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**These six Democrats are showing the party
how to resist Trump 2.0:
As leadership dithers, individual politicians are taking up the fight.**

By Perry Bacon Jr.

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Many on the left, myself included, are furious at Democratic Party officials for not aggressively contesting President Donald Trump. The decision by Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (New York) last week to acquiesce to a Trump-backed budget bill was the [latest in a series of capitulations](#) by [congressional Democrats](#). Even worse is California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has bizarrely decided this is the time for him to start a podcast with [softball interviews of pro-Trump conservatives](#) such as Stephen K. Bannon and Charlie Kirk.

But there are some Democratic politicians who are showing real fight and resolve — and have from the start of Trump’s second term. They are not only voting against his initiatives but attacking him in ways intentionally designed to get media attention and galvanize opposition against the new administration.

Here are some of the stars of Resistance 2.0, at least in the first two months of the second Trump administration. It’s not a comprehensive list, nor is it a power ranking (I have ordered them alphabetically), but each of these figures has distinguished themselves in ways that others in the party should emulate.

Rep. Jasmine Crockett (Texas)

The second-term congresswoman plainly states what many Democratic voters believe but their elected officials often won’t say. Asked what she would tell Elon Musk if she had a chance to speak with him, Crockett had a two-word answer: [“F — off.”](#) While many Democratic officials are reluctant to defend diversity, equity and inclusion programs, Crockett has [repeatedly emphasized their benefits](#) and cast critics of such initiatives as [“mediocre White boys.”](#)

The [43-year-old](#) was part of a group of members [who walked out](#) in the middle of Trump’s recent speech to a joint session of Congress, [reportedly drawing House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries’s \(New York\) ire](#).



I don’t think Democratic candidates running in swing districts and states next year should be as partisan as Crockett, or as progressive on identity issues. But most Democrats

aren't running in swing areas! (Crockett received about [85 percent of the vote last November](#) in her [Dallas-based](#) district.) Members in very blue areas can and should echo the very real anger and frustration of millions of Americans with what's happening in our country. Other members, such as Florida's Maxwell Frost, Massachusetts' Ayanna Pressley and New Mexico's Melanie Stansbury, have also been notable for telling the whole truth about Trump.

Sen. Chris Murphy (Connecticut)

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut) on Feb. 8, 2024. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post) At the start of Trump's second term, Senate Democrats, [led by Schumer](#), seemed desperate to show that they were not too partisan and would work with the new administration when possible. Not Murphy. Within weeks of Trump's inauguration, the Connecticut senator, not previously known as a liberal firebrand, was using terms such as ["red alert" and "constitutional crisis."](#)

And while other congressional Democrats now sound more like Murphy, he's still ahead of them in clearly articulating the dangers of the administration's actions. So while [Jeffries](#) and [Schumer](#) released equivocal statements when Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil was detained by the Trump administration last week, Murphy [said](#), "In dictatorships, they call this 'a disappearance.'" Such vivid language is important to describe the gravity of Khalil's arrest and, unfortunately, probably more convincing to the media and the average American coming from a middle-aged White man. (Murphy is [51](#).)

Murphy is also making an important intellectual contribution to the anti-Trump movement. Some on the left say that Democrats should attack Trump largely on economic issues, particularly his closeness to Musk and other billionaires. Others argue it's more important to focus on the president undermining democratic norms and values. But Murphy [rightly emphasizes both](#), and their interconnectedness.

"He's got two goals. I think he wants to enrich his friends and destroy our democracy," Murphy told The Post's Paul Kane last month, describing the president.

It's fairly clear that the Connecticut senator is [positioning himself for a 2028 presidential run](#), with a particular appeal to the anti-billionaire voters who backed Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) and Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts) in recent Democratic primaries. You might feel that makes his resistance less sincere.

I don't care. We need Democrats fighting Trump hard — whatever their motives. If Murphy helps address this crisis of democracy now, I'll be thrilled to reward him with my vote in the future.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (New York)

Ocasio-Cortez, [35](#), was such a strong critic of the president during his first term that Trump, in one of the most racist statements a modern president has made, declared that Ocasio-Cortez and the other three members of “the Squad” [should go back to their home countries](#). (This is her country — Ocasio-Cortez [was born in the Bronx](#).)

But while the congresswoman’s anti-Trump fervor is not unexpected, it is passionate and creative. With Trump entering office on a promise to deport millions, Ocasio-Cortez’s office conducted [an online seminar emphasizing immigrants’ rights](#). That led Trump border czar Tom Homan to publicly suggest that the congresswoman should be investigated by the Justice Department.

The New York congresswoman responded by [mocking Homan in a post on Bluesky](#). “Maybe he can learn to read. The Constitution would be a good place to start,” she wrote. Then, Ocasio-Cortez sent [a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi](#) that she also released publicly, asking if the congresswoman was being investigated by the DOJ, emphasizing that such a probe would be a violation of her rights.

The letter was the formal, Congress-speak equivalent of Crockett’s comment to Musk. She has not received a response from the administration.

