

# Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

## U.S. Representative-elect for NY-14

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (oh-CAH-see-oh;[1] born October 13, 1989) is an American politician and educator who is the U.S. Representative-elect for New York's 14th congressional district, having been elected on November 6, 2018. When she takes office on January 3, 2019, she will become the youngest woman to serve in Congress in the history of the United States.

On June 26, 2018, Ocasio-Cortez won the Democratic primary in New York's 14th congressional district covering parts of the Bronx and Queens in New York City, defeating the incumbent Congressman, Democratic Caucus Chair Joe Crowley, in what was described as the biggest upset victory in the 2018 midterm-election season. Ocasio-Cortez is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Ocasio-Cortez is the youngest woman ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. That distinction was previously held by New York Republican Elise Stefanik, who was elected at age 30 in 2014. Ocasio-Cortez will be 29 at the start of the 116th Congress.

## The Journey

At 28 years old, Ocasio-Cortez was one of the youngest nominees for Congress.



### 2018 House of Representatives Campaign

Ocasio-Cortez was the first person since 2004 to challenge the Democratic Caucus Chair, Joe Crowley, in the Democratic primary. She faced a significant financial disadvantage, but said, "You can't really beat big money with more money. You have to beat them with a totally different game." Nearly 75% of her donations were small individual contributions, while less than one percent of Crowley's contributions were. The Ocasio-Cortez campaign spent \$194,000 to the Crowley campaign's \$3.4 million.

### Primary Election

On June 26, 2018, Ocasio-Cortez received 57.13% of the vote (15,897) to Joe Crowley's 42.5% (11,761), defeating the 10-term incumbent by almost 15 percentage points. Time magazine called her victory "the biggest upset of the 2018 elections so far"; CNN made a similar statement. The New York Times described Crowley's loss as "a shocking primary defeat on Tuesday, the most significant loss for a Democratic incumbent in more than a decade, and one that will reverberate across the party and the country". The Guardian called it "one of the biggest upsets in recent American political history".

Her victory was especially surprising as she was outspent 18–1. Merriam-Webster reported that searches for the word "socialism" spiked 1,500% after her victory.[58] In a sign of her outsider status, as of 11 p.m. on election day Crowley had not phoned Ocasio-Cortez; she believed he did not have her phone number and stated that she did not have his. Earlier in the evening, however, Crowley, an amateur guitarist, did play a cover of Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" at his election night watch party as a way of conceding defeat, dedicating it to Ocasio-Cortez.

### Media Coverage

Many journalists faulted the traditional national news media (with a few exceptions such as CBSN) for not identifying, or even recognizing, the newsworthiness of Ocasio-Cortez's campaign. Brian Stelter wrote that progressive media outlets such as The Young Turks and The Intercept "saw the Ocasio-Cortez upset coming". Margaret Sullivan said that traditional metrics of measuring a campaign's viability, like total fundraising, were contributing to a "media failure".

After her primary win, Ocasio-Cortez quickly garnered nationwide media attention, including numerous articles and TV talk-show appearances. She appeared on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert and The View in the first few days after the primary and later on The Daily Show with Trevor Noah. Conservative Allie Stuckey also aired a fake interview.

Ocasio-Cortez also drew a great deal of media attention when she and Bernie Sanders campaigned for James Thompson in Kansas in July 2018. A rally in Wichita had to be moved from a theater with a capacity of 1,500 when far more people said they would attend. The event drew 4,000 people, with some seated on the floor. In The New Yorker Benjamin Wallace-Wells wrote that while Sanders remains "the de-facto leader of an increasingly popular left, [he is unable to] do things that do not come naturally to him, like supply hope." Wallace-Wells suggested that Ocasio-Cortez has made Sanders's task easier as he can point to her success to show that ideas "once considered to be radical are now part of the mainstream".

Ocasio-Cortez received backlash after barring members of the media from attending her "listening tour" on August 8 in the Bronx and August 12 in Corona, Queens.



# Political Positions

**Ocasio-Cortez is a self-described democratic socialist.**

## Education

Ocasio-Cortez campaigned in favor of tuition-free universities and public schools, saying that “[f]or the cost of the GOP’s tax bill, we could forgive ALL the student loan debt in the United States.”

## Environment

Ocasio-Cortez is a self-described hardliner on environmental issues, calling climate change the “single biggest national security threat” facing the United States. She advocates for the United States to transition by 2035 to an electrical grid running on 100% renewable-energy production and end the use of fossil fuels. She also calls for a Green New Deal in the United States, in which the federal government would invest in the construction of large-scale green-infrastructure projects.

## Healthcare

Ocasio-Cortez supports transitioning to a single-payer healthcare system, calling healthcare “a human right”. She says that a single government insurer should ensure that every American has insurance, while reducing costs overall. On her campaign website, Ocasio-Cortez says “Almost every other developed nation in the world has universal healthcare. It’s time the United States catch up to the rest of the world in ensuring all people have real healthcare coverage that doesn’t break the bank.”

## Immigration

Ocasio-Cortez supports a “path to citizenship” for immigrants who entered the United States legally and illegally. She supports abolishing the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), calling it “a product of the Bush-era Patriot Act suite of legislation” and “an enforcement agency that takes on more of a paramilitary tone every single day”. She has called immigration detention centers operated by the Department of Homeland Security “black sites”, citing limited public access to those locations. Two days before the primary election, Ocasio-Cortez attended a protest at an ICE child-detention center in Tornillo, Texas.

## Israeli Palestinian Conflict

After 60 Palestinian protesters participating in the 2018 Gaza border protests were killed on May 14, 2018, Ocasio-Cortez criticized the Israel Defense Forces’ use of deadly force, tweeting, “This is a massacre. I hope my peers have the moral courage to call it such. No state or entity is absolved of mass shootings of protesters. There is no justification. Palestinian people deserve basic human dignity, as anyone else. Democrats can’t be silent about this anymore.” In a subsequent interview, she said, “The idea that we are not supposed to talk about people dying when they are engaging in political expression just really moved me”, and said that many constituents, including Jewish Americans, had thanked her for taking that position. In an interview with the PBS series Firing Line, Ocasio-Cortez clarified that she is “a proponent of a two-state solution”.

After her primary victory, J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami expressed his support for “a new generation of candidates who are more outspoken about their opposition to the policies of Netanyahu’s far-right coalition and are eager to see the US play a more constructive role in making life better for both Israelis and Palestinians”.

## Social Issues

Ocasio-Cortez is supportive of the LGBT community, thanking its members for their role in her grassroots campaign. She spoke at a Black Lives Matter rally in 2017.

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