

# [***Joe Manchin and Rob Portman hold back support from their parties' presidential nominees while calling for bipartisanship in Congress***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BT1-FD21-DY7V-G00H-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

**(CNN) -** Retiring Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and former Sen. Rob Portman, an Ohio Republican, are holding off on throwing support behind their parties' presidential nominees, while taking aim at members on both sides of the aisle for stalled legislation in Congress.

When asked by CNN's Manu Raju if Manchin and Portman would vote for President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, respectively, the two dodged the question but made clear that they will not be voting for the opposing party's nominee.

While Portman said he's "looking at the policies," Manchin signaled that his hesitance over committing to vote for the president is because he believes Biden's policies have become more progressive over the years.

"I know Joe Biden and I've known Joe Biden for a long time, and it's not the Joe Biden I'm seeing today - the way he's being pulled so far left by his administration," Manchin told Raju on "Inside ***Politics*** Sunday." "I want to see him take charge again, bring him back to the central, center part where they're responsible, sensible, most of the people are."

Manchin, a centrist who has long found himself at odds with members of his party and has been critical of the president for being too liberal, announced last year that he will [*not run for reelection*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/09/politics/joe-manchin-wont-run-for-reelection/index.html) - a blow for Democrats' chances to hold control of the Senate. He briefly explored a third-party presidential run but announced earlier this year that he will [*not mount a 2024 campaign*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/16/politics/joe-manchin-president/index.html) for president.

The Democratic senator also blamed Biden for the border crisis, adding that the president "has to take blame for what is wrong," but Manchin and Portman agreed that some GOP members' unwillingness to compromise and vote on a [*bipartisan border security bill*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/politics/republican-opposition-senate-border-bill/index.html) has made the issue more dire.

"Whatever Joe Biden has done that was wrong and gets blamed for, it's worse now that we know we can fix it and it's done in a bipartisan way, and you won't accept it," Manchin said.

In early February, Senate Republicans [*blocked the bipartisan border deal*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/politics/senate-border-ukraine-israel-aid-vote/index.html), which included foreign aid for Ukraine and Israel, amid opposition from top House Republicans and Trump.

Portman echoed Manchin's call for members of both parties to work on this issue and said he disagreed with the Republicans who walked away from the deal, which the former senator argued was not perfect but "a step in the right direction" and "incrementally good for the country."

When asked by Raju if he believes Trump killed the deal because he wanted the issue, Portman said he thinks "that's part of it" and added that it might have been a missed opportunity.

"I also think, though, that having not solved it through this process - let's say President Trump is reelected, let's say you do get a Republican Senate, I think it's going to be very difficult to find 60 votes going forward," Portman said. "I think this was the opportunity."

Manchin and Portman also told Raju that they disagreed with Republicans' move to [*impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/13/politics/alejandro-mayorkas-impeachment-vote/index.html), who in February became the first cabinet member to be impeached in nearly 150 years.

The House is expected to [*send impeachment articles to the Senate*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/09/politics/mayorkas-impeachment-articles-house-senate/index.html) this week, and Manchin has said he will vote to dismiss the articles. Portman said he doesn't support the move because it could create a precedent.

"My problem with that impeachment is that if you were to impeach somebody for following the policy direction of the White House, rather than focusing on the White House, then you're gonna have that happen again and again, tit-for-tat. Democrats impeach Republicans," Portman said.

The two men also lamented the state of the current Congress, with Portman calling it "dysfunctional" and Manchin going as far as saying, "Every one of us should be ashamed of what we're, what we're living through now in the 118th Congress."

Manchin and Portman - who have both been known to negotiate bipartisan agreements during their tenure - said they believe lawmakers aren't as willing to compromise on significant legislation. Manchin added that he worries if the filibuster ends, which requires 60 votes to pass a measure, it will shrink the number of moderates in either party and make compromise more difficult.

"I am scared to death that whoever, on either side, is going to ever support getting rid of the filibuster, you will ruin that completely," Manchin said. "You will not have a middle at all - it'll be swinging from the left and the right. That's not who America is."

Portman said in his view, it's less about whether a lawmaker is moderate but whether they are "willing to come to the middle to figure out how to solve problems."

"And you can be MAGA Republican, you can be a progressive Democrat, but if you're willing to look at your job as solving problems, then you figure out how to find common ground," Portman said. "And that needs to be the overriding concern. I worry that that is in short supply in the Senate today."

CNN's Manu Raju, Morgan Rimmer, Edward-Isaac Dovere, Lauren Fox, Sheden Tesfaldet, Jeffrey Ackermann and Kayla Gallagher contributed to this report.

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