Other Democrats should emulate how Ocasio-Cortez dealt with Homan. She both belittled him — he can’t even get a MAGA attorney general to take him seriously — and cast him as an authoritarian.

Ocasio-Cortez is also playing a critical role by criticizing fellow Democrats who are not meeting this moment. She spent last week urging Democratic activists to call their senators, [including her home state colleague Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand](#), to build opposition to the government funding bill. Gillibrand and Schumer still paved the way for it to pass, but they no doubt felt the heat from party activists that was driven by Ocasio-Cortez. And now progressives are urging her to run for Schumer’s seat in 2028.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker

Newsom is perhaps the biggest disappointment [among the 23 Democratic governors](#). But many of them, particularly in the early weeks of the Trump administration, also seemed more focused on appealing to swing voters in Wisconsin in November 2028 (as the party’s presidential nominee) than contesting Trump’s actions in early 2025.

In contrast, Pritzker has rightly recognized that liberal states and institutions are in a war against an administration determined to either destroy them or force them into full

compliance with its edicts. So on Jan. 20, only hours after the inauguration, the 60-year-old governor [released a statement](#) sharply criticizing the president's initial executive orders and correctly predicting Trump would ignore the rule of law on a number of issues. The governor [announced a ban](#) on state jobs for Illinois residents who had participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection and been pardoned by Trump. He has [likened the administration's attacks on the rule of law to the Nazis](#), a stance that is even more significant because Pritzker is Jewish.

Like Murphy, Pritzker is likely to run for president in 2028. But as long as his campaigning pushes him toward contesting Trump and away from podcasting with Bannon, that's fine with me.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont)

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) on Jan. 16. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)
In many ways, the [83-year-old's "Fighting Oligarchy" national tour](#) is nothing new. Sanders spent 2016 to 2020 traveling the country and bashing the wealthy in his two presidential campaigns.

But the thousands of people who came to Sanders's initial appearances in Omaha and Iowa City last month were important. Those events showed that many liberals were desperate for a high-profile, left-leaning figure to act like we are in a national emergency. Other Democratic politicians started holding similar events.

And the prominence of Musk and other billionaires in the Trump administration validates the premise of Sanders's two presidential runs. Many Democrats who used to be less populist on economic issues, including Murphy, now mirror Sanders's language. Resistance 1.0 was largely about defending the rule of law and democratic norms. Resistance 2.0 is in many ways centered around the problem of Musk and other billionaires amassing too much power, making Sanders a kind of godfather of the movement.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz speaks to a crowd of supporters during a rally at the Highmark Amphitheater in Erie, Pennsylvania, on Sept. 5. (Dustin Franz/For The Washington Post)
Walz hosted an anti-Trump town hall in Des Moines last Friday. That was the first event of a [planned national tour](#). I'm glad Walz is out there, but Sanders beat him by about a month in this regard. And Walz, 60, is also a likely 2028 presidential candidate, making his resistance also a bit self-interested.

But I've included the Minnesota governor on this list for two reasons. First, he is a very

important figure in the party making the case for a more aggressive resistance to Trump. I know Sanders had two strong presidential campaigns. But Walz, as the 2024 vice-presidential nominee, was a true national standard-bearer for the Democrats. His early visibility and clear-eyed attacks on Trump's radicalism are important, particularly since Joe Biden, Barack Obama and Kamala Harris have said almost nothing since Trump was elected. Their silence gives the implicit message that the country's most prominent Democrats don't think anything too significant has occurred in the last two months. "The road to authoritarianism is littered with people saying, 'You're overreacting,'" he told the crowd in Des Moines.

Secondly, Walz is actually taking responsibility for the Democrats' losses in 2024. I am still, four months after the podcast aired, furious that Harris's top aides spent more than an hour on "Pod Save America" and [did not admit a single mistake](#). The Democratic Party will not become more effective until its leaders show humility and really study their losses.

"I didn't get it done," Walz said [in a recent interview with Vox](#). Democratic strategists and leaders, is that so hard to say?

It's possible that nothing these six — or any other Democratic officials — do will rein in Trump, particularly until the midterms. A president with Congress, the federal courts and [about half the state governments](#) aligned with him has huge power. But what's been infuriating over the last two months is that Democratic activists have to essentially beg the people they elected, even in very blue areas, to fight Trump hard. It was shocking how enthusiastic Democratic senators were in the early weeks of the administration to support some of Trump's nominees.

Now, with Trump's plans for an authoritarian second term becoming even clearer and his poll [numbers dipping](#), more Democrats are contesting him. But keep an eye on these six. They were some of the earliest to speak up and break with the Jeffries-Schumer nonaggression posture. They are likely to be actually leading the party over the next few years, even if none of them are formally senior Democratic leaders.

Perry Bacon Jr. is a Washington Post columnist. Before joining The Post, Perry had stints as a government and elections writer for Time magazine, The Post's national desk, theGrio and FiveThirtyEight. He has also been an on-air analyst at MSNBC and a fellow at New America. He grew up in Louisville and lives there now.