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Wednesday, I [wrote](#) about the need for Democrats to find ways to connect again with working-class voters and shed their identification with cultural elites. There is no other way to reclaim the White House or the Senate.

Where to start? Democrats charged with crafting a future for the party can start by listening to those members of Congress who continue to perform well in red, or at least magenta, districts. I mentioned Michelle Cottle's [profile](#) of Colorado Rep. Jason Crow, which showed him to be the kind of Democrat who wins in those districts, but he isn't the only one.

Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez from Washington state represents a largely rural district. "I live on a gravel road. I've got grease under my fingernails. I get my water from a well, and I'm proud of that," she told [The Daily Yonder](#).

"I don't necessarily want to be developed into something different," she said. "A lot of the issues I really care about, right to repair and timber, those were things that I had not seen discussed by federal candidates before. And so I thought, well, even if I can't win, I can at least challenge the narrative about who we are, who I am as a Democrat, and I can elevate these issues that I care deeply about."

Maine Rep. Jared Golden [narrowly won](#) reelection last November in Maine's second congressional district. The rural voters in his district appreciated that he broke with the Democrats on issues like student loan forgiveness and police reform.

Golden had long supported gun rights, which is necessary to win a district like Maine-2, but after a mass shooting in Lewiston, he backed a ban on assault weapons. "I had opposed this policy in the past. It's not easy to admit being wrong. But I believe I was," he [wrote in an op-ed](#) last year.

Two years ago, before backing an assault weapons ban, he won by 6 points. This time, he only won by 240 votes, but he won.

The second thing Democrats can do is talk to union organizers. They know that many members voted for Donald Trump even though most unions endorsed Kamala Harris. But they also know how, to get someone from "no" to "yes," you have to get them to "maybe" first. You have to listen to union members' concerns, and communicate what you learn to those running political campaigns.

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Former President Joe Biden knew how to speak about workers' concerns. He understood that a paycheck was more than a ticket providing access to consumer culture. Work provides dignity.

Upper-middle-class people do not worry about providing for their families the way working-class people do. Fretting about getting your kid into the most prestigious school is of a different order from worrying about being able to pay for child care. If Democrats learn nothing else from listening to workers, they must learn to empathize with the people who struggle to attain the things upper-middle-class people take for granted. That empathy is the starting point for solidarity.

If the Democrats make abortion rights the centerpiece of their campaigns, a significant percentage of union voters — and others — will tune them out. There is a reason the AFL-CIO has never taken an official position on abortion: Members of the building trades are the people who go to church and often send their kids to parochial schools. If you lead with workers' rights rather than abortion rights, you might get a hearing.

Reconnecting with working-class voters is about more than messaging and issue selection. I mentioned in a [recent newsletter](#) how I am always shocked by the ease with which people who wear their progressive credentials on their sleeves do not give a second thought to arranging an Uber from the airport, when there are unionized cab drivers waiting at the curb, too.

In 2023, the New York attorney general reached a settlement with Uber and Lyft in a wage theft dispute. The amount of the [settlement](#)? \$328 million. A similar [settlement](#) in California could top \$1 billion. I am glad that the workers are getting some settlement money, but if they had a union in the first place, and labor had a seat, or seats, on the companies' boards, there would not have been any wage theft in the first place.

Do Democratic party officeholders and their staffs think about the signal they send when they bypass the taxi line at the airport and climb into an Uber?

Next week, we will look at some early signs that Democrats are getting their act together. But learning to empathize and identify with the concerns of working-class

voters is the first and necessary starting point.