

Election Day 2006: The crisis facing American working people

Socialist Equality Party
7 November 2006

Whatever the outcome of today's congressional and gubernatorial elections, after November 7 working people in the United States will confront a political regime in Washington that remains committed to imperialist war in Iraq and attacks on democratic rights and living standards at home.

This election has once again demonstrated the inability of the two-party system to seriously address the most critical issues facing the American people: war, the threat to democratic rights, the growth of economic insecurity and social inequality. As a result, the largest percentage of the electorate will be those who do not bother to vote.

If, as pre-election polls suggest, the Democratic Party makes significant gains in the congressional vote and regains control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, or both, there should be no illusions that this will mean a change of course for the American ruling elite.

Tens of millions of Americans oppose the Bush administration because of the devastating toll in lives, both American and Iraqi, resulting from three-and-a-half years of war. The number one reason for a Democratic vote, according to pre-election surveys, is the desire to end the Iraq war and withdraw American troops.

But the party which will receive these antiwar votes is itself unshakably committed to "success" in Iraq, which means securing unchallenged US domination over the country's oil resources and utilizing Iraq as a base for wider military action in the region.

The real attitude of the Democrats was expressed by Congressman Rahm Emanuel, chairman of the House Democratic Campaign Committee, who appeared Sunday on the NBC program "Meet the Press." Senate Republican Campaign Committee chairwoman

Elizabeth Dole told host Tim Russert that the Republican position on Iraq was to achieve "victory," while "Democrats appear to be content with losing." Emanuel erupted in protest, demanding a retraction. "I will not sit idly by with an accusation that Democrats are content with losing," he said. "We want to win and we want a new direction to Iraq."

What does it mean to "win" in Iraq? It means the complete subjugation of the population of that country, which overwhelmingly opposes the American occupation. Even opinion polls commissioned by the Bush administration have found that a sizeable majority of Iraqis want US troops to leave and regard armed attacks on American forces as legitimate.

Achieving "success" in such an environment can be accomplished only by exterminating a large proportion of the Iraqi population—far more than the estimated 655,000 deaths already produced by the first three years of war and occupation—and at the cost of the deaths or maiming of thousands more American soldiers.

The vast majority of the American people reject such an outcome. But this antiwar majority has been effectively disenfranchised in the 2006 elections, which will maintain the domination of American political life by the right wing, even though the political trend among the masses of working people is to the left.

In that sense, the outcome of the 2006 elections is pre-ordained. Top Democratic Party officials moved systematically, after their defeat in the 2004 presidential election, to recruit candidates committed to more openly right-wing policies on social and political issues: opponents of abortion and gay rights, advocates of fiscal austerity and intensified domestic repression in the name of the "war on terror," open defenders of militarism and war.

The result is that if a massive antiwar and anti-Bush

vote does place the Democratic Party in control of Congress, the new congressmen and senators will be supporters of the war in Iraq, advocates of budget-cutting rather than any expansion of social services, and sympathetic to the reactionary views of the Christian fundamentalists who dominate the Republican Party.

One can be certain that in the event of such an electoral success, the first action of the congressional Democratic leadership will be to pledge bipartisan collaboration with the Bush administration and appeal to the White House to take on the Democrats as full partners in the struggle for “victory” in Iraq.

Once again, the 2006 election confronts working people with the necessity for a political alternative to the existing two-party system, in which both parties, the Democrats as much as the Republicans, are political instruments of the financial oligarchy.

This is the central issue which the candidates of the Socialist Equality Party have sought to place before the working class. In those states where our candidates are running—Maine, New York, Michigan, Illinois, California and Oregon—we urge the largest possible vote for the socialist alternative. But the vast majority of the American people will have no opportunity to cast a socialist vote, because of antidemocratic election laws that are particularly onerous for parties that represent the working class and receive no financial subsidies from big business.

In many states there are Green Party candidates on the ballot, but they do not represent a genuine alternative to the profit system. The Greens advocate modest reforms of capitalism, concealing from working people the true source of oppression, injustice and war: the domination of society by a financial aristocracy. They seek only to pressure the Democratic Party to move to the left, rather than to mobilize the working class as an independent political force against the existing political and economic system.

The SEP makes this additional warning: to the extent that the election results Tuesday express, even in a limited and highly distorted way, the growing opposition of the American people to war, attacks on democratic rights and the destruction of jobs and social services, the ruling elite will draw the conclusion that it must dispense with even the hollow forms of democracy and move towards openly dictatorial methods of rule.

This is the clear implication of the repeated statements by Bush and Cheney, particularly in the last week before the election, that the outcome of the voting November 7 will have no effect on the administration’s policy in Iraq.

“It may not be popular with the public. It doesn’t matter, in the sense that we have to continue what we think is right,” Cheney told ABC News. “That’s exactly what we’re doing. We’re not running for office. We’re doing what we think is right.”

Cheney continued, “The president’s made clear what his objective is. It’s victory in Iraq. And it’s full speed ahead on that basis. And that’s exactly what we’re going to do.”

This program of unrestrained military aggression has dire implications, not only for the people of Iraq and the whole Middle East, but for the democratic rights of the American people. Escalating a war in the face of overwhelming public opposition leads inexorably to mass repression at home.

The post-election period will see the further implementation of the antidemocratic measures enacted over the past five years—the Patriot Act, the secret torture program of the CIA, the establishment of a US concentration camp at Guantanamo, the illegal mass wiretapping and spying on financial transactions, the Military Commissions Act abolishing the right of habeas corpus.

The combined impact of these measures has been to establish the legal framework for an American police state. These repressive powers will be directed primarily against the working class and all those who oppose the war policies of the ruling elite.

The working class can defend its democratic rights only by breaking with the two parties of the plutocracy and building an independent mass political party of its own, based on a socialist program, and seeking to unite American workers with working people throughout the world in a common struggle against the profit system.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact