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The Decline of Far-Left Electoral Organizations



Third Way,

Takeaways

- Candidates endorsed by Our Revolution, the Sunrise Movement, and Justice Democrats have not flipped a single Republican-held seat blue over the last three election cycles.
- Far-left endorsed House candidates (non-incumbents) have lost 97 of the 117 races in which they have competed since 2018, an 83% loss rate.
- Candidates endorsed by Justice Democrats have lost 63 of the 72 non-incumbent races in which they have competed—an 88% loss rate. Sunrise Movement candidates have a 66% loss rate since 2018, while Our Revolution candidates have a 51% loss rate.

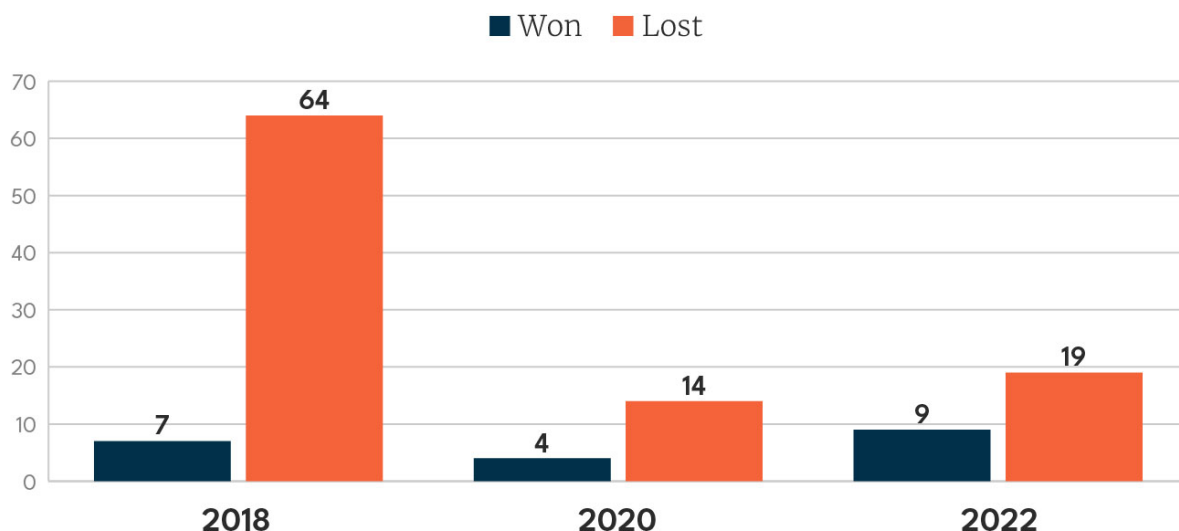
Far-left groups have been arguing for years that more progressive congressional candidates have a better chance of winning, saying they will energize base voters, increase turnout, and deliver victory. Yet, for three election cycles in a row, mainstream Democrats have outperformed the far-left candidates these organizations have endorsed in the races that determine who holds power in Congress.

In fact, candidates endorsed by Our Revolution, the Sunrise Movement, and Justice Democrats have not managed to flip a single Republican-held seat over the last three cycles. Given this weak track record, we decided to look at how non-incumbent House candidates endorsed by far-left groups have fared since 2018. The results are nothing short of shocking.

The Far-Left's Loss Rate: 83%

Since 2018, the first election after Trump was elected and spurred the Resistance, non-incumbent House candidates endorsed by far-left groups Justice Democrats, the Sunrise Movement, and Our Revolution have lost 97 races across both primary and general elections—an 83% loss rate. A total of 64 of these losses came in primaries, and 33 were in general election races.

Far-Left Endorsed House Candidates (Non-incumbents) Have Lost 97 Races since 2018, an 83% Loss Rate.



Source: Analysis of Sunrise, Justice Democrats, and Our Revolution endorsed candidates.

Despite what appears to be a more selective endorsement process in each successive cycle, there has not been a single election since 2018 where far-left candidates have won more races than they have lost. Most importantly, these groups have contributed nothing to expand Democrats' share of seats in the House of Representatives—having never flipped a Republican-held seat blue. Every opportunity that far-left endorsed candidates have had to flip a red seat blue since 2018 has come up short.

One of these races came in a crucial battleground district, which was previously held by a moderate Democrat. In 2022, Our Revolution-endorsed candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner primaried the moderate incumbent Rep. Kurt Schrader in OR-05, a Biden+9 competitive district, but she failed to win the general election and ended up flipping a blue seat red. The main reason why: moderate and conservative voters overwhelmingly dominate the makeup of this district, leaving a progressive Our Revolution candidate at a significant disadvantage in the general election. In what should have been a very winnable district with a moderate incumbent, this Our Revolution loss helped pave the way for Republicans taking the House of Representatives in 2022 by a slim five-seat majority.

