Wielding Power in a New Political Era

The historic 2026 midterm election outcomes reflect a seismic moment in our history. The people have spoken and elected Democrats in districts and states that conventional wisdom — and the establishment — did not believe were winnable. The American people didn't reject defeatist Democrats in the primaries and challenge Trump's billionaire-backed regime in the midterms just to return to business as usual. The people definitively closed the door on an entire political era, and demanded the start of a new one. It is time for Democrats to embrace a fundamentally different approach to political power.

The story of this election goes deeper than just an affordability crisis or a rejection of incumbents. This is about a turning point in our country. Authoritarianism and the consolidation of power by the ultrawealthy Big Tech overlords threatened our democracy – but rather than surrendering like so many elites, millions of people marched in the streets and elected a new set of leaders. Leaders who they expect to take on the corruption driving up everyday costs, hold Trump and his billionaire backers accountable, stand against cruel immigration policies and mass deportations, and refuse to bankroll endless, unjust wars at the expense of working families. Leaders who will refuse to hide behind procedural limits or consultant-speak to quash ambition. Leaders who recognize that despite Tuesday's resounding victory, Democrats cannot rest on their laurels, but rather must invest in serious efforts to rebuild credibility with the public. This moment demands a fundamental shift in Democratic leadership, and ambitions, to meet the public's demand.

<u>Leadership That Meets the Moment</u>

We have momentum that Democrats cannot squander during the Lame Duck period. Any Democrat who is considering business as usual, or unwilling to fight at a level that matches the public's demand for action - **is not qualified to lead the party at this moment.** Who leads the party in this era must be an open question, not a coronation. It's time to define what the next era of the Democratic party will be.

Any Leader for the new fighting Democratic party must commit to:

Ending the war

- Hegseth Impeachment - Leadership is whipping caucus unity and welcoming the opportunity to prosecute an impeachment of Pete Hegseth during this period.

- Refusing to pass a business-as-usual NDAA that gives a green light for this unchecked war in Iran, and the disastrous US-Israel military partnership.
- No funding for the Department of Defense that doesn't cut off money for the war, in advance of the Dec. 11 funding deadline.

Clawing back ICE and Border Patrol funding, stopping the Medicaid cuts

- Trump's ICE and Border Patrol have wrought violence and chaos in our streets, torn apart communities, brutalized our neighbors, and killed American citizens. Enough.
- Democrats must claw back their funding, and direct that money to stopping the life-threatening Medicaid cuts set to take effect at the end of the year.
- Every sitting Democrat already voted for this when Senator Sanders offered an amendment earlier this year – they were even joined by two Republicans.
- Democrats have an opportunity and an obligation to insist on this as part of the December funding bill negotiations.
- Headed into next year, Democrats must go on offense on healthcare. We can't just stop the bleeding – it's time to expand and improve Medicaid and Medicare so more people get covered, healthcare costs go down, and people get the care they need.

Leveraging Every Procedural Tool

- During the Lame Duck - this means refusing to cede any leverage on MAGA priorities
- In the new Congress - Leadership must not hide behind process as an excuse not to fight for the change people voted for
- In the Senate, this includes - breaking the filibuster on the first day of the new session.
    - Let Donald Trump veto the minimum wage, drug pricing relief, and bans on flock cameras, while Democrats bring the corporations and cronies who are all self dealing and getting richer as working families struggle to account. Let the GOP decide whether they will cling to their flailing leader - or break in response to public pushback.
    - If Democrats want the public to believe their campaign promises weren't just more talk from politicians who are just like the old politicians they hated – it's time to rebuild credibility.

Senate Leadership

- The Indivisible movement has been clear that Chuck Schumer's leadership for the last two years is part of the old era of politics that needs to be put to rest.
- Maybe Schumer has woken up the day after the election and understands we're in a new paradigm, agrees with these key demands above, and will clearly lay out the path forward for the Senate Democratic Caucus.

- But we're not holding our breath, celebratory statements are not enough.
- Senate Democrats must take this opportunity seriously. Debate these questions intensely. Consider new leadership, and new pathways. A coronation would be an admission that they aren't ready to meet the moment.
- Everyone with a Democratic senator – including those with newly-elected senators on their way to DC – should be demanding a contested leadership election, not a cleared field for Schumer.

Preparing for the Next Congress

Having the majority alone will not dismantle the systems of authoritarianism and corrupt, concentrated power. Democrats must seize the moment, and address their own credibility problem with the public. It is time to take meaningful steps to demonstrate that Democrats are discarding the old, failed playbook. This means: taking on corruption (including within the Democratic party), challenging status quo, and rejecting procedural constraints as a barrier in the way of progress.

Success in the 120th Congress means pairing bold affordability policy with aggressive accountability priorities. It is time to meet escalation with escalation, finally holding the corruption of the Trump Administration, and collusion of corporate America and Big Tech oligarchs to account. While the path towards actual legislative enactment is limited, that is no reason to compromise policy vision - the public is hungry for change, and this is a chance to demonstrate that Democrats are ready to deliver. If Trump or Republicans want to fight popular bold proposals, that is a productive conflict that Democrats should invite to create contrast between the parties and set the stage for the post-Trump era. Organizing in the 120th Congress is essential for preparing the caucus to move decisively when the window for passage is open.