The NFL keeps cashing in while its fans are left to cover the tab

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

I have been a New York Giants fan since birth, yet I have never been to a game at MetLife Stadium.

MetLife opened in 2010, when I was still a toddler. Since then, I have grown up, graduated from high school and started college. Regardless of how the Giants have performed in recent years, I am still loyal to them, but NFL organizations, including the Giants, are not loyal to their fans.

That's because the price to attend an NFL game has not gotten any friendlier over the years. A family of four will spend about $1,237 at a Giants home game, and most of that cost is just for the tickets.

A hard sell for a team that is coming off back-to-back last-place finishes in the NFC East. It is an even tougher sell when Forbes values the Giants at about $12 billion.

This is not only a Giants problem. Across the NFL, new stadiums are making it harder for fans to attend their favorite team's games, and the Buffalo Bills are the latest example.

The Bills opened the new Highmark Stadium this season. New York State and Erie County contributed $850 million in public funding, the largest amount taxpayers have ever paid for an NFL stadium.

Then the Bills added seat licenses, something the team had never charged before. Fans now pay up to $50,000 per seat just for the permission to buy season tickets.

The cost piles up from there. A Bills home game ranks among the most expensive trips in the NFL, at nearly $2,200 per family.

The new stadium also holds about 11,500 fewer fans than the old stadium. Fewer seats and more demand only increase prices.

SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., has already gone down the road to require a seat license. The cost to watch a Los Angeles Rams or Chargers game is over $100,000.

So now the obvious answer is to stay home and watch on it TV, but that is not cheap either.

For the 2026-27 NFL season, nine different networks and streaming platforms carry NFL games, and watching everything would cost an NFL Sunday Ticket customer nearly $1,000.



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY ANGELILLO

Where you live matters too. A Giants fan in the New York market can catch almost the entire season with an antenna, because the NFL puts its Prime Video and ESPN broadcasts on local stations in each team's home market.

Now move the same fan to a region outside the New York market. Out-of-market Sunday afternoon broadcasts require a standalone Sunday Ticket package of $480 a season. Add a month of Prime Video, Netflix, ESPN and a TV package for Giants broadcast blacked out on Sunday Ticket. A fan is paying more than $500 to follow the same team. The only thing that changed was the ZIP code.

All of this trouble to watch the Giants isn't limited to just the New York Region. This is a problem for all NFL teams if you're a fan watching outside your team's sports region.

Plus, it's still expensive to watch NFL games in your favorite team's region. The NFL will continue to make it difficult to watch and stream games because they will go where the most money is, even if it makes it less convenient for their fans.

The average NFL team is valued at $9.5 billion in 2026 and the NFL and its franchises are charging more because it can, not because they have to.

I understand that teams need to make a profit to make money, and heavy demand for a new stadium, like in Buffalo, only adds to the reason prices are increasing.

However, rising prices leave more fans without the option to watch their favorite team in person or on TV. Smaller stadiums, more seat licenses and more broadcasts behind paywalls hit the people with the least to spend first.

The NFL has nicer stadiums and money pouring in like never before. Making some cheap seats and keeping more football on free TV would barely make a dent. Until the NFL decides that fans matter first, loyalty will continue to cost fans more every season.

The Trump approval problem

By JAY BOOTH
Contributing Writer

This November, Republicans face the task of maintaining majority control of Congress. They are pushed up against difficult odds because of how the current Republican Party gets its votes from the American electorate — and the very thing that carried them to victory in the presidential cycles of 2016 and 2024 may be their demise in the midterms of 2026, similar to President Donald Trump's first midterm of 2018.

Trump has fundamentally changed the modern Republican Party. The party apparatus that was once so opposed to a supposed demagogue leading the presidential ticket now treats Trump like the overlord of the party itself. Trump is captivating for the Republican base. Low-propensity voters — individuals who don't vote as often or in lower-profile elections — will happily show up to the polls if Trump is on the ballot, or if Trump can convince them that someone running is pivotal to his personal political success.

Independents, on the other hand, are a volatile voter group who look for candidates, no matter the party, who have logical plans and project confidence that they can solve their problems. In 2008 and 2012, this was former President Barack Obama's Democrats. In 2016, this was the Republicans, spearheaded by Trump and the Make America Great Again movement. In 2020, it was the Democrats again under the Build Back Better movement. Then, in 2024, it was the Republicans again due to discontent with former President Joe Biden (and thus his vice president, Kamala Harris) over inflation and other economic concerns.

Independents also tend to blame the incumbent party for the issues that remain in the country, whether it's possible for the current government to do anything to solve them or not. Based on historical trends, this is bad news for Trump, as continually increasing gas prices and cost of living concerns are getting pinned on the Republican trifecta government.

