

AOC for President? Will She Run? Could She Win?

written by Dan La Botz | July 31, 2026



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the former waitress, member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and a New York City congresswoman, now in her fourth two-year term, won a recent poll on Democratic Party candidates for president in the 2028 election. In the New Hampshire poll, she won 22%, while former secretary of transportation Pete Buttigieg got 21%, astronaut and senator Mark Kelly received 9% and California governor Gavin Newsom had 8%. An ally of Senator Bernie Sanders, whom she accompanied on his “Fighting Oligarchy” national tour, and of Zohran Mamdani, the DSA member who is now mayor of New York City, she has become the standard-bearer of progressives. So now everyone left of center asks: Will she run? Could she win? [1]

The national mood makes such considerations possible. President Donald Trump is losing the war on Iran and doesn't seem able to win or get out. He is once again imposing tariffs that act as a tax on American consumers. Gas prices are up again. Food is costly. Homes remain expensive. Trump's popularity is at an all-time low. Even his base is turning against him. The Republican Party could lose the midterm elections this November and there is fear Trump might attempt to steal them, even launch a coup.

Yet the Democratic Party's popularity is about the same as Trump's. Democrats and independents are uninspired by Democratic Party leaders like House Minority Leader Hakim Jeffries and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer who seem to have no new ideas and no fighting spirit. Most Americans seem to be increasingly alienated from the parties, from the establishment, and from the whole political system. Yet, DSA candidates have been winning elections and gaining some power in the Democratic Party. It is this that makes an AOC campaign seem both attractive and plausible.

Yet an AOC presidential campaign would be difficult. Even many of her supporters think that she should run first for the Senate seat now held by Schumer. DSA itself is divided on AOC. While New York City DSA supports her, national DSA withdrew its endorsement of her in July 2024, believing she was insufficiently pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist, but if that was true in the past, it is not now.

She is strongly pro-Palestinian, calls the Israeli war on Gaza genocide, and opposes military aid to Israel. Still the division in DSA itself is less important than other factors.

The Democratic Party leadership, which acted forcefully to quash Sanders' presidential bid, loathes the party's progressives and socialists and would surely use its power to try to crush AOC. Whether or not they could is an open question.

AOC is a woman and the United States has never elected a woman to the presidency, despite several strong candidates in the past. And she would have to overcome a strong anti-Latino prejudice whipped up by Trump and his followers. While AOC was born in the United States, and while all people from Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony, have been U.S. citizens since 1917, given the long history of U.S. racism and xenophobia and the recent growth of white Christian nationalism, she would still face a barrier of racial animus. AOC has experienced harassment, vandalism, and death threats from both right and left.

Things in America are changing. A poll last year found 37% of Americans are favorable to socialism, while among young people the figure is about 60%. Still, a socialist for president would be a big leap.

She says this, "They assume that my ambition is a title or a seat. And my ambition is way bigger than that. My ambition is to change this country." She added, "Presidents come and go... but single-payer healthcare is forever, a living wage is forever, workers' rights are forever."

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