

The Socialist Threat Is Real

America will be in serious trouble if Democrats fail to defend their party.

By Mark Penn and Andrew Stein, July 2, 2026



Demonstrators in New York, June 25.

Adam Gray/Bloomberg News

Last month's election results in [New York](#), Colorado, Pennsylvania and elsewhere are a 911 call for the Democratic Party and America. The advancement of Democratic Socialists of America members to Congress, state legislatures and local offices, often by beating

Democratic incumbents, shows how broken the primary system is and how alienated young educated white voters in urban areas have become.

The turnouts in New York's elections were well below anything that could be called representative of the community. Only 18% to 25% of registered Democrats voted in each of the closed primaries for three contested House nominations. This means that a good organizational effort can impose its will with less than 15% of the party electorate. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez won her first primary, in 2018, with fewer than 17,000 votes in a district of 715,000 eligible voters. Since these are overwhelmingly Democratic districts, Republicans and independents don't count at all, and turnout, not viewpoint, becomes the critical factor.

This "revolution" is driven not by the working class but by the urban professional class that is willing to support candidates who celebrate 9/11, cheer at the massacre of 1,000 Israeli and American kids, would defund the police, abolish prisons, end private property and open the borders. New York's Rep. Adriano Espaillat, chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, lost his seat.

Even Letitia James, the Empire State's left-wing attorney general, was troubled by the results: "Some of the candidates that [Mayor Zohran Mamdani] has supported are individuals who do not understand the politics of New York City, the cultural differences from district to district, who have not been part of the history and the struggle of some of these districts, and are relatively new to the body politic."

This wake-up call requires action at all levels. Reps. Tom Suozzi (D., N.Y.) and Adam Gray (D., Calif.) have formed a coalition, Promise to America, that stands for moderate principles: “We are capitalist, not socialist. . . . We want safety, not lawlessness. . . . We are [fiscally] responsible, not reckless. . . . We believe government should solve problems, not create them. . . . We are mainstream, not extreme. . . . We are proud, not ashamed of America.” So far eight other Democratic lawmakers and five candidates have signed on. In a closely divided Congress, this bloc could wield considerable power.

But moderates alone can’t defeat this movement. Left-of-center voices like James Carville, Neera Tanden and Ms. James have sounded the alarm and will have to split from the far left or find themselves sidelined. Voter registration and turnout are nonprofit activities, and that means mainstream politicians need new get-out-the-vote organizations to mobilize the huge majority of voters who are sitting at home while socialists and communists make their way into positions of power.

Lawmakers, law-enforcement agencies and journalists should investigate the DSA to see if it is being funded by foreign governments and interests. Political-action committees and advocacy groups that have focused on federal races have to realize that the DSA initially focuses on low-turnout local races and nonprofit boards as easy targets. Once in power, its members degrade law enforcement with policies that encourage street vagrancy, drug abuse and higher taxes, fueling more voter anger, which they exploit at election time. Moderate PACs and other groups need a battle plan for every campaign from district attorney to Congress, city council to state legislature.

They also need a communications program on social media aimed at educating young people about the events that schools ignore—from the bloody history of communism to the Holocaust and 9/11. They need to learn that the true aim of Iran and their proxies like [Hamas](#) and Hezbollah is the destruction of Israel and Jews everywhere. They need to understand that competence, not TikTok videos matter, and that without police urban life would be hell.

If these things don’t happen, New York and other cities will decay further. More productive citizens will vote with their feet, vagrants and criminals will overtake more public spaces, social-service costs will explode, and the schools will deteriorate further.

Republicans may gain in the short run, but they aren’t a factor in most major cities, and they have shown a capacity to lose against an increasingly left-wing Democratic party, as they did in 2006, 2008, 2012, 2018 and 2020. If mainstream Democrats don’t retake their party, you may not recognize America the next time it wins a national election.

Mr. Penn was a pollster and adviser to Bill and Hillary Clinton, 1995-2008. He is chairman of the Harris Poll and CEO of [Stagwell](#) Inc. Mr. Stein served as New York City Council president, 1986-93.