

# [***It Will Take More than a Bench for Democrats to Win. They Need a Major Course Correction | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJM-GRF1-DY68-1001-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** It will take more than a bench if Democrats want to win in 2024. It will take a major course correction.

**Body**

If the election were held today, President Biden would lose, according to [*nearly every poll*](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/daily-memo/2897921/democrats-double-freakout/). Grizzled Democratic campaign veterans like to point out that Presidents Clinton and Obama were both underwater in their first term and came back to win; with slowly improving economic conditions, they argue Biden can do the same. But this view has a kind of Baghdad-Bob [*denialism*](https://www.natesilver.net/p/the-white-house-is-betting-the-election). Unlike Clinton and Obama, Biden's public approval has been persistently in the dumps since the early months of his presidency. And unlike the politically masterful Clinton and oratorically-gifted Obama, voters don't believe Biden has the mental agility for a second term.

Those who argue for replacing Biden with a younger, more vital candidate—Governor Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania, for example—solve only half of the problem: [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) increasingly Left-wing economic, social and [*foreign policies*](https://apnorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-Priorities-Brief-V7.pdf) have proven very [*unpopular with voters*](https://www.thefp.com/p/stumbling-white-house-2024-biden-trump). The 2022 issues of abortion and Trump's looming presence in the midterms eclipsed this reality and intoxicated Democratic elites into believing they should stay the course, despite mounds of polling evidence to the contrary.

Let's take the first of these two problems: the candidate himself. The [*New York Times/Sienna poll*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/03/us/politics/biden-age-trump-poll.html) shows 61 percent of voters don't believe Biden has the needed mental capacity for a second term. That surely reflects more than just the incoherent, unscripted public meanderings (which we saw again in Pennsylvania last week), or Biden's allusions to his recent conversations with dead French and German leaders.

Voter concern is not just about an occasional verbal hiccup. Rather, the deeply and widely held unease is more about whether there is a steady hand at the helm, particularly in an increasingly unstable world.

For example, it was nearly three years ago when Biden insisted that his national security team agreed with his total withdrawal from Afghanistan. But his senior advisers then testified before [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) they disagreed. A skeletal team of 5,000 troops could have kept President Hamid Karzai afloat, prevented the [*Taliban*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/taliban?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s tyrannical takeover and Al Qaeda's return there. In public interviews, Biden didn't appear to be aware of this crucial fact.

This segues into the next problem for Democrats: policy. In recent years, the Democratic party has [*ceded policymaking*](https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/democrats-be-the-party-of-pragmatic) to the intersectional Left, which tirelessly insists on identity ***politics***, statism, and the abandonment of strong deterrence on the global stage—philosophies fundamentally out of step with most voters. Prominent liberal writers Bari Weiss, [*Ruy Teixeira*](https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/the-progressive-left-is-a-paper-tiger), and others point to the culture of illiberalism and intolerance of dissent that enforces the resulting self-defeating groupthink.

Public opinion surveys have consistently pointed to the [*unpopularity*](https://nypost.com/2024/03/09/opinion/biden-could-fix-the-migrant-ciris-in-an-instant/) of Biden's open borders' policy on immigration; 70-80 percent of voters disapprove. It's no wonder: Eight million unassimilated, largely economic migrants continue the [*downward pressure*](https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/how-to-curb-illegal-immigrationand?r=brmm&utm_medium=ios&utm_campaign=post&triedRedirect=true) on working class wages—something white, Black and Hispanic working voters know too well. Biden could fix this today with the stroke of a pen, but he doesn't for fear of offending the parties far-Left activists who represent about [*six percent of voters*](https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2/).

Or take the economy; Biden inherited a recovering economy, albeit supply-constrained, but pushed dreamy-eyed Rooseveltian and Keynesian deficit spending, now responsible for over $2 trillion in annual deficits, that was more appropriate for recession economy. Starting with the profligate American Rescue Plan, the spending spree effectively dumped trash bags of unneeded cash into our economy. Many if not most of the resulting jobs created were either COVID-rebound jobs or government-funded, and voters know that the resulting inflation robbed them of income during the Biden presidency.

Bipartisan infrastructure legislation surely had its merits, but much of the authorized building hasn't even gotten off the ground. Clean energy is badly needed, but the [*EV fiascos*](https://www.wsj.com/business/autos/electric-vehicle-demand-charts-7d3089c7?reflink=integratedwebview_share) in the U.S. and Europe have many auto makers now running away from future investments amid huge economic losses and unsold EVs piling up on the dealership lots.

For the most part, it's only the self-congratulatory beltway elites that discuss things like "legislative accomplishments" during their Chardonnay hours; most voters know they didn't lose income under Trump as they did under Biden.

The patronage ***politics*** of student loan giveaways reinforce the negative images of elitism and welfare statism, instead of a more meaningful plan to grow the economy in a way that helps working class voters—the largest single voting block, which [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) own today despite Democrats telling us they represent working people.

Similarly, the constant pandering on race issues is also failing. *Axios* reports this week that non-white voters are abandoning the party in record numbers. Democratic positions on affirmative action and school choice are also [*increasingly unpopular*](https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/democrats-time-to-re-embrace-merit) with [*Black voters, who are much more moderate*](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/08/01/us/elections/times-siena-poll-registered-voters-crosstabs.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article) than Democratic elites.

Finally, on foreign affairs, America's critical role in global deterrence has clearly cratered, much to [*voters dismay*](https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3890). Say what you will about the erratic Trump years, Putin didn't invade anywhere during his presidency, Iran was largely contained, the breakthrough Abraham Accords brought historic peace to the Mideast, and China wasn't nearly as belligerent on Taiwan or in the South China Sea. We had no Afghanistan-like embarrassments, and there were no failed appeasement strategies on Iran (which started with Obama and continued with Biden), which clearly failed to contain [*Hamas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hamas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), the Houthis and other Iranian terrorist surrogates.

Does this mean I've totally given up on the Democrats? No; it means that I believe the Democrats have to return to what worked so well for them in the past: economic growth rather than statism and over-regulation, equal opportunity rather than "equity", legal rather than illegal immigration, and global deterrence with moral clarity rather than appeasement and both-sides-isms.

[*I was one of the first to argue*](https://www.wsj.com/articles/democrats-fear-the-truth-about-biden-re-election-age-gaffes-progressive-inflation-afghanistan-crime-c53cfba) that while Biden has had a distinguished career, he may be the only candidate who can't beat Trump and should pass the baton (he still can). For sure, Democrats have a bench—Senators like John Tester, [*Joe Manchin*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-manchin?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), and Shapiro, all of whom possess vigor and common-sense centrism in line with voting majorities. But it will take more than a bench if Democrats want to win in 2024. It will take a major course correction.

*Julian Epstein was Democratic Chief Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee and Staff Director to the House Oversight Committee*.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2362633/joe-biden.jpg)

**Graphic**

Joe Biden

Photo by Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

Joe Biden speaks during a meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Tusk in the East Room of the White House on March 12, 2024 in Washington, DC. The current president has gained a slim lead over his Republican rival, a new poll shows.

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