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Democrats can avoid disaster in November

Americans are frustrated with the Democrats. To avert losing in the upcoming midterms, they must do more and quickly for the working class

Democrats are the party of working people. Ahead of the 2020 election, we advanced ideas and plans that we believed would, in ways big and small, make our democracy and our economy work better for all Americans. Across this country, voters agreed with us — and gave us a majority in Washington so that we could deliver on those promises.

Republican senators and broken institutions have blocked much of that promised progress. Now Republicans are betting that a stalled Biden agenda won't give Democrats enough to run on in the midterm elections — and they might be right. Despite pandemic relief, infrastructure investments and the historic Supreme Court confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson, we promised more — and voters remember those promises.

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Republicans want to frame the upcoming elections to be about 'wokeness,' cancel culture, and the 'militant left wing.' Standing up for the inherent dignity of everyone is a core American value, and Democrats are proud to do that every day. While Republican politicians peddle lies, fear, and division, we should use every single one of the next 200 days or so before the election to deliver meaningful improvements for working people.

Democrats win elections when we show we understand the painful economic realities facing American families and convince voters we will deliver meaningful change. To put it bluntly: if we fail to use the months remaining before the elections to deliver on more of our agenda, Democrats are headed toward big losses in the midterms.

The need to deliver more quickly

Time is running short. We need to finalise a budget reconciliation deal, making giant corporations pay their share to fund vital investments in combating climate change and lowering costs for families, which can advance with only 50 Senate votes. Other priorities can be done with the president's executive authority. It's no secret that I believe we should abolish the filibuster. But if Republicans want to use it to block policies that Americans broadly support, we should also force them to take those votes in plain view.

Let's begin with corruption. For years, Americans have identified corrupt government officials as a top concern. And they're right: to tackle the urgent challenges we face — climate change, income inequality, systemic injustice — we must root out corruption. To start cleaning up government, members of Congress and their spouses shouldn't be allowed to own or trade individual stocks, which the vast majority of voters support banning, according to multiple polls. Whether you're a Republican senator or the Democratic speaker of the House, it is obvious to the American people that they should not be allowed to trade individual stocks and then vote on laws that affect those companies. I have the strongest plan and the only bipartisan bill in the Senate to get it done.

We can also act quickly to rein in costs for middle-class families. In the very short term, that means stopping companies from jacking up prices to boost their profits. Price increases are driven by many factors, including pandemic disruptions to global supply chains and Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. But when the Kroger chief executive, Rodney McMullen, said 'a little bit of inflation is always good in our business,' it's no surprise that, by a margin of two-to-one, American voters don't buy the explanation that companies are just passing along costs. Instead, they blame corporations for raising prices to boost their own profits. Even Fed Chair Jerome Powell, a conservative Republican, acknowledged that giant corporations raise prices simply 'because they can.'

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The president deserves enormous credit for advancing an ambitious agenda to promote competition and appointing effective regulators to enforce our antitrust laws, and it's time for congressional Democrats to have his back. According to Data for Progress surveys, eight in 10 Americans believe Congress should pass laws to reinvigorate competition and three-quarters strongly believe that oil and gas companies

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should not make gobs of money off this energy crisis. Beefing up regulators' authority to end price-gouging, breaking up monopolies, and passing a windfall profits tax is a good start. Only in Washington, where America's biggest companies spend billions to drown out reality, are these controversial ideas. Across America, these are *popular* plans.

We can stand up to the armies of lobbyists and PR flacks and tackle tax loopholes for the rich and powerful. About two-thirds of likely American voters — including a majority of Republicans — say it's time for billionaires to pay more in taxes. Nearly three-quarters of Americans want to put an end to wildly profitable corporations paying nothing or little in federal income taxes (yes, Amazon, I'm looking at you) and put into place a global minimum corporate tax. And a majority of Americans would like to use some of those tax revenues to invest in clean energy, affordable child care, and universal pre-K.

Protecting working people

That's a big legislative agenda, but it isn't big enough. We also need to use every tool of the presidency to deliver for working people.

For example, by a margin of more than two-to-one, Americans support providing some student loan debt cancellation — an action the president could take entirely on his own. Doing so would lift the economic outlook for too many borrowers who weren't able to get a college diploma, for the millions of women borrowers who shoulder about two-thirds of all student loan debt, and for Black and Hispanic borrowers, a higher percentage of whom take on debt to attend college compared to white students, and have a harder time paying it off after school. With the stroke of a pen, the president could make massive strides to close gender and racial wealth gaps.

Like many Americans, I'm frustrated by our failure to get big things done — things that are both badly needed and very popular with all Americans.

And he can do more. Decisive action on everything from lowering prescription drug prices to ensuring that more workers are eligible for overtime pay can be executed by the president alone, using the authority already given to him by existing laws, without rounding up 50 Senate votes.

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Americans. While Republican politicians obstruct many efforts to improve people's lives and many swear loyalty to the Big Lie, the urgency of the next election bears down on us.

Democrats cannot bow to the wisdom of out-of-touch consultants who recommend we simply tout our accomplishments. Instead, Democrats need to deliver more of the president's agenda — or else we will not be in the majority much longer.

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Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren is a former law professor and, since 2013, a United States senator from Massachusetts.