IT'S A TOUGH JOB BUT GEN Z NEEDS TO DO IT

HOW DAVID HOGG IS RALLYING YOUNG PEOPLE TO PURSUE ONE OF THE TOUGHEST AND MOST IMPORTANT CAREERS IN AMERICA: POLITICS.

BY DEVIN GORDON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JARED SOARES

David Hogg (left) and Kevin Lata cofounded Leaders We Deserve last year to help young candidates win office, primarily at the state level.

WHICH CITY IS THIS?

BOSTON.

DAVID HOGG IS IN BOSTON

RIGHT NOW.

HE ARRIVED THIS MORNING TO HOST A CONVERSATION AT the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, his alma mater. Now he's in an Uber, heading to catch a flight to Washington, D.C., where he lives—or at least where he has an apartment with a bed he sleeps in about five times a month. Hogg graduated a year ago, and that August he cofounded Leaders We Deserve, a political action committee (PAC) helping elect young progressives to office. It's only two weeks into April, and already this month he's traveled to Austin, Houston, Atlanta, and Orlando, meeting with candidates backed by his organization. Next week, after overseeing the move into Leaders We Deserve's new 4,800-square-foot office in D.C.'s Chinatown neighborhood, he'll be off to Seattle.

Hogg is 24 now. It's been six years since the world learned his name after a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, when a gunman murdered 17 of his classmates and teachers. Hogg was hiding in an office with a few other students, and somehow, despite his terror, he had the composure and presence of mind to turn on his phone and interview his friends in real time about a shooting spree they didn't know if they would live through.

In the months that followed, Hogg, along with several of his surviving classmates, including his little sister, who lost four friends during the rampage, became the public faces of a reinvigorated national movement to fight gun violence. He took a gap year after high school to co-launch March for Our Lives, a student-led nonprofit that organizes protest marches on state capitols nationwide and lobbies governments at all levels to pass common-sense gun control legislation. It now has 17 full-time employees. (Hogg remains on its board.) But as the years passed, the rest of his Parkland classmates got on with their lives, while Hogg threw himself even deeper into activism. He enrolled at Harvard, and unlike most bewildered college freshmen, he seemed to have a clear plan about what he needed to do with his time in college, seeking out professors who could school him in the history of movement politics—especially conservative movements—so he could understand why he and his fellow progressives keep getting their butts kicked.

"When I was in high school, I felt like all politicians were corrupt. They all sucked. And frankly, a lot of them do," Hogg says, crunched into the back seat of the Uber. He's taller than you might expect for someone with such a boyish face—6-foot-1—and so slender he could fold himself into his Rollaboard. But after a few years of mostly fruitless activism, "I realized that it's not enough to point out what's wrong, you actually need to talk about how to fix it. I've come to realize that power doesn't shout. It whispers."

Whispering doesn't come naturally to Hogg. He is still seething so much inside that you can almost see the steam burning off him. He has a tendency to monologue with rising intensity, peppering his speech with F-bombs, and he has a particular fondness for haranguing politicians, especially Democrats who chicken out on gun legislation. What he learned at Harvard, though, is that conservatives win because they play the long game, seizing gradual control of state governments, incubating far-right legislation on social issues, from guns to abortion to trans rights, and elevating it to federal law with the help of courts stacked with handpicked conservative judges. This is how they overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It took two generations, but they got it done. And that's why, upon graduating from Harvard, at a moment when he could've used his fame to unlock any door—Harvard Law, Biden's reelection campaign, the speaking circuit—he decided to put himself in the back seat and start a nonprofit dedicated to creating political stars of the future.

"Our biggest advantage," he tells me, "is time." Now, when he sits in meetings with squishy Democrats and smug Republicans, "what keeps me calmer is the fact that, as dark as this might be, we're going to outlive them. That's the greatest advantage you can have in politics."

Hogg cofounded Leaders We Deserve with a seasoned campaign manager named Kevin Lata to find young people willing to embark on a career path that appears more futile, draining, demoralizing—and even dangerous—than ever before. In the past year, more than 30 members of the U.S. Congress—roughly half a dozen senators and more than 25 representatives, ranging from progressive Democrats like Oregon's Earl Blumenauer to moderate Republicans like Wisconsin Rep. Mike Gallagher—have chosen to get the heck out rather than subject themselves to two more years of intraparty bullying and physical threats from unhinged constituents.

