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## Democrats: We can work with Trump

The threat of getting steamrolled could pressure Hill Democrats to come to the table with the new president.

By **BURGESS EVERETT** and **HEATHER CAYGLE** | 11/09/16 02:03 PM EST



## How Democrats blew the Senate majority they knew was theirs

By **BURGESS EVERETT**, **KEVIN ROBILLARD** and **SEUNG MIN KIM**

Congressional Democrats emerged from blistering losses in the election assessing the damage but pledging, at least for now, to try to find ways to work with President-elect Donald Trump.

The hopeful tone from Democrats is as much about self-preservation as it is about collaboration: The party is now starting down a midterm election in 2018 that party officials have long feared could result in heavy Senate losses, since Democrats are defending 25 seats vs. eight for the GOP. Democrats will start the Trump administration from a position of weakness, and their leverage is only likely to wane.

“I’m going to do my job. I’m going to help him when I can,” said Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), one of the most endangered incumbents in 2018. “But I’m going to be holding him accountable when I need to.”

“As he gets into governance, assuming he pays attention to it and doesn’t just delegate it, I think he’s going to find ... there is a potential irony here in that his more natural allies on specific items may actually be Democrats,” said Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.).

Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke with Trump on Wednesday morning and offered him congratulations in a statement. The presumptive Democratic leader didn’t say whether he would use his powers in the Senate minority to stymie Trump.

“Senate Democrats will spend the coming days and weeks reflecting on these results, hearing from the American people, and charting a path forward to achieve our shared goals and to defend our values,” Schumer said.

As they came to terms with the likelihood of a Republican-controlled Congress and White House for the next four years, Democrats floated infrastructure and trade as potential areas of collaboration. Conservative Democrats like Manchin might find common ground with Republicans on energy policy. And perhaps, Connolly suggested, there could be compromise on social issues.

The talk of possible cooperation came as Republicans spoke of repealing Obamacare and overhauling the tax code through reconciliation, an arcane process that allows the GOP’s narrow Senate majority to evade the supermajority requirement.

Indeed, it’s very much an open question how Trump might work with Democrats — or if he even has to. If Democrats launch a strategy of blanket opposition, Republicans will have the votes to unilaterally change Senate rules or use reconciliation to move legislation to the White House for Trump’s signature. The threat of getting steamrolled could put pressure on Democrats to come to the table.

Still, at least some Democrats sounded a hopeful note in the immediate aftermath of Tuesday’s startling results.

Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), a prominent surrogate for Hillary Clinton, said he “will be listening closely as [Trump] begins to discuss his plans for our future. I stand ready to work with him in any way that will benefit the constituents of my district.”

Even House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) raised the possibility of partnering with Trump on investing in crumbling roads and bridges, a rare issue of bipartisan consensus among party leaders.

“As President-elect Trump indicated last night, investing in infrastructure is an important priority of his. We can work together to quickly pass a robust infrastructure jobs bill,” Pelosi said in a statement.

Manchin said he would try to use back-channel relationships with New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie to get a line into the Trump administration. The West Virginia Democrat said it would be folly for his party to immediately announce opposition to Trump’s proposals while Democrats were still licking their wounds.

“Totally, absolutely a mistake to do anything right now” like that, Manchin said, adding that his decision whether to run for reelection in 2018 could hinge on Congress breaking its cycle of gridlock. “If something makes sense, then I’ll do it. I just hope other people in my party agree ... the first six months will tell you everything.”

That attitude will play better in West Virginia than it will in liberal bastions like New York City or California. Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.) said he’d keep an open mind about Trump, but that if the president-elect “makes good on his promise to reverse America’s progress in opportunity and equality, he will find in me the stiffest of opposition.”