

[Opinion](#)  
[Guest Voices](#)



On the final day of early voting ahead of the U.S. presidential election, residents wait in line to cast their ballots at the Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Office in Largo, Fla., Nov. 4. (OSV News/Reuters/Octavio Jones)



Thomas Reese

[View Author Profile](#)

Follow on Twitter at [@thomasreeseSJ](#)

Religion News Service

[View Author Profile](#)

## [Join the Conversation](#)

November 13, 2024

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

An editorial writer is someone who comes upon the scene of a disaster and assigns blame. This election season has provided rich fodder for editorial writers of both parties, but especially Democrats.

In such a close election, almost anyone could be blamed or praised for the results. Democrats will look for people to blame; Republicans for people to praise. The [exit polls](#) are bad news for Democrats, showing them doing worse with women, Hispanics and young people than they did in the last two presidential elections.

Having followed the American political scene since I was a graduate student in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, in the early 1970s, I know that this process of blame and praise often ignores larger trends that really mattered.

Instead, here are five takeaways that I believe political scientists and historians will be pondering for years in an attempt to make sense out of this election.

First, yes, it was the economy, stupid. From the Great Depression through the 1960s, men without a college education were the backbone of the Democratic Party — so much so that progressive elites, who had lured them into the party, came to take them for granted. Their concerns were not taken seriously, and instead, Democrats constantly talked of the plight of minorities and women, but not of working-class males.

Under President Bill Clinton, free trade and globalization were supposed to make everyone's life better, but in reality, they only made the lives of the college-educated better. Blue-collar workers were told to retrain for new industries after their jobs were lost, but the programs meant to facilitate this were a joke.

With the end of factory jobs, the path to the middle class closed for many men, and the healthy neighborhoods and small towns they supported were gutted. It should have surprised no one that these alienated men turned to Donald Trump as their

savior. COVID, supply chain disruptions and the Biden administration's massive spending bills, meant to fix this problem, added inflation to that mix.

Second, nativism, racism and isolationism, which have afflicted America in the past, are by no means dead.

The Republican Party appears to be especially susceptible to these diseases. Richard Nixon had his Southern Strategy to entice Southern whites into the party. He also preyed on the fears of white middle-class Americans with faintly disguised racial tropes.

Wall Street elites, who favored immigration and globalization, thought they could continue to control the party even as it racked up votes by pandering to bigots. But with the rise of Trump, they lost their handle on the party. This is no longer the GOP of Ronald Reagan or the Bushes.

## Advertisement

This profoundly changed the political landscape. College-educated Americans who once tended to vote Republican because of economic issues switched to the Democratic Party because they rejected the GOP's culture wars. Noncollege educated whites became Republican. This was the most significant party realignment since white Southern voters turned Republican at the end of the 1960s.

Third, Kamala Harris attempted to mobilize women with her uncompromising support for abortion, but the strategy did not work. Her edge among women this year (10 percentage points) did not exceed that of Biden (15) or Hillary Clinton (13). Nor did Taylor Swift deliver younger voters (18 to 29 years), who shifted toward Trump in comparison with 2020 and 2016.

Women's issues are central to the Democratic Party. The teachers' union, whose members are mostly women, is the party's most powerful ally. Abortion is nonnegotiable for the party, as are diversity, equity and inclusion.

Yet despite the GOP doing everything it could to push women away — nominating Trump, a serial abuser of women; demonizing DEI programs; and largely retaining its opposition to abortion on the state level — the party doesn't seem to have lost its share of women.

Fourth, the anti-abortion movement is in disarray without a home, as both political parties have become pro-choice. While anti-abortion forces celebrated the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* two years ago, it was a Pyrrhic victory, as a majority of voters in almost every state where it was on the ballot voted to protect abortion rights.

For years, the anti-abortion movement ignored the polls and claimed that the American public was opposed to legalized abortion. The polls and the votes on abortion-related referendums show that the public wants abortion to be legal.

Instead of converting the public to their cause, anti-abortion proponents relied on Republican politicians and judges to get their way. Facing electoral losses, Trump and Republican politicians ran away from the issue as quickly as they could.

But Democrats have only doubled down on choice. After Trump forced the GOP to abandon its abortion plank at the party's convention this summer, Harris showed herself unwilling to say that medical personnel would not be forced to perform an abortion if it violates their faith, even though, as a lawyer, she knows courts will support doctors whose consciences will not allow them to do abortions. (In any case, who in their right mind would want an unwilling doctor to operate on them?)

Fifth, evangelical leaders continue to compromise their Christian beliefs for partisan ends. While most Catholic bishops do not endorse candidates or political parties — and I thank God they don't — they also fail to point out that LifeSiteNews, Catholic Vote and Catholics for Catholics are political not Catholic organizations.

Too many progressive Democrats, meanwhile, continue to exhibit hostility toward religious Americans — remarkable, given that both Joe Biden and Harris are active Christians themselves.

In late October, when a man yelled, "Jesus is Lord," at a Harris rally in Wisconsin, she responded, "You guys are at the wrong rally."

This was a stupid response. She could have said, "Yes, and Jesus said, 'Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked.' He said, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Isn't it wonderful that we live in a country where everyone can believe and practice their faith in freedom."

Progressive Democrats don't know how to talk to Christians, even when Jesus is on their side.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. [View the full series.](#)