The maturation of Generation Z, though, offers a chance to reboot and reenergize what's become one of America's most hostile workplaces. Florida Rep. Maxwell Frost, 27, is the nation's first Gen Z member of Congress—his successful run in 2022 was managed by Lata. Frost describes his philosophy of political work as "creating coalitions and being in fellowship with people you feel like truly have the passion, versus the ambition." It doesn't always turn out to be that way, of course. Frost's passion helped him land a plum assignment on the House Oversight Committee, but it means that one of his regular job hazards is sitting across the dais from fellow committee member Marjorie Taylor Greene, and when it comes time for roll call, she's got the votes on her side. Frost has had to get used to losing, a lot, but all that losing reinforces a virtue that's common among Gen Zers across the professional spectrum: They don't feel entitled to win. They know it'll take every drop of their passion to flip the script.

Hogg fights discouragement too. When his spirit flags, he rewatches motivational movie scenes, and his default choice is a sequence from 2011's *Moneyball* in which the struggling, cash-strapped Oakland Athletics, assembled by Brad Pitt's Billy Beane, go on an improbable 20-game winning streak. "Whenever we have setbacks, whenever I'm just tired, frankly, I watch that scene over and over." In years past, he says, as we glide through a tunnel under Boston, he'd watch it and "envision us just fucking taking down the NRA." And then it happened. Or more accurately, the NRA imploded. "It's pretty amazing," he says. When he watches the *Moneyball* scene now, it's the 2024 election he pictures. He feels the adrenaline start to pump again, and he thinks to himself: *This is what it's going to feel like when we win. It's going to be win after win, after win, after win, after win.*

Illustration source image: Stage Door Photography (Thomas)

PROJECTING A SET OF TRAITS

ONTO AN ENTIRE GENERATION IS AKIN TO PRACTICING ASTROLOGY— it's both total nonsense and also, for some cosmic and ineffable reason, kind of accurate. The crises that each cohort face during their formative years tend to shape how they engage with the world. The oldest members of Gen Z were born in the mid-1990s, and their foundational crisis was the Great Recession, which was followed by a historically polarized presidential election,

GET TO KNOW

ANNA THOMAS

AGE 28

OFFICE RUNNING FOR Pennsylvania House of Representatives, District 137

ELECTION DATE November 5

NUMBER OF STAFFERS 2

EXPECTED SALARY Around $106,000

MOST REWARDING THING THAT'S HAPPENED "I've had kids point at me and be like, 'That's Anna Thomas.'"

CURRENT JOB Planning commissioner

EDUCATION Wellesley College, BS in chemistry; University of Pennsylvania, master's in public administration

SCARIEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED "I was canvassing and walking back to my car, and this huge guy was filming me and said, 'Why are you walking all over my neighbor's yard?' I was like, 'Oh, I'm just walking on the grass to avoid the main road,' because it was a busy road. I took out my phone, and we were both filming each other. To de-escalate the situation, I was like, 'I'm running to be your state rep. I actually was about to go knock on your door, so you would have seen me walk all over your yard in a second.' It was just this guy who was scared, and so he treated me with a certain kind of energy." *—Ellie Stevens*

CAREER SHE THOUGHT SHE'D HAVE Public service

IMPETUS FOR RUNNING "When I was in high school, [Pennsylvania] cut more than a billion dollars from public education. My favorite teacher ended up getting furloughed."

FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY Canvassing

LEAST FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY "It's a presidential [election] year, so there is a lot involved in working with people on levels up the ticket."

THE POWER OF TWO
Hogg and Lata raised more than $3 million from 100,000 donors in the fourth quarter of 2023.

a pandemic that killed more than a million Americans, and a violent assault on the U.S. Capitol. They have entered adulthood amid high inflation, an unaffordable housing market, and combustible campus protests over Israel's leveling of Gaza. Trayvon Martin was Gen Z. The children of Sandy Hook were Gen Z.

