



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on August 11, 2023

Manchin's Party Pondering: Is It All About Winning the Next Election?

West Virginia's Joe Manchin, the "conservative" Democratic senator who votes *with* hard-left Joe Biden 88 percent of the time, said in 2021 that he has "never considered" switching parties. Now, some may say, he has switched his position on switching, with Manchin stating that he's thinking "'very seriously' about switching party affiliation," as Newser [puts it](#). Yet while the senator would claim this is all about principle, is it really all about his conservative leanings?



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That is, his desire to win the next election and conserve his power.

Manchin hasn't officially thrown his hat into the ring, but if he does, he may be thrown out. While different polls do paint different pictures, and while the senator is more popular now than he was last year, a [recent Morning Consult survey](#) found that 55 percent of W.V. voters disapprove of his job performance; only 39 percent approve. What's more, Manchin is far less popular than the man who'd be his probable Republican opponent, current governor Jim Justice. So, how can he make sure Justice isn't served?

The answer: do exactly what the senator is considering — switch your party affiliation to "Independent."

Manchin the Mountain State Machiavelli?

The senator's political problems began last year when he supported the Biden-approved, unconstitutional, wasteful, and misnamed "Inflation Reduction Act" (IRA). The only thing it reduced was Manchin's popularity, with his favorability [deflating by 29 points](#) at the time; in fact, an August 2022 poll found that he'd become the "[least popular politician in country](#)."

So it's not surprising that, quite recently, Manchin [has been downplaying](#) his IRA role. He now claims he merely provided "input" on the bill and that there never, ever was a "deal" on it between himself and uber-left Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Never mind that the IRA passed the Senate on a 51-50 party-line vote, with Manchin's support allowing "Vice President" Kamala Harris to break the tie. In reality, the senator once boasted that he "wrote" the bill, and his Senate website has an August 16, 2022 [press release](#) titled "MANCHIN'S INFLATION REDUCTION ACT SIGNED INTO LAW."

"*Manchin's*" — as in *his own* — I'll emphasize.

But now he may be disowned by his state's voters. This brings us to his latest gambit.

Complaining that the Democrat and Republican "brands" have become tarnished — but insisting that W.V. Democrats are terrific — Manchin averred Thursday that he was a real Mountain State mensch.

"It's the Democrats in Washington or the Washington policies of the Democrats [that are the problem],"



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he [said](#) on his state's MetroNews station. "You've heard me say a million times that I'm not a Washington Democrat."

Uh-huh, yeah, we've heard ya' say it, Joe. Now maybe you can explain how your not-Washington-Democrat self votes with Washington Democrats [close to 90 percent of the time](#).

Witnessed here is the magicians' trick of "misdirection." "Listen to what I say," is Manchin's message, "Ignore what I do," as he gesticulates distractingly with his right hand and votes for Biden's policies quietly with his left. And now his latest trick may be to become an Independent.

After all, he couldn't win a primary as a Republican, and he might lose a general election to Justice as a Democrat. But a three-way race is different. The GOP and Democratic candidates would capture, respectively, the staunch conservative and liberal votes — and Manchin could prevail with his name recognition by winning the mushy middle. This has happened before, too.

In 2006, three-term incumbent Senator Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) [lost](#) the Democratic primary to hard-left Ned Lamont after having been demonized by his party as too conservative (much as Manchin has been). He then ran as an Independent and, with less than 50 percent of the vote, [beat both major party challengers](#).

Manchin could do likewise. Even if we accept Morning Consult's finding that his support is a mere 39 percent (his election vote share would likely be higher), this would leave only 61 percent to be divided between Justice and a Democratic contender. Upon prevailing, Manchin could then govern as an "Independent" — and still vote with the Washington Democrats [87.9 percent of the time](#).

Of course, this percentage *might* drop once Manchin is no longer as beholden to the Democratic Party. Yet despite this being a risky bet, it would be difficult for Justice, or any Republican, to overcome big-name Manchin, with his *reputation* as a reasonable, conservative W.V. guy.

It is, however, instructive to grasp how [90-percent-Biden Manchin](#) got this deceptive rep: When he on rare occasion breaks character and makes a stink about some aspect of a high-profile left-wing bill, the mainstream media become apoplectic, calling him an unacceptable DINO (Democrat in name only) and an impediment to "progress." "That darned conservative Manchin!" they hiss. "He shafted us again!"

Since many reporters are too irresponsible to actually check a politician's voting record (or won't accept anything less than total imbibition of their Kool-Aid), some media types may actually accept the conservative-Manchin illusion. But there's another lesson here:

As with how ardently anti-Trump Liz Cheney voted with Trump *91 percent of the time* when she was in Congress, politicians virtually always vote mainly with their party. So the truth is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, you really are and *should be* voting for the party and not the person.

In other words, if you vote for Manchin next year, you're voting for the Democratic Party agenda. This likely holds true even if he runs as an "Independent."



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