

# Asshole Elon Musk Could Be Democrats Secret Weapon in Midterms

Elon Musk's Approval Rating Plunges To New Low

By [Martha McHardy](#)

Much to the annoyance of [Democrats](#), [Elon Musk](#) has become a prominent figure in President [Donald Trump](#)'s administration. The [Tesla](#) CEO has spearheaded efforts to reduce the deficit by at least \$1 trillion, held private meetings on Capitol Hill, and even attended cabinet meetings.

However, Musk's growing influence in Washington may become a central factor in a Democratic resurgence in the 2026 midterms.

In recent weeks, Musk's approval ratings have plummeted. A recent poll conducted by the Harvard Center for American Political Studies and Harris, which surveyed 2,746 registered voters between March 26 and 27, found that 49 percent of respondents view Musk unfavorably, compared to just 39 percent who view him favorably. This is a sharp decline from February, when 44 percent said they viewed Musk favorably, and an equal percentage viewed him unfavorably.

Similarly, a YouGov/Economist poll, conducted between April 5-8 among 1,563 registered voters, showed a drop in Musk's favorability from 44 percent in January to 40 percent. Meanwhile, 54 percent of voters view him unfavorably, an increase from 48 percent in January.

Pollster [Nate Silver](#)'s tracker also shows Musk's approval rating deep underwater, with 54 percent of Americans viewing him unfavorably and 40 percent viewing him favorably.



Composite image of Elon Musk, the U.S. Capitol and the Democratic Party's donkey symbol.

Since joining the Trump administration, Musk has aggressively pushed for policies aimed at slashing government spending, rolling back regulations, and downsizing the federal workforce, all in his role as the head of the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). These efforts have triggered a series of legal challenges and widespread public backlash.

Just last week, thousands gathered in a series of global "Hands Off!" protests, expressing outrage over Musk's attempts to gut federal agencies and cut the federal workforce. Hundreds of "Tesla Takedown" demonstrations have also taken place, urging people to sell their Tesla vehicles and shares of the company's stock in protest of Musk. In March, its market value fell by 4 percent.

Musk's political clout was also shaken this month by the defeat of Brad Schimel, the Trump-backed judicial candidate, who lost to Susan Crawford by a 9-point margin in Wisconsin, despite Musk pouring millions of dollars into backing the [Republican](#) candidate. Since then, political analysts and GOP strategists have pointed to Musk's increasingly polarizing image as a key factor in the loss.



Demonstrators rally against Tesla CEO Elon Musk and U.S. President Donald Trump and their recent policies outside a Tesla showroom on April 5, 2025, in London. Alishia Abodunde/Getty Images  
"It was clear that his efforts to take a chainsaw to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are deeply unpopular with the majority of voters," Democratic strategist Doug Gordon told *Newsweek*.

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In response, a group of 77 House Democrats, led by Congressional Progressive Caucus Chair Greg Casar, is launching a campaign to force Musk to resign from his position at DOGE by May 30, saying it is "for the good of the country."

Amid Musk's declining popularity, Democrats are starting to see a path to recovery in the 2026 midterms after the party faced a humiliating defeat in the 2024 election, with Trump improving his vote share in almost every state, and the [Republicans](#) taking the House and the [Senate](#). Pollster Adam Carlson suggested that Democrats could adopt a strategy similar to the one Republicans used in 2010, when they targeted then House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#), whose low favorability ratings made her a more effective target than President [Barack Obama](#), who was still relatively popular.

Carlson argued that Musk, much like Pelosi at the time, could become a potent symbol for Democratic opposition, particularly if his favorability continues to decline while Trump's approval remains stable due to the loyalty of his base. However, recent polls have shown Trump's approval rating declining as well.

"Musk could serve as a powerful 'bonus bogeyman' for Democrats, particularly in tight races across the House, Senate, and state-level contests," Carlson said. "As we saw in Wisconsin last week, Musk is so electorally toxic that just the idea of him might be enough."

Carlson also noted that while Democrats should focus their attacks on Trump ahead of the 2026 midterms, "having that bonus bogeyman who is loathed by swing voters could be pivotal in key House, Senate, governor, and downballot races."