A similar story played out in Nebraska's 2nd Congressional district in 2018, when Justice Democrat Kara Eastman beat former Congressman Brad Ashford in the primary by three points and went on to lose in the general election in what was a blue wave election year—underperforming Democrats' stellar national performance by 10 points. In 2020, Eastman again proceeded to fall short in the NE-02 general election—this time, by an even larger margin. Yet, another missed opportunity played

out in 2018 when Our Rev candidate Dana Balter ran in NY-24, a Clinton+4 competitive district, and proceeded to lose and underperform Clinton by 10 points—the worst result of any Democrat running in a Clinton–Republican district.

But this story is nothing new. Candidates endorsed by these far-left organizations have an atrocious record since they were founded in 2017. Justice Democrats has lost 63 of the 72 non-incumbent races in which they have endorsed—an 88% loss rate. Sunrise Movement candidates have a 66% loss rate since 2018, while Our Revolution candidates have a 51% loss rate.

Far-Left House Candidates Have Suffered Enormous Losses since 2018

Organization	Non-Incumbent Races	Non-Incumbent Losses	Loss Rate
Justice Democrats	72	63	88%
Sunrise Movement	29	19	66%
Our Revolution	96	49	51%

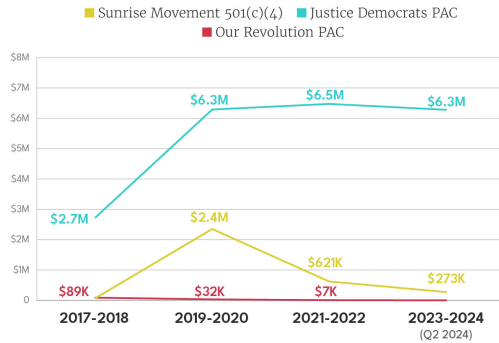
Source: Analysis of Sunrise, Justice Democrats, and Our Revolution endorsed candidates.



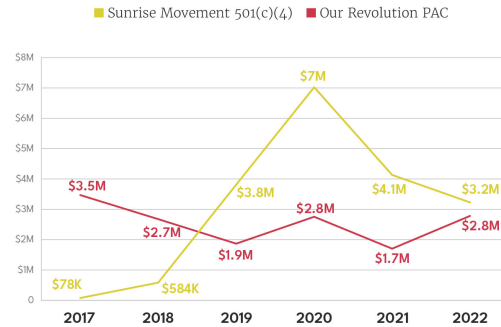
A Losing Record Is Costly

Interestingly, Justice Democrats has managed to deliver the greatest number of losses while raising the most amount of money among these far-left organizations. Justice Democrats PAC, with an 88% loss rate, has raised nearly \$22 million through 2024, according to FEC reports. Only nine non-incumbent Justice Democrats have gone on to win their races, all of them in deep blue districts. That’s \$1.7 million per blue seat and no flips. Four victories came in 2018 when Justice Democrats raised \$2.7 million. Three wins came in 2020 with \$6.3 million raised, and two occurred in 2022 with \$6.5 million raised. It appears that Justice Democrats’ win record decreased even as their fundraising increased—and none of the seats won flipped that district from red to blue.

Sunrise, Justice Democrats, and Our Revolution PACs Fundraising



Sunrise Movement and Our Revolution 501(c)(4) Revenue



Source: Analysis of Sunrise, Justice Democrats, and Our Revolution FEC reports; Analysis of Sunrise Movement & Our Revolution 501(c)(4) ProPublica reports.

Meanwhile, Sunrise PAC fundraising has steadily decreased since 2020, while Our Revolution shuttered their PAC in favor of devoting more resources towards their 501(c)(4). In total, Our Revolution’s 501(c)(4) has raised \$15 million since 2017, with their best year of fundraising being 2017. Sunrise Movement’s 501(c)(4) has raised \$18.8 million since 2017, with 2020 being their best year of fundraising—although Sunrise candidates managed to win just three races in deep blue districts during in that peak fundraising cycle.

Conclusion

Looking at the 2024 election cycle, far left endorsements of non-incumbents have been few and far between compared to what they had been in prior cycles—and likely for good reason. Two far-left incumbents have lost primaries this cycle for one simple reason: voters don’t want purity tests and showmanship in their representatives; they want mainstream, reasonable, and pragmatic leaders who will get things done. In an election year where control of the House of Representatives will come down to less than a dozen conservative-leaning districts—and given the atrocious record of these far-left groups in competitive districts since their inception—it is clear that the path to winning Congress is not through the far left but through the center.

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