"Zoomers have endured more adversity than any generation of young Americans in at least 70 years. And they know it," writes John Della Volpe, the director of polling at Harvard's Kennedy School, in his 2022 book *Fight: How Gen Z Is Channeling Their Fear and Passion to Save America*. True, the millennials before them faced 9/11 and then entered the job force during the Great Recession, and the Generation Xers before *them* came of age during the Cold War and the daily specter of nuclear holocaust. But according to Della Volpe, what Zoomers have endured is more psychologically insidious and overwhelming. He describes this cohort in such grave terms that it's as if he's pitching to rename them Gloomers. They're anxious, demoralized, prone to mental illness, and racked with doubts about their future, he says. "One of the most challenging questions I ask Gen Zers is to name the time in their lives when they were most proud to be American. More often than not, I get blank stares," he writes. But they have "no such trouble answering my follow-up question about a time when they were ashamed of their country."

Yet they're also the most politically engaged generation we've ever seen. They voted in record numbers in 2018 and 2020. A recent survey by Tufts University's Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) determined that while older people run for office at a much higher rate than young people, young people express interest in running in significant numbers—1 in 5 surveyed—and this is particularly true in marginalized communities. Interest in running isn't the same as following through, though—that's the challenge for Hogg and organizations like his. But this baseline openness to seeking elected office is a generational sea change.

NATE DOUGLAS

AGE 23

OFFICE RUNNING FOR
Florida House of Representatives, District 37

PRIMARY DATE
August 20

ELECTION DATE
November 5

EXPECTED GOVERNMENT SALARY $29,697

PREVIOUS JOB
Agricultural policy researcher at Atlantic Sapphire

EDUCATION
University of Florida, BS in food and resource economics, master's in information systems and operations management

CAREER HE THOUGHT HE'D HAVE
Programmer, foreign service officer, or foreign service information management specialist

IMPETUS FOR RUNNING The overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Plus: "The fact that my family almost lost our house [during the Great Recession, despite] both of my parents having two jobs."

FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY Canvassing

LEAST FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY
Fundraising. "I spend hours on the phone a day basically begging for money. Either you are wealthy or have great connections, or are someone like me who was never supposed to be running in the first place—and you have to raise a ton of money in a short period of time, and it's not fun."

NUMBER OF STAFFERS 3

MOST REWARDING THING THAT'S HAPPENED
"I knocked on the door of a registered Democrat. [His mom] told me, 'He's not home at the moment.' So it was just this woman, who was a Republican. [I asked], 'Can I tell you a bit about me?' And she said, 'Sure.' We start talking. She gives me some water and snacks. . . . Some experiences make you have faith in humans." —*ES*

GET TO KNOW

ASHWIN RAMASWAMI

AGE 25

OFFICE RUNNING FOR
Georgia State Senate, District 48

ELECTION DATE
November 5

EXPECTED GOVERNMENT SALARY
$22,000–$23,000

PREVIOUS JOB
IT specialist at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

EDUCATION
Stanford University, BS in computer science; Georgetown Law

CAREER HE THOUGHT HE'D HAVE "I always knew I wanted to do service."

IMPETUS FOR RUNNING "We have an $11 billion budget surplus in Georgia, and we can't pay our teachers a fair wage. We have underfunded healthcare systems. We are not dealing with AI and technology how we should be. And my state senator literally got criminally indicted with Donald Trump for trying to overturn the 2020 election results."

FAVORITE PART OF THE WORK-DAY Talking with people

LEAST FAVORITE PART OF THE WORK DAY "Sometimes you have to miss some personal obligations."

NUMBER OF STAFFERS 5 or 6

MOST REWARDING THING THAT'S HAPPENED "I was talking to someone who's Indian American who wanted to run for office. Her parents were like, 'Don't . . . it's too dangerous.' Then one day her parents were like, 'We see this guy Ashwin on the news did it, so I guess you can too.'"

SCARIEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED "I've been hearing that some folks have been talking about me at the state capitol, like, 'We are going to take this kid down.'" —*ES*

"The idea of asking young people to run for office before 2017 was literally laughable," says Amanda Litman, a former Hillary Clinton staffer who co-launched Run for Something, the influential progenitor for Leaders We Deserve, shortly after Trump's election. She has since helped elect more than 1,000 young people to state and local offices. "When my cofounder and I went around talking to folks about what we wanted to build, people told us, 'Good luck, but young people don't want to run for office.' It was like, 'Enjoy your hobby. You should probably get a real job.'"

