

# [***Taylor Swift's Rare Endorsement Candidate Had No Idea It Was Coming***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7G-JSM1-DY68-1000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Katherine Fung

**Highlight:** "We were absolutely surprised—all of us on the campaign were surprised—when she posted," Phil Bredesen's communications director said.

**Body**

A politician who received a rare endorsement from [*Taylor Swift*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/taylor-swift?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) six years ago said he had no idea it was coming until the news broke.

Phil Bredesen, a former Democratic governor of Tennessee who ran for the U.S. [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in 2018, recalled finding out about Swift's support for his congressional bid in a Thursday interview with Politico. While he was familiar with her, he said, his campaign had never talked to Swift or her team directly.

Swift had largely remained out of ***politics*** up until 2018, an aversion she discussed in detail in her *Miss American*a documentary. However, during the midterm elections that year, the pop star dived into Tennessee ***politics***, endorsing two Democratic candidates running for the U.S. House and Senate as part of her opposition to Republican [*Marsha Blackburn*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/marsha-blackburn?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s Senate bid.

"We were absolutely surprised—all of us on the campaign were surprised—when she posted," Laura Zapata, Bredesen's communications director, said.

Swift's dominance in the headlines and news cycle has recently fueled attacks from conservatives who have railed against her for her liberal views. They warn that her massive popularity could sway the 2024 election if she endorses a presidential candidate.

A [*Newsweek poll conducted last month*](https://www.newsweek.com/can-taylor-swift-sway-2024-election-1864474?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) found that roughly a fifth of voters would be more likely to support a candidate backed by Swift. But almost as many voters said they would be less likely to vote for a Swift-endorsed candidate.

This week, *TheNew York Times* reported that President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s reelection campaign is actively seeking Swift's endorsement in hopes of "reaching her 279 million [*Instagram*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/instagram?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) followers." Swift backed Biden in the 2020 election after making critical statements about [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and supporting the voting out of the former president.

Bredesen, who led Tennessee between 2003 and 2011, said he met Swift during his governorship at a couple of events but they hadn't talked in years when she publicly backed his Senate campaign.

"The endorsement—Swift's first public foray into ***politics***—came completely out of the blue," he said, according to Politico. "The campaign had never talked to her directly, let alone lobbied for the endorsement, and she didn't reach out before or after announcing her support for Bredesen in an Instagram post."

*Newsweek* reached out by email to Bredesen's company, Clearloop, for further comment.

In the post announcing her endorsement of Bredesen, Swift wrote, "In the past I've been reluctant to publicly voice my political opinions, but due to several events in my life and in the world in the past two years, I feel very differently about that now."

Swift said while she has long supported women in office, she could not vote for Blackburn because of her voting record in the House, where she was among the most conservative members.

"These are not MY Tennessee values," Swift said about Blackburn. "I will be voting for Phil Bredesen for Senate and Jim Cooper for House of Representatives. Please, please educate yourself on the candidates running in your state and vote based on who most closely represents your values."

She told her fans, "For a lot of us, we may never find a candidate or party with whom we agree 100% on every issue, but we have to vote anyway."

Despite Swift's endorsement of Bredesen, Blackburn defeated the Democrat, gaining 62 percent of the vote. Bredesen received 37 percent.

Zapata recalled Swift's endorsement as "this exciting, uplifting kind of moment for the campaign, who had been working so hard and who were younger folks who were backing a more established candidate, an older candidate."

"There is this person who has now put her very important spotlight on our state," she continued. "It showed our state was competitive and that it mattered and that all that work that we had put into it, to challenge...the way that things had gone in Tennessee for so long—that there was hope and there was reason for us to believe."

Zapata added that she reached out to Swift after the race to thank her and tell her that even though Bredesen lost, "it did get people engaged in a way that they wouldn't have otherwise."

On Thursday, Bredesen reacted to the recent uproar about Swift, saying the conspiracy theories surrounding her are "just kind of expected part of the political atmosphere we have today."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2343620/taylor-swift-rare-endorsement.jpg)

**Graphic**

Taylor Swift Rare Endorsement

Patrick Smith/Getty Images

Taylor Swift celebrates on the field after the Kansas City Chiefs 17-10 victory against the Baltimore Ravens in the AFC Championship Game at M&T Bank Stadium on January 28, 2024 in Baltimore, Maryland. Phil Bredesen said he had no idea Swift was going to endorse him in the 2018 midterms.

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