With the unpopularity of the Iranian conflict and the resulting increase in crude oil prices, Trump's administration is currently sitting at a nationwide -25 net approval rating, specifically 40 points underwater with Independents. This could prove decisive in contests for Republicans in states like Arizona, Iowa, Ohio, Maine, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas and others.

And this discrepancy between Republican and Independent opinion is where the big issue lies for down-ballot Republicans. For Republicans to win in more competitive contests, they need support from both Republicans and Independents during the campaign.

For example, Pennsylvania's Seventh Congressional District, held now by Republican Ryan Mackenzie, after he flipped the Allentown-Easton-based district in 2024 against Democratic incumbent Susie Wild, would need to win with a strong coalition of Independent and Republican voters in the district. This may prove to be an impossible line to finesse perfectly, and every Republican needs to choose one or the other.

The main problem here is that Republicans, though not as much as at the start of his term, still approve of Trump. He has also shown throughout the primary season to have a very strong hand among the tuned-in electorate and who they elect, ousting incumbents like House Representative Thomas Massie, Senator John Cornyn, Senator Bill Cassidy and others.

The fact the Republican electorate still responds so positively to him shows that Trump cannot be ignored or pushed aside, and doing so would likely crush Republican and Independent turnout.

On the same coin, dropping Trump could seem like a necessity, where Independent voters in states that Trump previously won by sizable amounts in 2024 now disapprove of him by net double-digit margins, providing a big enough shift for Democrats to flip crucial seats in November. If a Republican politician can't reject Trump for fear of losing Republican turnout, but also can't embrace him for losing Independent support, then where can they turn?

Multiple Congressional and Senatorial candidates must have already done the math, and it seems that the consensus is to drop Trump. Multiple candidates have made statements against the Iranian conflict, tariffs or other policies that have faced harrowing polling regarding their approval with the American people.

Take Republican Iowa Senate nominee Ashley Hinson. She's running for the Senate seat in Trump+13 Iowa, a state that should now be relatively safe for the Republicans; however, less than a week ago, she released a video promoting her ability to be bipartisan. While this may seem innocuous to some, the fact she felt the need to reach out to Democrats and Independents in this way in a state that Trump carried by the largest margin for any presidential candidate since Nixon's 49-state landslide in 1972 is extremely telling.

Some Republicans just can't seem to shake Trump completely, or they don't think it's worth it. In Maine, the argument can be made that Susan Collins, the only remaining Republican Senator representing a state that Kamala Harris won in 2024, isn't doing enough to separate herself from the president. Her opponent, former State Senator Troy Jackson, has set up his entire campaign around connecting Collins, who has always run as an independent-style Republican, to Trump, who is underwater approval-wise by 31 points amongst all Maine adults.

Despite this, as gas prices continue to rise, the dilemma may continue to get worse. It's an issue for Republicans nationwide, and whether their plans work out in the end is a question only the voters can answer Nov. 3.

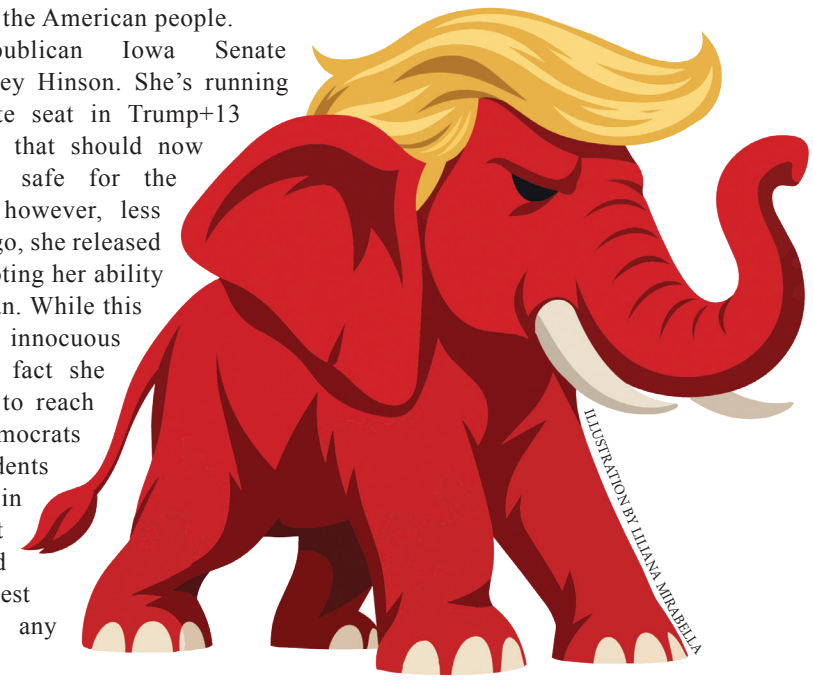


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