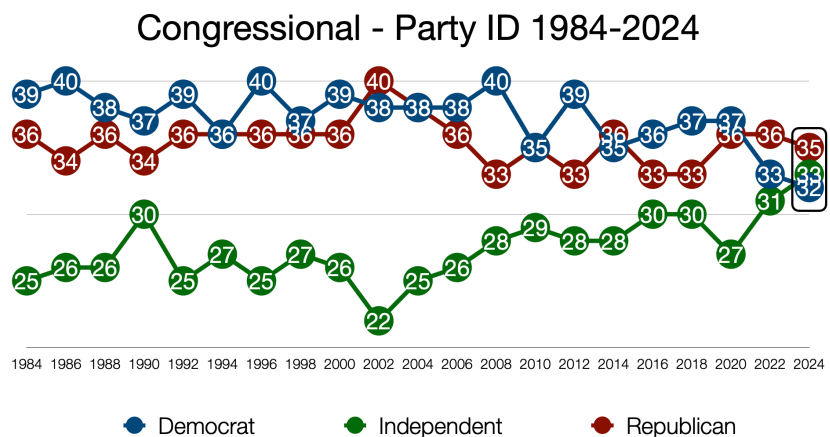


Schumer's Choice

Democrats are in an uproar over Chuck Schumer's decision to back a GOP funding bill to keep the government open. His decision sparked backlash from the left and rumors of a primary challenge from AOC. The head of progressive group Indivisible [lamented](#) that "[Schumer] *let us, the country, and the Democratic Party down.*" The Progressive Change Campaign Committee said "*People are furious about Democrats not having a plan to fight Trump – and supposed 'leaders' folding over and over again.*"

Schumer confronts the age-old test that has faced numerous Republican leaders over the past decade: showing the base they are fighting versus getting things done and protecting competitive seats. Campaign consultants are likely telling him that "the base might not turn out" in 2026.

The Democratic Cliff: Progressives don't want to hear this, but the math is not on their side. The Democratic Party has experienced a serious decline in self-identified Democrats during the Biden years, so their first challenge is how to grow their own ranks. This erosion didn't start in 2024 and isn't solely the fault of Kamala Harris. The 2024 election produced a historic low for Democrats, continuing a decline from the 2022 midterm election that saw the lowest percentage of the electorate that they had experienced in Congressional elections not only from 1984 forward but in the history of exit polling. In the last two elections, Democrats have had their two lowest performances as percentages of the Congressional electorate (33% in 2022; 32% in 2024) over this 40-year timeframe. In the elections before 2022 (in the same timeframe), Democrats had not gone below 35% as a percentage of the electorate.



Both parties tend to focus on their bases. But in the last election, the progressive playbook put Democrats into the minority, behind independents. The last time a major political party came in behind independents was Republicans during the Watergate scandal, a half a century ago. This is more than just bad messaging; it represents a loss of standing to the American electorate in terms of the value proposition of the Democratic Party.

More Reliance On Independents To Win Elections: It could take multiple cycles for Democrats to rebuild their standing on party ID. Until then, Democrats must rely more heavily on winning larger shares of independent voters. In 2024, Harris lost ground with independents, winning this group by only 3 compared to Biden winning them by 13.

For Democrats to succeed in 2026, they must broaden their coalition well beyond their ideological base. The question is whether progressives will play the long game rather than demanding short-term wins to satisfy their liberal base.

Have a good weekend.

David & Myra