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Politics

Do Taylor Swift's Politics Matter? Looking at the Pop Star and the 2024 Election

We look at how Swift has spoken about politics in the past and the criticism she's faced.

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Taylor Swift has more than double the number of followers across Instagram, TikTok, and X — about 412 million as of the end of July — as **total votes cast** in the last US presidential election. Her influence has driven mass voter registrations in elections past and now, mere months ahead of the **2024 election**, her name is a rallying cry for **MAGA crowds** and **coconut-crazed** Vice President Kamala Harris supporters alike.

And yet, Swift herself hasn't actually spoken (this election cycle, at least) about any candidates or even her plans to vote in the coming presidential election. That leaves us to guess if and when she will come out with her second-ever endorsement of a candidate for president.

Based on her **record of voting and prior political stance**, it's not a stretch for fans — including the **#SwiftiesforHarris** already organizing in her name — to confidently expect a Democratic ticket endorsement. And in recent days, fans' confidence has been reaching a fever-pitch, starting with the choice of Minnesota governor **Tim Walz** as Harris's running mate.

Walz earned Swifties' seal of approval earlier this year when he signed into law House File 1989, or **the "Taylor Swift Bill,"** taking aim at ticket resellers. For Walz, pushing the law through was personal: He had tweeted his frustration after not being able to buy Eras Tour tickets in a very **cat-forward (and Swift-coded) way**. That's already positioned him as a far cry from **JD Vance** and his talk of "childless cat ladies," a comment that won the GOP vice presidential nominee no points among fans of Swift, perhaps the most famous childless cat lady in the world.

Walz seems to offer another figure for Swifties to easily rally around. And Swift may soon be ready to join them. Social media users are **speculating** she's likely to save any official endorsements for the Democratic National Convention later this month.

The likelihood of an upcoming endorsement aside, it needs to be said that questions remain about the "Speak Now" singer's election silence. Those include: What does

that silence say about Swift's level of advocacy and her real political involvement? If she does get involved in the election, will she simply encourage people to vote or will she take a stance with more stakes? And perhaps most of all: Do her plans to vote even matter?

To answer that, we've synthesized some of the criticism Swift has faced for her approach to politics up to now and what critics think she could do differently in 2024 and beyond.

Taylor Swift and the 2024 election: What to know

For someone who's yet to publicly speak about the 2024 presidential election, Swift's name sure is stamped all over it. First, there were the **"MAGA meltdown"-provoking conspiracies** about February's Super Bowl, with far-right Republicans calling **Swift and Travis Kelce's relationship** fake, the NFL game rigged, and a win by Kelce's Kansas City Chiefs all a Pentagon ploy to get President Joe Biden reelected. Speaking to his Truth Social followers, former president Donald Trump opted not to play into conspiracies for once by saying there was "no way" the **not-as-popular-as-he is** Swift would endorse Biden, given it **would be "disloyal."**

At the same time, talk was circulating among Democrats about **how to court a second pro-Biden showing** from Swift. In 2020, she'd shared her first-ever public endorsement of a presidential candidate via a plate of **Biden-Harris frosted sugar cookies** — that, depending on your view of Swift's politics, either cheekily defied or **played directly into criticism** of her safe-bordering-on-sugary brand of activism. Criticism aside, scoring another Swift endorsement became so common a talking point that in the job posting for a social media role on Biden's campaign, applicants were told **not to share any more "Taylor Swift strategy" takes**, the team had plenty already, thanks.

By June, Trump appeared to be courting a Swift endorsement himself in a (decidedly creepy) interview where he gushed over her **"unusually beautiful" looks** and seemed to suggest Swift might secretly support him. Reversing an earlier Swift-critical stance, it was a view more likely to please the **"Conservaswifties"** in Trump's fan base — at

least, the ones who aren't among the **one in five Republicans** who believe Swift is a Pentagon “psyop.”

But then, July 21 happened when Biden announced he was dropping out of the election and backing Harris. Amid the **wave of celebratory memes** that followed, the work of Swifties was clearly felt, including through fan-run @Swifties4Kamala accounts. As of the end of July, that group had **16.2K followers on Instagram**, nearly **50K followers on X**, and a **group chat with committees** overseeing everything from beading Harris friendship bracelets to raising donations in increments of \$13, Swift's favorite number, for the Harris campaign.

And all of this organizing happened without the involvement of the star whose flag Swifties fly. It shows that whether she actively participates or not, Swift is already having an impact on the 2024 election. So, to what degree is an official endorsement from her needed? And more to the point:

Do Taylor Swift's politics matter?

Outside of **Oprah Winfrey's influence** on Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, polls like a 2019 Hill-HarrisX survey suggest that celebrity endorsements don't do much to **move the needle** in US elections. The cultural monolith that is Swift, however, could prove to be an exception to that rule, at least in some states.