When millennials were graduating into the professional world back in the aughts, the tech revolution was in full swing, and the idea of going into public service and restoring public institutions was anathema to a generation itching to move fast and break stuff. For millennials, there was no problem that an app couldn't solve. America would be rescued by Silicon Valley innovation, not federal policy. Social media would connect the world and eliminate all the gatekeepers, and this would be a great thing.

Gen Z witnessed what came next—Facebook and Amazon and the rest of Big Tech behaving like ruthless, independent nation-states—and lost all romance for Silicon Valley. "When I was at Stanford, that was the time of the 'tech-lash,' as they call it," says Ashwin Ramaswami, 25, an election cybersecurity specialist who, backed by Leaders We Deserve, is now running for the Georgia State Senate. "Everyone would take these classes about the bad things Facebook did with Cambridge Analytica and why maybe tech isn't the best place to go [to work]." He could've stayed in the Bay Area after graduation and parlayed his computer science degree into a job at a hot tech company. Instead, he stuck with the job he started while he was still at Stanford, helping local governments fix flaws in their election security at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Shortly after he enrolled in Georgetown Law, he learned that the state official representing his hometown was one of Trump's fake electors in 2020 (he's now under indictment). The campaign narrative practically wrote itself.

Can civil service be for Gen Z what startups were for millennials? Hogg and Lata think so—but only if someone helps them surmount the structural biases that tilt the playing field toward older candidates, who tend to have financial security and deep-pocketed connections. For a young candidate, money is the biggest challenge—both raising enough to have a fighting chance and earning enough to pay the rent if they win. If Ramaswami prevails in Georgia, he'll make $22,342 per year, plus a $247 per diem for the 40 days each year that the House is in session, though the work doesn't end when the session does. There's always money to raise and constituents' problems to solve. Representatives in the Texas House, meanwhile, make $7,200 per year, plus a $221 per diem, and for the 140 days every two years that the legislature is in session, they must put their day job on pause. How many young people can plausibly afford to do that? How many would even dare to ask their boss? The 400 members of New Hampshire's House of Representatives each make $100 a year, and they haven't gotten a raise since 1889. Some state-level offices do pay a living wage: In Pennsylvania, for instance, which is in session year-round, legislators make a starting salary of $102,844. In most states, though, particularly the red ones, these are jobs that demand a full-time commitment but pay like side hustles.

Leaders We Deserve isn't an ATM, but thanks to Hogg's fame and tireless fundraising, it can stake Gen Z candidates with enough to legitimize them in the eyes of donors and party officials. Anna Thomas, 28, a Leaders We Deserve–backed candidate who lost her first run for Pennsylvania State House in 2022 by just 703 votes (to Republican Joe Emrick, who signed an amicus brief to overturn the 2020 presidential election), launched her bid with just $2,000 in her campaign account. After she lost, someone in politics told her that she'd need to start with $100,000 in the bank in order for party officials to consider backing her. "Early money is like yeast," Thomas says. According to her latest Pennsylvania Election Commission filing, she had more than $300,000 in her coffers for this fall's rematch—twice Emrick's total. Leaders We Deserve staked her $50,000 and helped raise another $50,000.

Thomas also had no real idea what she was doing last time, and now Lata is just a phone call away. In Leaders We Deserve's loose division of labor—it is still a two-man operation until nine full-time employees arrive in the coming weeks—Hogg is the camera-ready rainmaker in Topman blazers, and Lata, 33, is the political wizard in plaid untucked button-downs. The two met in 2021 through Frost, who had been March for Our Lives' national organizing director and was now running for Congress, with Lata as his campaign manager. Hogg endorsed Frost—the first time he'd ever endorsed a politician. "He helped us raise $400,000 in just the first two quarters of the race," Lata says.

Frost's win was the most improbable of the 2022 midterm cycle, and it earned Lata an award for campaign manager of the year from the American Association of Political Consultants. Now he's spreading his expertise. "When you're a first-time candidate," Hogg says, "there are so many things that you just don't understand are really important." Where do you find quality staffers? How do you get voter lists and constituent data? What kind of return on investment should you expect from a digital ad campaign? Which consultants are worth the money? Lata has all the answers. "It's like this insider knowledge that no one would think to share with you," says Thomas.

