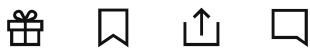


Opinion: Five themes Democrats can focus on to boost their standing

By [Jennifer Rubin](#)

Columnist | [+ Follow](#)

Today at 10:00 a.m. EST



Defeatism abounds in Democratic circles these days.

Many Democrats are down in the dumps about President Biden's poll numbers, fretful about inflation, convinced the House majority is already lost, certain that voting-rights legislation will not get through and, most recently, despondent about the prospect of right-wing partisans at the Supreme Court snatching away the right of women to control their own lives. More sober Democrats realize they have missed the boat in organizing and developing political talent at the local and state level, leaving them at a disadvantage on everything from school board fights to redistricting.

Let's first acknowledge that while Democrats have reasons for concern, so, too, do Republicans. The GOP remains under the thumb of former president Donald Trump, an insurrection instigator and covid-19 superspreader. Crazyies who spew rabid antisemitism and Islamophobia dominate the House Republican caucus, which is led by the weakest minority leader in memory.

Meanwhile, Republicans oppose a raft of popular measures (e.g., affordable insulin, subsidized child care, green energy transition). They are also at odds with a supermajority of voters on abortion (or compelled pregnancy and childbirth, which is what right-wing justices seem to have in mind). Oh, and elected Republicans have spread anti-vaccination conspiracy theories and have resisted mandates, leading potentially to thousands of deaths.

Can Democrats improve their 2022 outlook? Certainly. But they will need to adjust their message in several respects if they want to survive 2022 (and beyond), protect democracy from the authoritarian Republican Party and secure a comfortable governing majority.

Democrats, in addition to finally investing in down-ballot races and grass-roots organizing, would be wise to stick to five basic themes between now and the 2022 midterm elections.

Stress that there is only one pro-democracy party. The White House could use a point person on threats to democracy, and progressives need a unified message to explain the stakes to voters. They should be clear: Republicans want to rig elections and to stop people from voting to keep them out of office. Democrats seem bizarrely averse to making the most unhinged characters on the right the face of the GOP. They should instead focus on their recklessness as Republicans egg on violent elements, disregard election results and play to white supremacists. Democrats must pound this message: "Republicans are a threat to democracy, to law and order and to common courtesy."

Stop the hand-wringing and paint a portrait of “Morning in America.” The economy is improving, vaccines are allowing us to return to normal and a 21st-century plan for shiny new infrastructure will make Americans richer with new high-paying jobs and improve their quality of life (through shorter commutes, policies to address extreme weather, etc.). Naturally, this only works if the economy continues to boom, inflation recedes and the pandemic ceases to be a threat. But citing the progress *toward* this bright future is essential for the party in power.

Follow Jennifer Rubin’s opinions



Present themselves as the party of work and family, and Republicans as defenders of rich tax scofflaws and climate change culprits. Forget “Build Back Better”; it’s “Help Workers Get Rich.” It is not about what Democrats are *giving* people, but what people are able to attain when given a fair shot.

By freeing parents up to work, alleviating the shortage of quality child care, cutting taxes through a fully refundable child tax credit, protecting unions and restoring overtime for gig workers, Democrats are making it easier to be successful as well as cheaper to raise kids. Republicans defend billionaires who pay no taxes; Democrats go after Big Pharma companies that are gouging consumers. (Don’t Democrats know how to play the class warfare card?)

Return to an oldie but goodie from the Clinton presidency: “There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.” Democrats are labeled as surly critics of America who dwell on the “bad stuff.” They could use some patriotic, optimistic rhetoric. It is not enough to highlight systemic racism. In fact, the purpose of looking back is to *figure out what we need to do to make our country better*. Democrats must tell voters how we can reform our institutions (better policing, a fairer justice system, make voting easier and more secure) and restore respect and empathy for one another. Democrats should vow to put an end to vigilantism and political violence (both of which the GOP, the former “law and order” party, have stoked).

Call out the GOP’s war on women. With the likely repudiation of nearly half a century of precedent on abortion, the right-wing Supreme Court majority is poised to revoke a fundamental constitutional right for the first time in history. Republican legislatures and governors stand at the ready to compel women to give birth against their will, an exercise of governmental oppression unthinkable just a few years ago. The Republican Party, in the most basic sense, is therefore refusing to trust and respect women’s choices in the most intimate aspects of their lives. And they are willing to run roughshod over the doctor-patient relationship to enforce their view of “personhood” rooted in a single religious tradition. If voters care about privacy, personal autonomy and limited government, they should not entrust Republicans with power.

By the end of this year, Democrats will likely have nearly completed their immediate legislative agenda with the possible exception of voting rights. (If they haven’t gotten the Build Back Better bill over the finish line by then, they are really in a heap of trouble of their own making.) Unless they repair their disjointed and often off-putting message, voters will not reward them for what will be a remarkably successful legislative year. Moreover, Republican cries of socialism, critical race theory and a stolen election will drown out everything else.

Democrats have powerful rationales for retaining majorities and statewide offices. They simply need to articulate them in accessible ways over and over again.

What CIA officers thought of the presidents they briefed

Opinion • December 2, 2021

Justice Sotomayor drops the S-bomb

Opinion • December 3, 2021

I tried the Elizabeth Holmes schedule, and here is how it went

Opinion • December 3, 2021

View 3 more stories 

