

## Could Kamala Harris Have Won? Our Take

A forthcoming book *Original Sin* is set to reveal new details about President Biden’s declining condition in the White House. From released excerpts about his short lived re-election campaign, many leading Democrats have concluded that Kamala Harris never stood a chance. Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg penned an op-ed in the American Prospect called [Kamala Could Have Won](#). One of his main points is that if the Harris campaign had talked more about the economy, she would have won. Here are three points from the op-ed and our take:

***[The Harris campaign] stopped running the successful ad contrasting Harris and Trump on the cost of living...Instead of talking about their economic plans, they attacked Trump to engage the anti-MAGA majority.***

He believes the messaging shift from the economy to democracy was a critical error. We agree that was a mistake, but simply talking about the economy wouldn’t have been enough. Voters believed the Biden administration’s spending policies caused record inflation. From our September 2024 research: *Government policies under President Biden, Vice President Harris and Democrats in Congress have caused inflation to increase and prices to go up* (54-37 believe-do not believe).

Her policy rollout in early August focused on price gouging and corporate greed. The [Washington Post Editorial Board](#) responded that *instead of delivering a substantial plan, she squandered the moment on populist gimmicks*. Obama economist Jason Furman called the price gouging proposal ***“not sensible policy.”*** Harris had no policy answer to bring down the inflation that the administration’s policies were perceived to have caused.

***They stopped talking about an aggrieved middle class and stopped criticizing big business.***

From the exit polls, the overwhelming majority said inflation had been a hardship, and a large portion of the electorate said their financial situation had gotten worse in the last four years. The middle class wanted relief and a plan for inflation, not grievances and class warfare.

***She was for the middle class, mainstream on cultural issues, and pushing clearly and consistently for economic and political change.***

Democrats may believe she represented those attributes, but that was not what the electorate thought. Exit polls showed that on the attribute of *can bring needed change*, Trump won decisively 74-24. She never broke with Biden’s policies and defined what a Harris administration would do. On handling of the economy, Trump won 53-46.

Her positioning as *“mainstream on cultural issues”* was not how the electorate saw her. From our July 2024 research shortly after her announcement as nominee, voters saw her as being to the left. On an ideological scale of 1-9 with 1 being very liberal, 5 moderate and 9 very conservative, Congressional Democrats were at 3.42, President Biden at 3.37, and Kamala Harris was farther to the left at 3.15.

The 2024 election saw a historic low in self identified Democrats as a percentage of the electorate, a continuation of the decline that we flagged in 2022. The Harris campaign’s defeat was not solely about Harris — this was a defeat of Democratic policies. Only with a significant change in economic policy could she have had a greater chance to win.

Have a good weekend.

David & Myra