Thomas Gift, an associate professor of political science and director of the Centre on U.S. Politics at University College London, agreed, telling *Newsweek*: "Elon Musk will certainly have a political target on his back in the 2026 midterms. The fact that DOGE is waning in popularity, and many voters resent Musk trying to buy elections with his wealth, will serve as energizers for the Democratic base." "Musk does offer the Democrats an advantage in campaigning in that he is increasingly unpopular and his wealth is very otherworldly to most Americans," G. Elliott Morris, former director of 538 for [ABC](#) News, said.

Democratic strategist Christy Setzer pointed to recent protests and strong special election results as signs of rising Democratic momentum. Setzer sees Musk as a powerful symbol for Democrats to rally against, particularly if they tie him directly to Trump, framing both as a unified threat.

"There's a clear and obvious upside in going after Musk—just ask the Wisconsin electorate, who showed him the door in dramatic fashion just last week," Setzer said.

Indeed, in Wisconsin's recent [Supreme Court](#) election, the Democrats framed their victory as a repudiation of Musk. Following their success, [DNC](#) Chair Ken Martin issued a statement criticizing both Trump and Musk for undermining key social programs like Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, all in favor of tax cuts for the wealthy. He also blamed their economic policies—especially the "Liberation Day" tariffs—for eroding consumer confidence and fueling fears of a recession. On a recent episode of the *Hacks On Tap* podcast, former Obama-era adviser [David Axelrod](#) characterized the recent Wisconsin election as "a referendum on Elon Musk," not Trump. "Democrats see it as more fruitful to go after Musk," Axelrod explained.



Billionaire businessman Elon Musk arrives for a town hall wearing a cheesehead hat on March 30, 2025, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Scott Olson/Getty Images

However, Giff warned that while Musk and DOGE's declining popularity could energize the Democratic base, the party still needs a compelling, positive agenda to make significant inroads.

"Democrats still need a positive message about what they stand for. Like in November's election, simply running against Trump or against Musk won't be enough for Democrats to make the kind of gains in the House and Senate they hope for in 2026."

Morris echoed this caution, noting that it is unlikely to repair the party's credibility on key issues such as crime, inflation, and trade, where voters still express skepticism.

"I do not think the backlash to him alone will be enough to repair the party's credibility where it was before [Joe] Biden took office," Morris told *Newsweek*. "Americans tell pollsters they do not trust Democrats to handle crime, the economy, inflation, guns, trade, etc. Just fighting against Musk will not fix all of those problems for them."

In order to retake the House and the Senate in the 2026 midterms, the Democrats face an uphill battle. Since Trump won against his opponent [Kamala Harris](#), the [Democratic Party](#) has seen record-low approval ratings.

According to an [NBC News](#) poll from March 7-11, 55 percent of respondents said they had a negative view of the Democratic Party, while 27 percent said they had a positive perception. That is the lowest level recorded since NBC News began asking the question in 1990.

There was also evidence of dissatisfaction with the party from its base, with 20 percent of Democratic voters viewing it negatively, twice as high as the figure for Republicans who had a negative view of their party. The poll had a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

Some recent polls have also shown that Trump's approval rating among Democrats is actually rising, indicating that some voters may be less hostile to him than in the past.

In a recent interview on *Real Time with Bill Maher*, California Governor [Gavin Newsom](#) described his party's brand as "toxic."

"Democrats, we tend to be a little more judgmental than we should be," Newsom added.

"We need to own our mistakes. We need to own what's wrong with our party."

But Setzer argued that her party's popularity has declined because it has been weak in the face of Trump—something that has frustrated voters.

"Democrats aren't standing up strongly against the biggest threat to our economy and our democracy in history," she told *Newsweek*.

Looking ahead to the 2026 midterms, Setzer argues that if Democrats want to use the unpopularity of figures like Musk as part of their campaign, they must connect that negative image directly to Trump.

By doing so, they can use the public's dislike of Musk to also weaken the president's support. Setzer believes this strategy—attacking both at the same time—can help diminish Trump's power and mobilize voters against him.

"Democrats, r anyone who wishes to stop Trump, need to make sure they're tying Musk's toxicity to Trump and taking him down in the process," Setzer said.