in these solidly Republican states, was almost a victory in its own right."

John Dilulio, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a former director of the White House Office of Faith-Based Programs, observed in 2007:

“There’s no way you would have had the success they had if they hadn’t fielded [pro-life and pro-family] candidates.”

Howard Dean was not alone in promoting a Big Tent strategy. In their book, *Take it Back*, James Carville and Paul Begala laid out a solid strategy for Democrats to start winning again after devastating losses in 2000 and 2004. They devoted an entire chapter to the issue of abortion. Their advice was sage then, and it’s even wiser today. Their first point was that Democrats must:

- ✓ **Be the Big Tent party:** Carville and Begala wrote, “You can be a good Democrat and be pro-life or pro-choice on abortion.” The party has moved away from this belief, going as far as telling pro-life Democrats that they would not receive support if they did not change their position that they do not belong in the party. The current Democratic Party platform language on abortion reinforces the opinion that pro-life voters are not welcome.

Other points made by Carville and Begala included:

- ✓ **Move to the mainstream:** Taxpayer funding of abortion until the 9th month of pregnancy is not appealing to mainstream America. Voters today prefer a more nuanced position when it comes to abortion. Remember President Clinton’s “safe, legal, and rare?” Even Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee, said not too long ago, “When I say rare, I mean rare.” Carville and Begala wrote that, since an overwhelming majority of Americans support restrictions on abortion, the party should “understand and respect their values” or the party will “risk losing the war they ought to win.” By taking the extreme position on abortion, we are not only losing the battle but also risking total defeat.
- ✓ **Stand up to pressure groups:** The abortion lobby has a stranglehold on the party, and it is costing the party seats. We need to stop pressuring pro-life Democrats to change their position and stop discouraging them from running for office if they don’t. Diversity, inclusion, and acceptance are sources of strength. Let’s be the party for all Democrats and stop letting the abortion industry define what it means to be a Democrat.
- ✓ **Agree that the goal should be to reduce abortion:** We say it, but we don’t mean it. We should strive for a day when there are no financial or societal barriers to bringing a pregnancy, planned or unplanned, to term. The current focus on making abortion the necessary force for power and freedom for women

discounts the experiences of people who have suffered from abortion. We must recognize that abortion is, for most women, not an act of celebration but a heart-wrenching decision.

The 2006 strategy was successful. The pro-life Democratic victors included, among others: Heath Shuler (NC), Steve Driehaus (OH), Charlie Wilson (OH), Kathy Dahlkemper (PA), Joe Donnelly (IN), and Brad Ellsworth (IN) in the House and Bob Casey, Jr. (PA) in the Senate, and Democrats took both the House and the Senate back from Republicans.

Forty years ago, we had a 292-seat majority in the House, with 125 Democrats who were pro-life. Today there are only a handful of Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives who are pro-life, and we hold only 193 seats.

Democratic candidates racked up successes back then despite the difficult political terrain. However, after the 50 State Strategy was discontinued, Democratic success rates took a plunge. Democrats once again lost the majority in the U.S. House, where sustaining the majority is impossible without electing pro-life Democrats, as the total number of pro-choice Democrats has remained around 180 for the past 40 years. And now those legislative achievements from the Obama Administration – the Affordable Care Act, equal pay, climate policy, and more – are under assault by President Trump. So what is the obvious conclusion?

Winning in the purple districts and running moderate and pro-life Democrats are critical to regaining a Democratic majority in Congress!

In this chart, one trend stands out above all else: The number of pro-choice Democrats has remained relatively flat over time, **while the decline in total numbers of Democrats in the House is highly correlated with the decline in numbers of pro-life Democrats.**

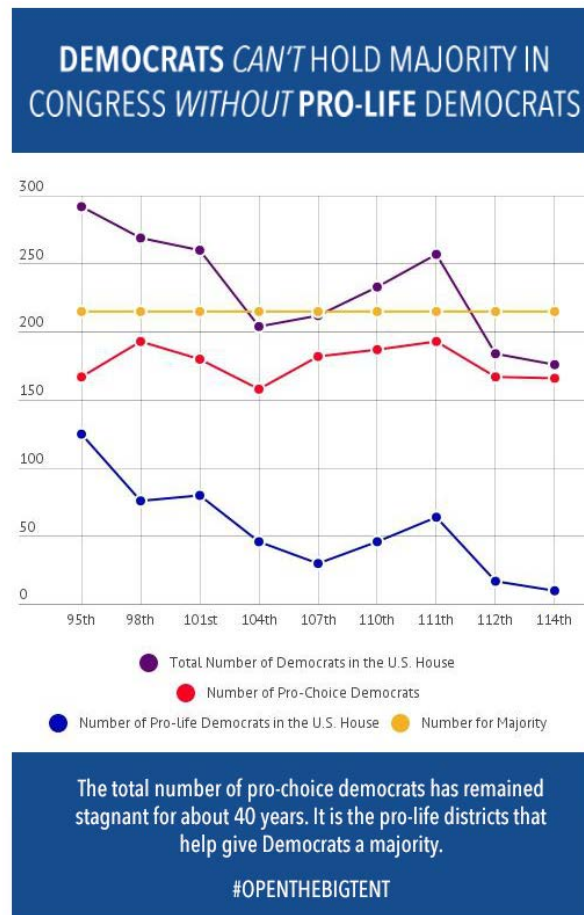
What this means is that the Democratic Party has maxed out its pro-choice representatives; if we want to retake the House, we must elect pro-life Democrats.

