

# FOUR WAYS TO FIGHT FASCISM: CHECKING IN

Throughout this year, I have argued there are four ways to fight fascism – and doing so through the guise of the Democratic Party (especially DC Democrats) is not yet the best way to do so.

I argued these were the four ways to peacefully fight Donald Trump's authoritarianism:

1. The Erica Chenoweth rule, which says that if you can get 3.5% of a population in the streets, it often leads to regime change.
2. Beginning to peel off four people in the Senate or eight or nine people in the House.
3. Rescuing Republicans from a predictable catastrophe like Democrats did in 2008 and 2020.
4. Waiting until 2026, winning at least one house of Congress, and beginning to rein in Trump that way.

Since for many of you, today will be the last normal day of the year, and unless Trump sets off a predictable catastrophe, today will also be the last Nicole Sandler show we do, I wanted to check in on how we're doing on these four issues.

## The 3.5% rule

Start with people in the streets.

If 6.5 million people attended October's No Kings rallies (some estimates go as high as 7 million), it would amount to about 1.8% of the US population. That would make them the biggest protests in American history, but still just halfway to that 3.5% mark, and not directly in response to a particular outrage. The organizing and openness of those protests was a huge accomplishment and, at the very least, taught a lot of people who had never protested before how to do so.

But it wasn't enough to oust Trump.

A more interesting measure of people in the streets, however, is Chicago (and other anti-ICE/CBP protests). I have no idea what population of Chicago took part in mobilizing to oppose Stephen Miller's goons. But there are aspects of that mobilization – perhaps most importantly the way media coverage arose from citizen witness to local media to independent media to mainstream outlets – that provided real lessons in how to thrive in a disastrous media environment.

One point I keep making about this kind of opposition: it does not have to be, and arguably is far more successful if it is not, coincident with the Democratic party. Some of the most powerful moments in Chicago's opposition came when right wingers in conservative suburbs joined in – holy hell those people were assholes!!

Whatever else Stephen Miller's terrible dragnets have done, they have renewed civil society in most places the invasions happened.

## **Peeling off defectors**

Both Axios and Politico took a break from Dems in Disarray or ragebait stories this week to instead focus on Hakeem Jeffries, both focusing on Jeffries' success at getting four "moderate" Republicans to vote for his discharge position extending ObamaCare subsidies for three years.

Time and again this year, Democrats under Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries have maneuvered to successfully undercut the GOP agenda and put its leaders on the back foot. From a daily drumbeat on health care to the long-running saga over the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein to a new focus on the rising cost of living, they believe they're succeeding by making the party in power talk about Democratic priorities, not its own.

Their success was underscored this week when four House Republicans joined a Jeffries-led effort to force a vote on expiring Obamacare insurance subsidies – a major embarrassment for the GOP speaker.

“Our message to Mike Johnson is clear – you can run, but you cannot hide,” Jeffries said as he took a victory lap on the House steps Thursday.

And as Politico notes, it started (actually, two months earlier than they credit) with the Jeffrey Epstein effort.

Indeed, since Tom Massie and Ro Khanna, with Jeffries' cooperation, chased Mike Johnson away a week earlier in July for fear of Epstein votes, Johnson has largely vacated his majority.

There have been limited instances where Republicans have defected on other issues. Just before the SCOTUS hearing on Trump's illegal tariffs, for example, a handful of Republicans defected to pass resolutions against Trump tariffs.

Where things may get more interesting in the new year – on top of what is sure to be a frantic effort to fix the healthcare crisis Republicans are causing – is on Russia. The NDAA Trump signed yesterday included a number of restrictions on European and Ukrainian funding and troop alignment, measures that directly

conflict with Trump's National Security Strategy.

In a break with Trump, whose fellow Republicans hold majorities in both the House and Senate, this year's NDAA includes several provisions to boost security in Europe, despite Trump early this month releasing a national security strategy seen as friendly to Russia and a reassessment of the US relationship with Europe.

The fiscal 2026 NDAA provides \$800m for Ukraine – \$400m in each of the next two years – as part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which pays US companies for weapons for Ukraine's military.

It also authorizes the Baltic Security Initiative and provides \$175m to support Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's defense. And it limits the Department of Defense's ability to drop the number of US forces in Europe to fewer than 76,000 and bars the US European commander from giving up the title of Nato supreme commander.