There's a far simpler reason young people so rarely run for office, though: because it never crosses their minds that they can. And no one ever tells them they should. People under 30 show a high interest in public office, according to polling data, "but for that to become actual steps toward submitting your name and being a candidate, explicit encouragement is critical," says Sara Suzuki, a senior researcher at CIRCLE. If you ask Gen Zers to close their eyes and picture politicians, they probably envision nothing but old white people. A gerontocracy. No one who looks like them and understands their problems—housing insecurity, student debt, mental health. Reproductive rights matter less to people who are too old to reproduce.

According to Run for Something's Litman, a remarkable thing happens when Gen Zers see an age-mate running for office: They go vote for them. A recent survey conducted in concert with Harvard's Della Volpe found that the presence of a young progressive on the ballot for state or local office would make 61% of Democrats aged 18 to 29 in battleground states more likely to vote. That number is potent enough to put President Biden, who struggles to animate young voters, over the top in his rematch with Trump. Typically it's the top of the ticket that carries downballot office seekers to victory, but this fall, Biden will need local candidates more than they need him. "Reverse coattails will absolutely be the story of the 2024 election," Litman predicts. "I think it's the only way that Biden is going to be able to win."

Previous spread: Illustration source image: Jeremey Rodriguez (Douglas). This page: Illustration source image: Masao Dohlgren (Ramaswami)

Illustration source image: Kaitlin Werner (Phillips)

ANNA THOMAS JOINS OUR ZOOM

MEETING FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CLOSET. THIS IS HER OFFICE. "IT'S literally 4 feet by 6 feet," she says, with bookshelves up to the ceiling on either side and a curtain drawn behind her. Actually, it's a dormer on the second floor of her parents' house in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, located roughly two hours from both Philadelphia and New York City, but at least it's got a window. She's living at home and paying rent to *(Continued on page 91)*

GET TO KNOW

ALLIE PHILLIPS

AGE 29

OFFICE RUNNING FOR
Tennessee House of Representatives, District 75

PRIMARY DATE
August 1

ELECTION DATE
November 5

EXPECTED GOVERNMENT SALARY
$28,406

PREVIOUS JOB
Ran an in-home daycare

CURRENT JOB
Runs social media for ForwardTN

CAREER SHE THOUGHT SHE'D HAVE News anchor. "Then I had a baby my last semester of college, so that was set aside."

EDUCATION
Middle Tennessee State University, BS in multimedia journalism

IMPETUS FOR RUNNING "This time last year, I was pregnant . . . a planned for and wanted pregnancy with my husband. At 19 weeks, we found out that there were fetal anomalies and got sent to a specialist. The baby was deemed incompatible with life in and out of the womb. The doctor told me that [staying] pregnant would put my health and life at risk. Tennessee law had no [abortion] exceptions except to preserve the life of the mother, and I wasn't sick enough [yet]. I flew to New York City and found out that [the baby] had already passed, so I was at risk of going septic. I ended up essentially getting an emergency abortion. . . . I don't want anybody to go through that again."

NUMBER OF STAFFERS 15

MOST REWARDING THING THAT'S HAPPENED "Hundreds of women have reached out to share their stories. I feel like I've made this safe space."

SCARIEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED "I get death threats online a lot, [and] people have threatened my family." —*ES*

DAVID HOGG

(Continued from page 39)

her parents so she can afford to campaign full-time in her rematch against Emrick, a privilege that she says motivates her to give back to the community where she was raised. She studied chemistry at Wellesley, and to help explain how she thinks about politics, she grabs one of her old textbooks off the shelf.

"I swear to God, I'm not this corny. I've never used this book as a visual aid before," she says, "but it's like: You've got two molecules, and if you want to synthesize something, you first identify, okay, what are the pieces of this"—molecule A—"that interact with this"—molecule B—"and then how do you create the right environment? What solvent do you choose? It's the same in policy. You identify the groups that need to be interacting, and then you create the environment that allows them to come together." This approach toward politics—fewer collisions, more bonding—is characteristic of many Gen Zers, who tend to be practical and motivated by passion for specific issues but, according to Della Volpe, less confrontational about achieving their goals.

Thomas, a first-generation American whose parents are from India and Malaysia, says her political awakening happened during her sophomore year of high school, when Pennsylvania's governor at the time slashed more than $1 billion from public education and as a direct result, her favorite teacher lost her job. She started going to every school board meeting to protest the cuts and wound up on the board as a student representative. The experience, she says, "just cemented the importance of state and local government and the impact it has on your basic quality of life."

