

Tim Walz is ready to talk — including about why Trump won

Pre-campaign Walz is back. In his red-state town hall events, Walz is encouraging people to share their ideas on what they want to see from Democrats. **Yeah, this should do the trick**

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[Story source: Washington Post](#)

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — Kamala Harris selected Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate in part thanks to his strength [in viral unscripted moments](#). But on the former vice president's ticket, **Walz was a cautious campaigner, infrequently interacting with undecided voters and rarely taking questions from the public or the press.**

That pre-campaign Walz is back. Making his way backstage Monday before the latest town hall on a tour of red states, Walz excitedly shared that he would be concluding the event by going “popcorn style” — or calling on a random sample of the more than 2,500 attendees gathered.

“Say whatever the hell you want to say,” Walz urged during the event, encouraging people to share their ideas on what they want to see from Democratic elected officials.

His approach was looser and more freewheeling than the Walz of fall 2024, and largely devoted to answering questions from attendees. And in an interview with The Washington Post, Walz noted areas in which the campaign had fallen short, such as a failure to reach Latino voters and unacknowledged anger over the war in Gaza.

“No s---” it’s a different vibe, said Walz, sticking to the profanity that typically peppers his remarks, in an interview with The Washington Post. He noted he’s at his best in such environments and said he thought if the campaign had done more events similar to the town hall here, it would have helped. Youngstown, where Walz held his event Monday, is a historically blue city that still elects Democratic leadership at the state and local level but is located in a county that Trump won in 2020 and 2024.

Since losing the election, Walz has emerged as one of a short list of national Democrats gathering crowds around the country. His town hall events focus on Republican districts where GOP officials have declined to hold town halls or meet with constituents eager to express their frustration with Trump in states such as Iowa, Wisconsin, Texas and Nebraska.

The event at times felt like a group-therapy session, with attendees telling The Post they feel listless, uninspired, frustrated and uncertain about why they lost or how Democrats can bounce back.

“We’re pretty confused, and it kind of sucks, because it’s a point in time where we have to not be confused, and we have to have a uniting voice,” said Jackson Hargett, 20, while waiting in a line that spanned over two blocks long to enter the event.

Walz has argued that the types of people showing up to events like his have the best ideas about where Democrats go next, and he was eager to hear attendees' thoughts — though they were more excited to hear his view on what to do, despite his loss, and ended up using the suggestions period of the event asking him for guidance instead.

Walz described the events as a listening tour of sorts, aimed at both supporting Democrats in GOP-leaning areas and understanding why the party lost. The crowd at the Ohio event rivaled Walz's largest solo events during the campaign, and attendees furiously applauded and cheered throughout the event.

“Donald Trump did a wonderful job of articulating why these people are angry. He's done nothing to improve that, and they don't believe we have either. That's what I'm trying to figure out,” Walz told The Post. People don't trust Democrats or align with the party's national brand, he added.

“I don't know what the answer is,” he said during the event, noting that the **last person to say where the party should go next is “the guy who got his ass kicked in the last election.”**

Walz is still hesitant to criticize the Harris campaign, but in an interview with The Post, he acknowledged areas for improvement and moments he viewed as warning signs ahead of November — including a **failure to connect with Latino voters, frustrations over the war in Gaza** and a press strategy that ceded ground to the GOP.

“People ran what they had in the moment, what they thought was best, but I do think it's irresponsible to not look back and say, ‘Okay, what could we do to win?’ It's not enough to blame something else. I don't blame the voters. I blame: What did we not do?” Walz said. “I put my suggestions out there. If those aren't the ones that are chosen, I work as hard as I can for the ones that were,” he said of his time on the ticket.

Walz was deployed to headline several campaign events aimed at Latino voters but said he was shocked by [how few of them attended](#). Democrats [underperformed with Hispanic and Latino voters](#) across most swing states compared with Joe Biden's 2020 run.

“I think especially with the Latino community and an immigrant community, these are driven people to succeed, and that is the American Dream. And I think sometimes we're a little bit, we're a little bit too much, you know, you should be ashamed for being successful,” he said, noting he doesn't know whether Democrats have a message yet that can reclaim lost support with that demographic.

He added that **“it needs to be spoken that there's the angst over Gaza and things that needed to be addressed,”** when asked about other warning signs he saw on the trail. **“I think we have to understand: How do we articulate that we're better for that? It's obviously self-evident now that for folks in Gaza, Donald Trump's not going to be the [one] to help them. We got to make sure that they believe that we would have been.”**

Looking forward, Walz said Democrats also need to change how they interact with the press, **including doing more interviews with more outlets and online personalities to flood the zone.** Like Trump, who took advice on podcast appearances from his son Barron Trump, 19, Walz cited conversations with his 18-year-old son, Gus Walz, on how to reach young men.

Walz, who as a former teacher was frequently deployed as a surrogate to reach young voters and spoke throughout the campaign about the political gender gap among the age group, recalled Gus asking if he was on Twitch or appearing with podcasters such as Joe Rogan and Theo Von. He said his son told him it doesn't seem as if the politics of his fellow young men are baked in, but that it seems as though it's more fun on the right.

After a significant drop in support from young voters, particularly men, Walz said, Democrats need to come up with a way to bring such young men into the party, by being “a little looser.”

“Trump doesn't know squat about football, but he shows up at football games. He doesn't know squat about NASCAR, but he shows up at NASCAR. We do know those things, and we should be out there,” Walz said. “I'm not saying it's me — send Cory Booker out to do these things. Send Elizabeth Warren; she knows basketball. ... We should do more of the spaces where they're at authentically, not performance-like.”

Walz acknowledged that the attendees showing up at his town halls are mainly people already aligned with him or the Democrats, but he said that some independents and Republicans have come out to the events and that the tenor is like a Democratic tea party moment. He explained the town halls launch as a result of a “primal scream from America, when people on the streets were saying, **‘My God, elected Democrats, do something.’”**

The Ohioans whom The Post talked to said they want to see Walz run again in 2028, though they were unsure if they would support him. They were happy to see him doing *anything*, they said, and their wish lists of future presidential candidates included lawmakers who have taken on Trump in public since his inauguration: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-New York), who [have held their own series of rallies](#), and Sen. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey), who [broke a record](#) with a more than 25-hour-long speech on the Senate floor.

“If you're thinking about doing this stuff for 2028, you're gonna get rolled by people,” he said. He subtly called out other Democrats who have been less visible, saying of the [large protests held nationwide](#) over the weekend, “You get a big old gathering last Saturday, and lo and behold, people showed up to give speeches.”

Walz argued that grassroots Democrats offer the party a road map back to power.

“The people are responding, and they're gravitating to what they think needs to happen. This is actually very healthy,” he said. “I don't want a think tank to figure out and say what we wanted to do. I want it in the laboratory of the people to tell us.”