

Democrats May Run On Repeal. What Is Their Replacement?

Democratic responses to the recently passed tax bill indicate there is no consensus about their 2026 strategy. Here are a few examples:

- Chuck Schumer tried to show concern about the debt and define the bill in terms of health care: *One Big, Ugly Betrayal that will increase the debt by more than \$3.3 TRILLION. ..Trump has always promised over and over and over that he'd have a new healthcare plan for America. Today, he showed you his only plan is to rip health care away from you.*
- In very dramatic fashion, AOC called it *the largest and greatest loss of health care in American history*. Pelosi weighed in with similar language about a “dark and harrowing time” invoking Robin Hood: *(It is an immoral Robin Hood in reverse of bad economics.)*
- DSCC Chair Kirsten Gillibrand is trying to run the 2006 campaign playbook that elected Democrats in states like Montana. She focused her response on the cost of living — Schumer’s main theme in that election cycle: *This bill will raise the cost of living for working families by thousands of dollars.*

James Carville authored a [New York Times op-ed](#) for “confused and leaderless Democrats” with his suggestion for a unity message. To hold the party together through the midterms with a unifying message, he suggests rallying Democrats around a single word: Repeal.

Our midterm march starts with a simple phrase every candidate can blast on every screen and stage: We demand a repeal. A repeal of Mr. Trump's spending law is the one word that should define the midterms....It must be slathered across every poster, every ad, every social media post from now until November 2026. That single word is our core message. Every Democrat can run on it, with outrage directed not at the president or a person but at this disastrous bill.

Republicans have significant work ahead to sell the tax bill, and if they don't define it on their terms, Democrats will do it for them. It is clear that Democrats are trying to define the bill in terms of health care, replicating their 2018 midterm strategy. However, Carville's idea faces serious challenges if Democrats pursue this strategy by itself.

Republicans know all too well about the pitfalls of running on repeal. When posing the idea of repeal, the obvious next question is — what is the replacement? Voters believe that Biden policies caused inflation (*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, September 2024*). They also believed that prior to the tax bill's passage, taxes would go up if Congress did not act. (*If nothing is done and Congress does not act, taxes will go up next year. 62-18 believe-do not believe, June 2025*).

If Democrats run only on repeal, this is a gift to Republicans to define the Democratic replacement as the failed Biden/Harris policies of the past. This includes spending levels that set new records, tax increases, economic claims that voters never believed (“zero dollars”), and the highest inflation in 40 years. With voters already believing taxes will go up if nothing is done, a Democratic repeal message would convey that they want to return to the economic policies of the past — everything voters rejected last November.

Democrats are right to want a unifying theme, but If the answer is repeal, they should be careful what they wish for. Republicans should be ready.

Have a good weekend.

David & Myra