In April, a Beacon Center **poll on Swift's political clout** showed that 37% of registered Tennessee voters are Swift fans and, of these, 12% would be more likely to vote for a candidate Swift endorsed. A spokesperson for the center, the libertarian think tank behind the poll, pointed out that while a Swift endorsement “likely wouldn't” impact the outcome of races in red Tennessee, it “could make a huge difference in swing states if the numbers are similar in other parts of the country.” A May *Newsweek* poll seemed to support this assertion where **22% of voters** who backed Biden in 2020 said they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate if Swift endorsed them — even if that meant crossing party lines.

Hypotheticals are one thing. But we've also concretely seen the influence Swift has on her fans' political involvement. Consider when, for National Voting Day in 2023, she encouraged her then-272 million Instagram followers to register to vote through the

nonpartisan group Vote.org. The impact was, dare we say, swift, especially among young voters. Vote.org reported a **115% increase in voter registrations from 18-year-olds** compared to the year before. It's not exactly a hot take that when Swift speaks, Swifties listen, which is why some critics take issue with the fact that she hasn't used her platform and voice more consistently and for deeper impact.

The criticism: Where Taylor Swift's politics have fallen short

To be clear: Getting young people to **register to vote** is extremely important. The issue with Swift is that her advocacy, with a couple of exceptions, has rarely gone beyond that, says **Na'ilah Amaru, MPA, MPP, MS**, an advocacy and policy strategist. Swift's political engagement, Amaru tells *Teen Vogue*, is typically in the form of "vague and safe political statements" that often "are nonspecific, such as her social media posts about voting that don't indicate which candidates or politics she supports." (Note: Swift has endorsed four candidates on two occasions: **Phil Bredesen and Jim Cooper in 2018** congressional races and the **Biden-Harris ticket in 2020**. She hasn't publicly supported any candidates since.) Swift also, Amaru points out, "avoids more controversial topics" like the war in Gaza, which the singer **has yet to publicly acknowledge**.

Speaking to **POLITICO magazine**, Brian Donovan, a University of Kansas professor who teaches a Sociology of Taylor Swift course, said: "There was a period of time when she became more politically active... She hasn't really continued with that. The pandemic hit, and other than a **tweet about the Dobbs [abortion] decision** and a **speech** that she gave during one of her concerts during Pride Month, she's been very relatively politically silent."

When Swift has broken that silence, she "selectively chooses causes that align with her brand and audience and engages with them in fairly surface-level ways," Amaru says, "rather than taking a stand on more controversial issues, advocating for substantial policy changes, or addressing intersectional issues, all of which could be riskier to her brand."

Inextricably wrapped up in this are Swift's identities as a white, conventionally attractive, and very wealthy cis woman, which "absolutely help her dodge expectations

for deeper political engagement,” Amaru says, adding that her “privileged status allows her to navigate the political landscape with a certain level of detachment that others with different identities cannot afford.”

“As a white person, she is not directly affected by systemic racism, and as a wealthy individual, she is insulated from economic hardships. Her political engagement is not borne out of necessity or lived experience, but rather a choice,” Amaru adds, noting that, because of this, she’s likelier to face “lower expectations to engage deeply with complex political issues.” Importantly, for the same reasons, Swift is also more likely to be celebrated for whatever way she does choose to engage.

Meanwhile, society “holds marginalized individuals to higher standards of political awareness and activism because their lives are more directly impacted by these issues,” Amaru says. In contrast, Swift can “navigate political discourse with less pressure compared to those from marginalized backgrounds” — something, Amaru adds, gives Swift a “responsibility to use her platform more robustly.”

It should be said that with **far-right conspiracies about Swift and Kelce** out there, the chance that her current near-total silence stems from fears over their personal safety may be more than a small one. Political violence in the US **is rising** to the point that the presidential candidate who has **condoned violence** is himself **not immune from it**.

For Swift and her team, the recent mass stabbing at a **Swift-themed dance and yoga workshop** in Southport, England, that left three children dead, eight more kids and two adults injured, and the **far-right riots in its wake** after the perpetrator was falsely identified as an immigrant may have raised the specter of violence in an even more direct way. Swift **had to cancel** her August 7 show in Vienna after local authorities learned that two men had allegedly planned to stage a terror attack outside of the concert venue, according to the Associated Press.

And there’s also something to be said for the fact that demanding celebrities to be political mouthpieces for us versus taking concrete steps ourselves to advocate for the world we want to live in doesn’t, as a standalone action, count as activism on the part of fans either. In other words, regardless of what a next-level celebrity like Swift says or does, doesn’t absolve us from applying focus to **taking meaningful actions in our own lives**.

Still, as Amaru says, Swift is “in a unique position to leverage her privilege for substantial advocacy — should she choose to do so.”