



# SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER

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## Democrats see chance to rebuild in rural America

### Locals report rising dismay over GOP cuts

Sarah D. Wire  
USA TODAY

Dom Holmes, 28, has learned something important in 10 years of organizing progressives in rural Pennsylvania: You can't just show up when you need people to turn out to vote. You have to sit and listen to them.

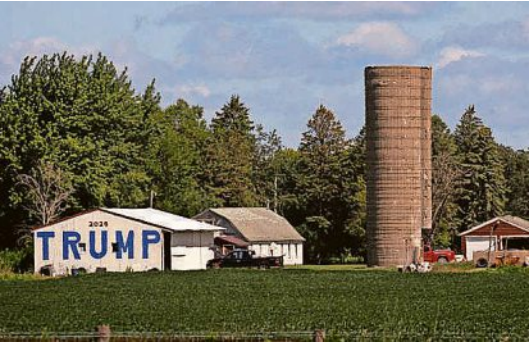
In recent weeks, when he's stopped to listen, he's gotten an earful about the tax and spending bill the Republican-led Congress passed in July.

"Folks are especially worried about how that's going to impact them at the local level," he said. They're particularly "outraged," he said, about cuts to food stamps and Medicaid and the likely damage to rural hospitals. "Folks should be aware of what the impact – immediate and not – will be on them and they should know who brought that impact to their community; who brought it home to them."

His message is being echoed by rural organizers across the country who told USA TODAY that now is the time to talk with rural voters about the cuts in the GOP's landmark law – and who voted for them.

Rural Democrats see implementation of the GOP tax and spending law, combined with other changes from the Trump administration that they say will directly harm rural communities, as a moment Democrats can use to rebuild their brand in what has been MAGA country for a decade.

And while national Democrats have their own plans for wading into these communities, the locals say they know these places and their neighbors best. They aren't sitting



A farmer uses a barn to show support for President Donald Trump on Aug. 10, 2024, near Charles City, Iowa.

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

around, hoping a national group will swoop in. "I'm a rural Democrat. We don't really tend to wait around. There's already just a ton of stuff happening," said Matt Hildreth, executive director of RuralOrganizing.org. "The energy is already happening on the ground."

#### 'The frustration with Republicans is palpable'

Republicans control the House by a voting margin of 219 to 212 with four seats currently vacant. Democrats need to win four seats next year to take over the Senate. Gaining control of either chamber would allow Democrats to freeze many of President Donald Trump's policy proposals with two years left in his term.

Both parties expect the new spending law,

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AT TOP: Lily Franklin visits voters in Montgomery County, Virginia. The Democrat narrowly lost the race for a House delegate seat in the rural district in 2023 and is running in 2025.

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## Jenny Lind elevator work to start Sept. 1

Hope Davis  
Special to the News-Leader

Replacement of the elevators at Jenny Lind Hall is set to start Sept. 1 but residents remain wary, saying the timeline for repairs has been pushed back before.

The affordable housing development for seniors and tenants with disabilities has been without a working elevator since early 2024, creating safety issues for residents and prompting calls for the city to do more to force the building's owners into compliance.

Resident Amy Jackelyn Moreau addressed City Council at its Monday, Aug. 25, meeting, saying the elevator

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## Springfield teacher finalist for top honor

Claudette Riley  
Springfield News-Leader  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Springfield educator Danielle O'Neil made the short list. She is in the running for the 2026 Missouri Teacher of the Year award.

O'Neil is a physical education teacher at Sherwood Elementary.

In early May, she was named Springfield Public Schools' Teacher of the Year at a Celebrate SPS event.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced Aug. 28 that she was one of seven finalists for the state-level award.

The Houston, Missouri, native started her career with SPS in 2016 and taught at Pershing Middle School until 2018. She then taught for a year at Delaware Elementary from 2018-2019 before transitioning to her current role at Sherwood.

The other six are:  
• Aubrey Shortino, Lee's Summit, kindergarten teacher at Trailridge Elementary;

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