



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 25, 2026

Study: GOP and Dems Have Changed on Opposition to Big Government

“Government is not the solution to our problem,” late GOP president Ronald Reagan famously said in 1981 — “government is the problem.” We don’t hear this much from today’s Republicans, however. On the other hand, then-Democratic President Bill Clinton proclaimed in January 1996, “The era of big government is over.” And we don’t hear this at all from today’s Democrats (and Clinton didn’t mean it). These changes are, too, examples of words reflecting actions, a new study reveals.



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In fact, finds the Institute for Legislative Analysis (ILA), the parties have changed in more than one respect. Republicans’ current unity is greater than in recent years, for example. That is, the party’s moderates and right-wing have both gravitated toward supporting President Donald Trump’s agenda. This has resulted in the GOP becoming more populist and nationalist. The party also, however, registers less support for limited-government agendas.

Democrats remain the party of full-bore big government and are still more monolithic on the issue than are Republicans. Yet some Democrats have begun breaking away from the collective on certain key issues (e.g., the border).

All this information and more is found in the ILA’s “2026 Congressional Vote Record [Report](#).” This is, the organization wrote in a Thursday press release,

the most expansive ideological dataset on the U.S. Congress, detailing the policy stances and voting trends of all 535 federal lawmakers. A comparison of the last three years of data reveals major ideological shifts within both parties, based on roughly 265,000 individual votes.

The ILA explains its methodology:

The 2026 report covers congressional voting between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, with all lawmakers placed on a 0 to 100 ideological scale. A score of 100 represents the strongest alignment with reduced federal spending, narrower regulatory power, a



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smaller scope of government, and strict adherence to constitutional structure and civil-liberties protections. A score of 0 reflects the opposite. Unlike labels such as conservatism, progressivism, or MAGA, which can shift over time, the ILA scale is designed to provide a consistent baseline for measuring party behavior and ideological movement.

The Who's Who of Statism

"A billion here, a billion there, pretty soon you're talking real money." But the government has grown a *lot* since late Senator Everett Dirksen (R-Ill.) expressed this sentiment in the 1960s. And the ILA [reveals](#) who's watering the federal leviathan most (with our tax money). The organization's key findings are, it writes:

- 1. Republican moderates are voting further to the right and closer to President Trump's agenda**, with an eleven-fold drop in the number of Republicans scoring below 60 percent on the ILA scale, from 33 in 2023 to just 3 in 2025.
- 2. Republican alignment with the more traditional limited-government stances has declined**, with the number of Republicans scoring above 90 percent on the ILA scale falling by more than half, from 63 in 2023 to 27 in 2025.
- 3. Democrats remain more unified than Republicans overall, but starting to fracture on border, crime and national security**, with the number of Democrats scoring above 10 percent on the ILA scale more than tripling, from 28 in 2023 to 98 in 2025.

As to how the parties directly compare, the difference is profound. The GOP averages 79.62 percent on the ILA's limited-government scale. The Democrats average 10.31 percent.

In other words, if you want bigger, more intrusive government, the Democrats are the party for you.

Naming Names

And who are the kings of small- and big-government voting? Mr. Limited Gov 2025 is Representative Chip Roy (R-Texas), who scores an almost perfect 99.50 percent on [the ILA's scale](#). Mr. Bloated Gov 2025 is also from Texas: Democrat Christian D. Menefee. He managed to go as low as possible: 0.00 percent. So perhaps everything *is* bigger in Texas — even the inter-party ideological chasm.

An honorable mention goes to Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) who, at 99.34 percent, almost equaled Roy. A dishonorable one goes to Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.). At 2.51 percent, she was second only to Menefee among voting representatives. Other notables:

- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), 3.0 percent.
- Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), 3.11 percent.
- Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), 3.57 percent.
- Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), 3.93 percent.
- Jasmine Crockett (D-Texas), 4.28 percent.
- Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), 7.14 percent.
- Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), 92.82 percent.
- Byron Donalds (R-Fla.), 89.77 percent.
- Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), 88.08 percent.



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- Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), 87.82 percent.
- John Kennedy (R-La.), 87.10 percent.
- Ted Cruz (R-Texas), 86.43 percent.

That “actions speak louder than words” raises a question. What does the above tell us about the real differences between Pelosi and the “Squad,” with which she’s had friction? Is it more ego and mouth than anything else?

The ILA also pointed out something interesting. As it writes:

[D]espite frequent claims that Marjorie Taylor Greene and Thomas Massie have dramatically changed philosophically, both have remained relatively consistent over the last three years. Greene scored 95.87 percent in 2023 and 93.18 percent in 2025, while Massie was nearly identical at 93.6 percent in 2023 and 93.62 percent in 2025.

The Final Analysis

If the above doesn’t help voters make up their minds, consider the following. Average Republicans voted [with their party](#) 95 percent of the time in the House and 96 percent in the Senate. Average Democrats voted with their party 93 percent of the time in the House and 92 percent in the Senate. The point?

We Americans currently have a *de facto* two party system; either the Republicans or the Democrats will control Congress in 2027. And whomever you vote for *will vote with his party the vast majority of the time*. This will happen no matter what a candidate says while campaigning, how good he speaks or looks, how passionate or charismatic he is, or how pure or scandal-ridden he may be. Conclusion:

In general elections, you’re simply deciding to give [one party or the other another vote to pass its agenda](#). That’s it.

This means that the subtle old boast “I vote for the person, not the party” is misguided. A wise citizen votes for the party, *not* the person — knowing that the person will vote *with* his party. (In the *primaries* you vote for the person.)

Grasping this truth cuts through the smoke and mirrors. Just consider a candidate’s personality — it can be magician-like misdirection. (E.g., voting for a charming demagogue. A certain big-city mayor comes to mind.) In the general, you don’t really need to know the candidates.

You *do* need to know the parties. A candidate can with 10,000 words lie, but what never will is one letter: the D or R after his name.



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