

# [***Democrats' Joe Biden Problem Got Worse With Special Election Win***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BB8-VJC1-DY68-100D-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Strategist Michael Gordon told Newsweek that Tom Suozzi's strategy of distancing himself from Biden was "effective" in New York's special election on Tuesday.

**Body**

Democrats may have won the special election in New York, but Tom Suozzi's win could suggest that there's a winning tactic for Democratic candidates—as long as they're willing to abandon President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Questions about Biden's reelection campaign have swirled in the last week after a damning report from special counsel Robert Hur described the 81-year-old president as a forgetful commander-in-chief. The report came amid already troubling numbers for Biden, who is neck-and-neck with former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in a hypothetical rematch in 2024 and whose approval ratings have struggled since August 2021.

As an increasing number of voters and anti-Trump media are now casting doubt over Biden's reelection effort, Suozzi—a rare Democrat who spent his competitive race distancing himself from the president and [*admitted Biden was "old" on the eve of his special election*](https://www.newsweek.com/tom-suozzi-joe-biden-old-doubts-election-1869225?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)—has flipped a GOP seat in a swing district.

"Suozzi had an effective strategy, and that's frequently a good way to go when the president is unpopular," Michael Gordon, a Democratic strategist and principal at Group Gordon, told *Newsweek*.

Less than 4 in 10 Americans approve of the job Biden is doing as president, according to a popularity calculator from FiveThirtyEight. Disappointingly for the White House, that number is far from new. The Democrat's approval has been underwater for the last two and a half years.

And yet, there's more bad news on the horizon. Even as the Biden campaign continues to push back on Hur's report, more than 8 in 10 Americans, including over 7 in 10 [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), believe Biden is too old to serve a second term, an [*ABC*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/abc?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) News poll from Monday found.

As his age remains a stubborn obstacle, and without improvement on his approval ratings, Democratic candidates across the nation could embrace the strategies Suozzi used to propel him back into his old House seat for New York's 3rd District on Tuesday.

"Unless [Biden's] poll numbers improve, Democrats in swing districts (like NY-03) will focus more on local issues and attempt to distance themselves from the president," Jeffrey Kraus, a political science professor at Wagner College, told *Newsweek*.

While Suozzi's Republican opponent Mazi Pilip embraced Trump in the final days of the race, Kraus noted that neither Biden nor Trump played a major role in the special election. Both men remain underwater in New York's 3rd District, as Suozzi acknowledged throughout the race.

Earlier this month, the Democrat told [*CNN*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/cnn?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) he didn't think it would have been helpful for Biden to stump for him, just as he didn't think a Trump appearance would have helped Pilip.

"This race is really very local. It's Suozzi versus Mazi," Suozzi said.

While Biden won the 3rd District by 9 points in 2020, [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) have made steady gains in recent years. The district elected Republican [*George Santos*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/george-santos?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in 2022 by 8 points, and [*Suozzi won by nearly the same margin on Tuesday*](https://www.newsweek.com/democrat-tom-suozzi-wins-new-york-special-election-ap-projects-1869531?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Gordon said it will be harder for candidates to distance themselves from Biden this year, since the president will also be on the ticket. He said while it's still possible some will cling to Biden if he was popular in their district, "every Republican will be trying to glue the Democrats they're challenging to the president" if Biden's numbers remain low in November.

Political consultant Jay Townsend told *Newsweek* that in the same way, it's likely Republicans in swing districts will also be trying to avoid Trump.

"In 2024, all candidates of both parties running in suburban swing districts will find ways to offer some degree of separation from Trump or Biden," Townsend said. "In part, because in swing districts, naked partisanship doesn't sell well. Bipartisanship, compromise and problem solving sells well."

Townsend added the "most important takeaway" from Tuesday was exactly that.

Because House Republicans tanked the border security bill in the weeks leading up to New York's election, the GOP "helped Suozzi win what was supposed to be a close election" by handing him the tool to "turn what was a defensive position [on immigration] into an offensive weapon which he used to bludgeon his opponent."

Even Biden's team seemed to acknowledge so, saying in a statement, "Suozzi put support for the bipartisan border legislation—and congressional Republicans' killing of it for ***politics***—at the forefront of his case."

"The results are unmistakable," White House spokesperson Andrew Bates said.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2349266/joe-biden-democrats-suozzi.jpg)

**Graphic**

Joe Biden Democrats Suozzi

Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

President Joe Biden speaks in the State Dining Room of the White House on February 13 in Washington, DC. Tom Suozzi's win in New York's special election could suggest that it may help Democratic candidates to distance themselves from Biden.

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