

LEADERSHIP

How would you describe your leadership style? Give an example from your past work, and how that will influence your approach in Congress.

Beth Ellen Adubato

My father is a coach. I watched him get the best out of people by individualizing his approach to members of his team. I do not, however, yell. I believe leadership on executive boards or on nonprofits or in the classroom requires a calm demeanor, a willingness to put in as much work as you expect from your “team,” and staying on top of crucial information so you can lead from strength.

Traditionally, “freshman” members of Congress need time to figure out the intricacies of the job and do not readily earn placement on prestigious committees. This midterm election, however, will present a reckoning between restoring our republic or allowing the corporations and corrupt billionaires to lay waste to our 250-year experiment. This is no time to let inexperience hold us back. If we flip Congress, the Democrats must work together—in strength and solidarity—to layer-by-layer peel back and expose the corruption and address it.

So, in this case, I would be observant, study, then insinuate myself wherever possible, and remain active with my constituents and use the media. Congress can no longer afford to act like a country club.

Brian Varela

My leadership style is simple: show up, do the work, and build from the ground up.

In 2024, I was looking at the town of Wharton in our district. Republican mayor, all-Republican town council, and no local Democratic organization at all. Most people would look at that and say it's not worth the effort. I saw an opportunity.

I went door to door. Not to campaign, but to listen. I talked to neighbors about what they cared about, what was missing, who wanted to get involved. I recruited local advocates and community organizers one conversation at a time. By early 2025, we had restarted the Wharton Democrats from scratch. Then two candidates stepped up to run for town council in a swing town that hadn't elected Democrats in years.

In November, both of them won. Wharton now has its first Democrats on the town council in years.

That's my leadership style. I don't wait for permission. I don't need an existing infrastructure. If the organization doesn't exist, I'll build it. If the path isn't there, I'll make one.

In Congress, I'll bring that same approach. Passing legislation is about building coalitions, finding common ground with colleagues, mobilizing grassroots support back home, and being creative about how to get things done. Too many members of Congress listen to corporations and lobbyists instead of the people they

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represent. I'll always start by listening to real people in our communities. I will work hard to understand their needs, their struggles, their ideas, and then fight to turn those into policy. That's how you legislate effectively: from the ground up, not the top down.

I'll work to mobilize constituents to keep pressure on tough votes, help elect more Democrats in swing districts, and look for unlikely allies wherever I can find them. I didn't get into this to play it safe. I got in to fight for working people, for our democracy, and to stop Donald Trump and his allies from dragging this country backward. I will bring that fight to Congress every single day.

Megan O'Rourke

Congressional Representatives are often described as “work horses” or “show horses.” I am a work horse with deep policy expertise who prefers to listen and work hard while adhering to the highest ethical standards. This is reflected in my career as a civil servant. I have directed climate change science funding to universities across the country with an annual budget of ~\$200 million. My work was grounded in technical expertise, required building coalitions of scientists and stakeholders throughout the country, and was done without personal fanfare while my finances passed rigorous ethical reviews every year.

Michael Roth

My leadership style is rooted in fairness, urgency, and trust. I'm a crisis-tested builder who leads from the front to fix what's broken and deliver results fast. In Congress, that means listening to constituents first, aggressively holding people and agencies accountable through all oversight authority, building coalitions, sweating implementation details, and measuring success by outcomes, not headlines.

As Head of the U.S. Small Business Administration during the pandemic, I worked across agencies, parties, and sectors to deliver aid quickly and transparently. I took over the 13,000 person agency from Trump while 6 million small businesses were shuttered, waiting for funding. I found an operation hollowed out by incompetence and cruelty. Technology systems were not set up. There was no communication with Congress. Political enemies like Planned Parenthood Clinics and immigrant-owned businesses were being denied. And I fixed it – fast.

In just a couple months, we delivered nearly \$1 trillion in relief. In NJ alone, we kept 200,000 small businesses open and saved more than a million NJ jobs. We made sure Planned Parenthood Clinics stayed open, eligible

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immigrant business owners were able to access funding, and built trust with local community leaders. We cut down on fraud, waste, and abuse. By making government work for the people, we turned an economic crisis into the biggest small business boom in US history and flipped the trend on income inequality for the first time in a century.

That same approach defines how I lead everywhere: build trust, move with urgency, empower talented teams, and stay grounded in the communities we serve. Whether working with governors and mayors across the country, building a company recognized as one of the best places in the country to work, or leading chants at the No Kings Day Rally or staying late to fold tables and pack cars, I lead from the front with accountability, humility, and a bias toward action.

Rebecca Bennett

My leadership style is **mission-driven, people-centered, and accountable**. I focus on setting a clear objective, building trust within diverse teams, and then empowering people to execute—while taking responsibility for outcomes.

An example is when I was serving in the Navy as a helicopter aircraft commander - I led missions in the middle of the ocean, in the middle of the night, where there was no margin for error, and I got the job done every single time. The stakes were life or death then, and they are life or death now.

In Congress, I would lead the same way—focused on outcomes, not ideology. I believe in doing the hard work of listening, building coalitions, and grounding decisions in facts and real-world impact. I'll prioritize accountability, insist on clear objectives for major policies (especially when lives or livelihoods are at stake).

At the end of the day, leadership isn't about speeches or titles—it's about responsibility. I've spent my career leading when the stakes were high, and I'll bring that same seriousness, discipline, and service-first mindset to representing the people of New Jersey's 7th District.

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Sara Sooy

I'm not a reactionary leader. I like to collect the full information and assess it to make decisions. I like to work collectively with all levels of government, from municipality, to county, to state, to federal, because everyone offers a different perspective. I have served Somerset County through emergencies such as IDA and Covid and I have seen first-hand how federal legislation and dollars impacts us here at home. I would take this local, on-the-ground experience back to Washington.

As a County Commissioner, I have served in the minority and I have served in the majority. I do believe it is more impactful to have conversations across party lines in a respectful fashion. The more people dig their heels in, the farther apart on the spectrum they get - when they may not have been that far apart to begin with. We need to talk to each other civilly, listen to each other, and explain our viewpoints and values to gain support on our priorities. That's how you get things done.

Tina Shah

I'm an ICU doctor. Every day I go to work to try to save people's lives and make them better.

When I'm dealing with a patient in crisis, my first question isn't "Are you a Democrat or are you a Republican?" It's instead an open ended question so that I can listen and get the clues to make the right diagnosis and bring the right treatment to my patient, regardless of their background or political views.

This is the exact approach I'll take to solving problems and getting things done in Congress. We all come from different walks of life, different experiences, different world views, and that's okay. What matters is, are our representatives able to listen, come together, work toward a common good, and rise above what makes us different to create a positive, lasting impact for our community? That's what matters to me, and that's the ethos I'll bring to Congress.