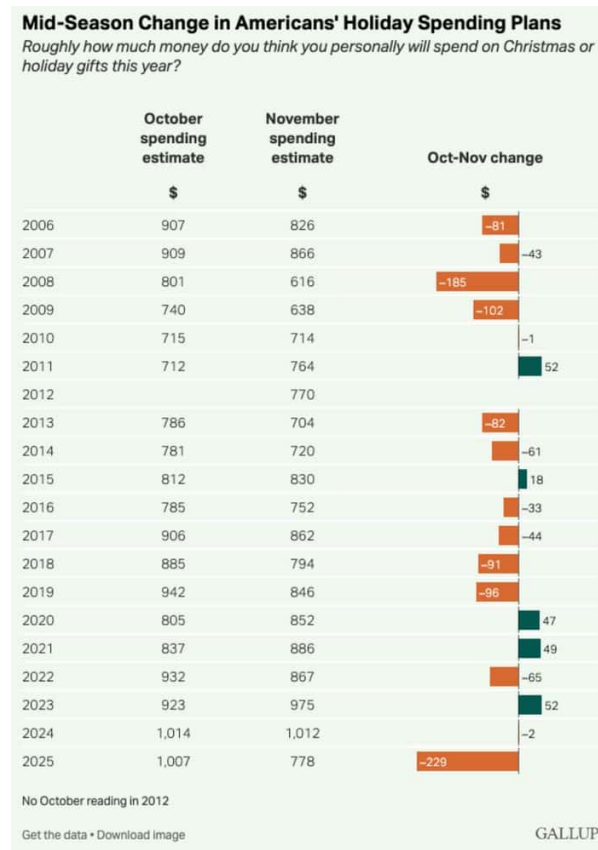
To be sure, thus far, Congress has done nothing to police Trump when he spends money in ways they tell him not to. But these restrictions (along with a few things to make Whiskey Pete Hegseth behave) might set up a conflict early in the year.

Remember: recruiting defectors actually takes efforts to reach out to them, often the opposite of what people think they want.

And while all that is not enough defectors to stop Trump, Marjorie Taylor Greene may set off a stampede for the exit. And that could make it easier for Jeffries, at least, to continue to pants Mike Johnson.

# Predictable catastrophe

Democrats have done a good job of seeding the ground to get credit for rescuing the country from Trump-caused catastrophes in healthcare and the economy – and both will exacerbate the other in days ahead.



I'm less sanguine that Democrats have prepared to rescue the country (and claim credit) for other likely Trump catastrophes, like a collapsing AI bubble or epidemic. Laying the ground for both is really critical, in the former case bc AI bros plan to spend big in 2026 in the same way crypto bros did in 2024, and in the former case, because bigots are trying to blame rising measles (and, now, whooping cough) on migrants rather than assholes like RFK Jr.

## 2026

Democrats are doing surprisingly well to position themselves for 2026, both because they're overperforming by numbers that suggest they will do well (including in elections, like

TN-07, with midyear-levels of turnout), and because they're matching Republican redistricting efforts (and Stephen Miller's goon squads mean the redistricting in Texas may not turn out like Trump wants).

But it will be harder to achieve a true Blue Wave than in 2018.

Even as this year's election results have left many in the party encouraged they can mount a massive blue wave, next year's battleground is a far cry from 2018 – with fewer Republican-held seats for Democrats to easily target.

Democrats don't need to win as many seats this time around, netting just three seats rather than two dozen to claim a majority. But the hill to reach a comfortable majority like the 235 seats they held after the last blue wave has grown much steeper, driven by multiple rounds of gerrymandering – including ongoing redistricting in several states that threatens to erode the battlefield even further.

The result is that Democrats could post a bigger national swing than in 2018 and still end up with a slimmer majority than they had after that year.

Where Democrats are doing better is in promising consequences if and when they do get a majority.

I'm more interested in Democrats promising those capitulating to Trump – whether it be law firms or Paramount – that there'll be consequences in 2027 than I am in discussions about impeachment (except for people like RFK Jr, such discussions will work against other Democratic efforts, IMO).

Such efforts, in my opinion, are one way to do more to lay out Trump's accountability for predictable disasters.

All in all, opponents of fascism have more

momentum than they had when caught flat-footed in January. But there's still a lot of work to do.