Campaigning for state office means knocking on a hundred doors a day, which means you've got to be okay with them occasionally getting closed in your face. You've got to spend hours each night dialing for dollars, which means being okay with getting hung up on. "We're super on the level [with prospective candidates] about how it's mostly miserable," Litman says. "We have to be, because you can't do this if you think it's going to be glamorous or exciting or make you rich. You have to have a really strong rationale, because it is going to be such a huge sacrifice for you, for your family, for your partner, for your friends, for maybe your job, your finances. It's going to be hard as fuck."

And thanks to the most extreme elements of the MAGA movement, it can also get scary. Hogg has grown accustomed to the doxing and the death threats and the photoshopped images of his decapitated head. Many of the candidates he's backing, though, are about to get their first dose of it. "It's always something to be aware of," Ramaswami says. "But if you don't get involved for that reason, then you're basically ceding the ground." Litman says that in the past year, Run for Something has built out a program of candidate safety resources—registering your campaign without using your home address, installing basic security measures for public events, and establishing a point of contact with local law enforcement in case you start getting death threats. "It's horrifying," she says, "but we have found it's really needed."

At this stage in the campaign, Ramaswami's Republican opponent, Shawn Still, seems mostly focused on portraying him as an inexperienced kid. And to be fair, Ramaswami does look like he could pass for a teenager, and he does still live at his parents' house, outside of Atlanta. While at Georgetown Law School—he graduated in May—he lived with them five days a week, spending just two in Washington, D.C., where he crashed with family while finishing up his degree. Commuting like this was cheaper than renting a place in D.C., which is something lots of people his age can relate to. Even after Frost got elected and moved to D.C., he had trouble finding an apartment because his credit was lousy from all the debt he racked up during his campaign. Republicans saw a vulnerability and went on the attack, a misreading of the political and economic moment that swiftly backfired.

DAVID HOGG ISN'T THE TYPE OF PERSON to give up without a fight, and if it takes him the rest of his life, he is going to get this office printer working. He got so preoccupied with figuring it out this morning that he was 15 minutes late for our breakfast a few blocks from his and Lata's new office. Until two weeks ago, they were working out of a spare room upstairs from the office of some friends in politics. It had no air-conditioning, and the bathroom was on a different floor, but it was free.

When he and Lata launched Leaders We Deserve last August, all they had were 3,000 or so contacts, including an ex-girlfriend of Hogg's whose info he forgot was in his phone and whom he inadvertently wound up asking for donations. (She posted about it on Instagram. "It was like 'When your ex-boyfriend launches a PAC and tries to get you to give money,' and like, eye-roll emoji," he recalls.) Through Hogg's name, though, and Lata's operative network, they managed to raise more than $3 million from 100,000 separate donors in the fourth quarter of 2023 alone.

Because they started after this election cycle had begun, Hogg and Lata are backing candidates who had already thrown their hats into the ring. They gathered a list of all the under-30 state-level candidates nationwide, narrowed it down by the contours of the district—is it an open seat? A winnable race?—and did background research. Going forward, they plan to be more active about seeking out people who haven't thought about running or maybe aren't sure.

"We exist to try to elect the best of our generation, to do everything we can to help them win," Lata says. "People who can be real leaders within the party and within their states."

After the shooting in Parkland, Hogg pictured himself as one of those people. In a 2018 cover story for *New York Magazine*, he said that he intended to run for Congress as soon as he was old enough. He has since reconsidered. He's come to realize that his national profile is his Achilles' heel. "Let's say I ran somewhere, say it's a House seat," he says. "Best-case scenario, I win. And I then have to spend most of my time doing call time for the [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee] to help myself, to help my allies. But any amount of money I raise, it's going to be canceled out by two times as much that Republicans raise off of me. And I'm so polarizing that it's going to be hard for me to get any bipartisan action on anything. Unfortunately, that is just the reality." Alternatively, he says, he can launch something like Leaders We Deserve, and "I can help all of these amazing young people run for office who collectively can have way more power than I ever could."

He's not ruling it out, though. Maybe someday. He's only 24. He's got time.