



## Dems will struggle to pry middle-class Americans away from Trump

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Former Vice President Joe Biden is viewed by many as the Democrats' best hope of winning back those blue-collar workers in states like Ohio and Michigan who defied tradition and voted for Donald Trump in 2016.

Certainly, compared to progressives like Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) or Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), the likeable "Uncle Joe," raised in hardscrabble Scranton, Pa. by middle-class parents, seems a good bet to reconnect with those voters.

But what does Biden or any other Democrat hoping to beat President Trump in 2020 offer the middle class? Nothing but the politics of envy and a transparent effort to misrepresent and belittle the current economy.

During a recent interview with "CBS This Morning," Biden, who has hinted he might run in 2020, urged his party to "focus on all the terrible things that are happening now in terms of interest of the middle-class people and working-class people."

What exactly are those terrible things, Joe? Would that be the unprecedented number of jobs that are currently available, unemployment that is near a 50-year low, rising wages, lower middle-class taxes that the GOP incorporated in the tax reform bill and that every Democrat voted against, or maybe the increased credits for child care?

Working-class Americans are prospering in today's economy. Democrats running for office this year have struggled to offer up any competitive economic program because it's tough to combat the booming jobs market and accelerating growth.

Instead, they are studiously ignoring the obvious success of the Trump agenda — the roll-back of cumbersome regulations and reduced taxes — and the consequent soaring optimism among consumers and business owners alike.

Joe Biden, and others in his party, have instead manufactured a fiction that Trump's policies have caused the middle class' struggles to worsen. The narrative starts with the false assertion that the GOP tax cuts benefited only the rich and corporations.

This argument is well-trod ground, but it is important to call out Democrats who continue to lie about the tax bill. The Washington Post awarded two "Pinocchio's" to Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) earlier this year when she described the GOP reforms as a "debt-inducing, make-rich-people-richer tax bill that in the long run is not going to be helpful to the vast majority of people in my state...".

The Post noted that the left-leaning Tax Policy Center estimated that 80 percent of Americans got a tax cut and that the only people hurt by the bill were high earners living in states with onerous state and local taxes, who could no longer deduct those outlays.

They also cite the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation's estimate that, thanks to the GOP bill, people earning between \$30,000 and \$200,000 would see their taxes drop by 7.5 percent to 11.5 percent, depending on their bracket, with the bigger savings coming at lower income levels.

Cato Institute Fellow Chris Edwards calculates that if payroll taxes (which were unchanged) are excluded, the tax burden on those earning between \$40,000 and \$200,000 drops by 14.8 percent to 56.3 percent, again with the biggest savings accruing to those in the lower income brackets.

If you repeat a lie often enough, it gains traction. That has been the guiding principle for Democrats this year: Tell people they didn't benefit from the tax bill and some will believe it, even as their withholdings drop.

Meanwhile, the employment situation for working Americans is the best it's been in decades. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were an unprecedented 7.1 million jobs available at the end of August (latest available) and a record 5.8 million hires that month — also a series record.

More good news comes from the elevated "Quits" rate, implying that record numbers of workers are leaving their jobs, confident they'll find something better.

Wages, which stagnated over the past decade, have finally moved higher, rising 2.8 percent in September. The Atlanta Fed wage tracker puts the 3-month moving average of median wage growth at 3.5 percent, while for "prime age" workers the rise is 3.9 percent.

Despite the obvious improvement in most Americans' financial outlook, Democrats hope to bring voters aboard by stirring up envy of those better off. As Hillary Clinton did in 2016, they constantly call for higher taxes on the wealthy, saying those folks need to "pay their fair share."

But a recent analysis by Bloomberg shows that the richest Americans are paying their fair share and then some. Bloomberg reported, "The top 1 percent paid a greater share of individual income taxes (37.3 percent) than the bottom 90 percent combined (30.5 percent)." Also, "The top 50 percent of all taxpayers paid 97 percent of total individual income taxes."

The Economist magazine described the U.S. tax code as "perhaps the most progressive tax system in the rich world...".

In a recently released NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, Americans by a wide margin (43-28) judged Republicans better able to deal with the economy than Democrats. The economy and jobs still rank first among voters' concerns.

Respondents also credited Republicans (44-27) with better protecting the country's interests on trade issues, important to U.S. factory workers.

Those are pivotal votes of confidence. As we approach Election Day on Nov. 6, we will see whether Democrats have been successful in convincing middle-class Americans that they are worse off under President Trump and a GOP Congress.

In that same poll, asked which party is “looking out for the middle class,” Democrats get the nod over Republicans 39-31. However, that eight-point difference is the slimmest lead for Democrats in the past 30 years. In 1990, the GOP trailed in that assessment by 29 points and by 20 points in 2011.

It sounds like, despite the fog of Democrat deception, middle-class Americans are coming around to the truth: the Trump agenda is working for them.