Some political observers think that, based on historical trends, Democrats will be poised to make gains in Congress in 2018 due to President Trump's unpopularity. While this may be likely, Democrats can realize only limited gains if they continue on their current trajectory. Democrats are defending a Senate map with eight senators running for re-election in states Trump won, and the inefficient distribution of Democratic voters in major urban areas means that Democrats will *have* to win rural voters if they are to have a chance of taking back the House. Furthermore, Democrats will have to improve their performance in places such as central Pennsylvania and upper Michigan in order to defeat President Donald Trump in 2020.

But to appeal to these voters, Democrats *must* moderate their tone on abortion! Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson, a moderate, pro-life Democrat who was re-elected in a district that Trump carried by 31 points in 2016, is a model of how Democrats can win in rural areas. Peterson told the *Washington Post* that his constituents “have a different view of the world than people do in these urban centers. They have a different lifestyle, and they don't want to change it. They're happy with the way things are. It's causing the party political problems.”

What do most Americans think about abortion?

It is really important to understand where Americans stand on abortion in order to appreciate our call for inclusion. Although many Americans do not want abortion to be completely illegal, most of the country wants more restrictions on legal abortion than currently exist. Most Americans do not celebrate abortion, nor do they wear “I love abortion” t-shirts. Nevertheless, on the issue of abortion, the Democratic Party is as extremist and radical as the Republican Party is on issues of economic justice.



Americans agree that abortion is a difficult decision. Thus they support reasonable regulation of abortion, including prohibiting abortion after 20 weeks. America's abortion policy is quite lax. The United States is one of only seven nations in the world that still allow late-term abortions. Most European countries ban abortion after 12 weeks.

At the same time, only 37 percent of Millennials think that abortion is morally acceptable (Public Religion Research Institution, 2012), while 54 percent of Latino Millennials think that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. African Americans and Muslim Americans also are strongly skeptical of abortion.

The solution: Open the Big Tent!

The percentage of pro-life voters is higher than average in the Midwest, in swing states, and in rural areas (Pew Research, 2013). These are areas where Democrats are losing seats. Therefore, the ability to win outside the nation's largest urban cores by appealing to independent and single-issue pro-life voters is critical to winning back Congress, governorships, and state legislatures.

The statistics back up this view. Many Americans of all stripes, including Democrats and minorities, identify as pro-life:

- 47% of Americans identify as pro-choice, 46% as pro-life (Gallup.com, May 2016).
- 32% of Democrats and 50% of Independents identify as pro-life (Gallup.com, May 2015).
- Single-issue pro-life voters outnumber single-issue pro-choice voters by 23% to 19% (Gallup.com, May 2015).
- 54% of Hispanic Millennials (18-35-year-olds) are pro-life (Public Religion Research, 2015).

And even more Americans, including Democrats, have moral objections to abortion:

- 60% of Americans say that abortion is morally wrong (Marist, 2016).
- 51% of African Americans view abortion as morally wrong (Pew, 2015).
- 33% of Democrats think that abortion is morally wrong, and another 19% are unsure.

As a result, most Americans support reasonable regulations and limits on abortion:

- 81% of Americans, including 66% of pro-choice Americans, believe that abortion should not be allowed after the first trimester (Marist Poll, 2016).
- 69% of Americans think that abortion should be legal only in certain circumstances or illegal in all cases (Gallup.com, May 2016).
- A Marist poll found that a large majority of Americans believe that the law can protect both a mother and her prenatal baby.

Americans do not want to fund abortion with taxpayers' money:

- 68% of Americans, including 51% of pro-choice Americans, oppose taxpayer-funded abortion.
- A CNN Poll in 2014 found that 54% of Americans opposed and 39% favored taxpayer funding of abortion, while a 2016 Marist Poll showed 68% opposition; but the current (2016) Democratic Party platform supports repealing the Hyde Amendment, which forbids taxpayer funding of abortion.

Conclusion: Make the Democratic Party Great Again – by including pro-lifers!

Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign adopted the slogan "Stronger Together." But her campaign did not incorporate this philosophy when it came to including pro-lifers or rural Americans inside the Democratic tent. Indeed, we are strongest when we are open to diverse viewpoints and make room at the table for Democrats of every stripe. That is when our party historically has experienced its greatest success. We are not together right now when the Democratic Party platform excludes Democrats who hold mainstream views on regulating abortion.



The GOP has several striking vulnerabilities. Despite the fact that they have won elections recently, only 26 percent of Americans identify as Republicans. Combine this reality with President Donald Trump's unpopularity, the GOP's struggles with racial minorities and younger voters, and the turmoil racking the Trump Administration, and Democrats

have a clear opportunity to win. The recent congressional races in Kansas and Georgia and local elections in Illinois have shown clear GOP vulnerability, and Democrats are trying to capitalize on this for future elections. These are areas where we need to win, but Democrats won't be able to win enough of these seats without running pro-life candidates.

We could seize this opportunity to capitalize on the dissolution of the GOP coalition and rebuild our Democratic Party. A vital part of this effort is to revisit the way we currently address the abortion issue. Therefore, fellow Democrats, let us be smart. Let us adopt a strategy to win across America, not just in big cities and college towns. Let us open the Big Tent. Make room for pro-life Democrats and invite pro-life, progressive independents back to the party to focus on the right to parent and on ways to empower women in crisis or unplanned pregnancies with more choices than only abortion.

One of the crowning achievements of this decade has been the Affordable Care Act, which would not have been passed without a Democratic majority that included several pro-life legislators. Our common goals – to provide paid maternity leave, a living wage, and Medicaid expansion to ensure that everyone has access to health care – can be achieved only with a truly united party and a Democratic majority. Moreover, all these policies will help young families with the economics of pregnancies, whether planned or unplanned.

Democrats simply cannot win if we restrict party membership to people who can pass an “abortion supporter” litmus test. Democrats cannot win without once again being the party of open diversity of opinion, the party of “Come one, come all.”

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