

United States after the elections: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ends truce by warning 'incompetent' Democratic party

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New York representative denies Movement for Black Lives and Green New Deal cost seats.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has criticised the Democratic party for incompetence in a no-holds-barred, post-election interview with the New York Times [\[1\]](#), warning that if the Biden administration does not put progressives in top positions, the party would lose big in the 2022 midterm elections.

Signaling that the internal moratorium in place while the Democrats worked to defeat Donald Trump was over, the leftwing New York representative sharply rejected the notion advanced by some Democrats [\[2\]](#) that progressive messaging around the Movement for Black Lives and the Green New Deal led to the party's loss of congressional seats in last week's election.

The real problem, said Ocasio-Cortez, was that the party lacked "core competencies" to run campaigns.

"There's a reason Barack Obama built an entire national campaign apparatus outside of the Democratic National Committee," she told the Times' Astead Herndon [\[3\]](#). "And there's a reason that when he didn't activate or continue that, we lost House majorities. Because the party - in and of itself - does not have the core competencies, and no amount of money is going to fix that."

Ocasio-Cortez, who defeated a longtime Democratic politician in 2018 and who won re-election in her Bronx district by more than 50 points, endorsed the Vermont senator, Bernie Sanders, over Joe Biden in the Democratic presidential primary.

Since then, Ocasio-Cortez and her closest allies in Congress - a four-woman group known as "the squad" who all won reelection last week - toed the party line while calling on grassroots activists to boost Biden and Democrats down-ticket.

The truce is over. The failure of the party to operate an online strategy "in a real way that exhibits competence", Ocasio-Cortez told the Times, made it hypocritical for the party to advance criticism of progressive messaging.

"If I lost my election, and I went out and I said: 'This is moderates' fault. This is because you didn't let us have a floor vote on Medicare for all.' And they opened the hood on my campaign, and they found that I only spent \$5,000 on TV ads the week before the election?" Ocasio-Cortez said. "They would laugh. And that's what they look like right now trying to blame the Movement for Black Lives for their loss."

Grassroots activism that produced large turnout in Detroit, Philadelphia and Georgia was crucial to Biden's win, and if the Democratic party fails to recognise that and incorporate the grassroots, the

party disintegrates at the ballot box, Ocasio-Cortez said.

“It’s really hard for us to turn out nonvoters when they feel like nothing changes for them. When they feel like people don’t see them, or even acknowledge their turnout,” Ocasio-Cortez said.

“If the party believes after 94% of Detroit went to Biden, after Black organisers just doubled and tripled turnout down in Georgia, after so many people organised Philadelphia, the signal from the Democratic party is the John Kasich won us this election? I mean, I can’t even describe how dangerous that is.”

Kasich is a former Republican governor of Ohio who campaigned for Biden, endorsing him as a centrist that moderate Republicans could get behind. Such an appeal might have had traction in some places, such as northern Michigan and western Omaha. But Trump beat Biden in Ohio by eight points and half a million votes.

The Ocasio-Cortez interview is full of frank impressions freely shared. Asked what her “macro takeaway” was from the election, she said: “Well, I think the central one is that we aren’t in a freefall to hell anymore.” Asked whether there was anything about the election that surprised her, she said: “The share of white support for Trump. I thought the polling was off, but just seeing it, there was that feeling of realising what work we have to do.”

While there were concerns about the reliability of exit polls this year with so much voting happening over mail and the failure of polls generally, Trump appeared to have won white voters in 2020 by about as much as he did in 2016 – 15 points.

The coming period of presidential transition and the Biden administration’s early days will be crucial to determining whether the Democratic party will incorporate in a permanent way its grassroots progressive engine – or veer off down a path toward defeat, Ocasio-Cortez said.

“So I need my colleagues to understand that we are not the enemy,” she said. “And that their base is not the enemy. That the Movement for Black Lives is not the enemy, that Medicare for all is not the enemy. This isn’t even just about winning an argument. It’s that if they keep going after the wrong thing, I mean, they’re just setting up their own obsolescence.”

Appearing on CNN later in the day, Ocasio-Cortez said: “Progressives have assets to offer the party that the party has not yet fully leaned into... Every single swing seat member that co-sponsored Medicare for All won their re-election, and so the conversation is a little bit deeper than saying anything progressive is toxic.”

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P.S.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/08/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-ends-truce-by-warning-incompetent-democratic-party>

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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/aoc-biden-progressives.html>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/democrats>

[3] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/aoc-biden-progressives.html>