

Cory Booker heading for US Senate following easy primary victory in New Jersey

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Newark, New Jersey Mayor Cory Booker easily won the Democratic Party primary election on Tuesday in his bid to replace the late Frank Lautenberg for the state's Senate seat.

Booker, who spent millions of dollars on the campaign and received the endorsement of all major media outlets, won by a lopsided margin, receiving 60 percent of the vote, compared to about 40 percent for his three rivals combined. Congressman Frank Pallone got 20 percent, and Congressman Rush Holt 17 percent, while State Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver received less than 5 percent.

Voter turnout was only about 15 percent of registered Democrats and less than 5 percent of eligible voters in the state, reflecting the general disgust and lack of enthusiasm for the big business parties and candidates.

A special election on October 16 will pit Booker against Steve Lonegan, a right-wing Republican who easily won his party's nomination. Lonegan is not given much chance in this contest. If Booker takes office in October he will become the Senate's only current African-American member.

The special election was ordered by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Christie, a leading Republican who is considered to be a possible presidential candidate in 2016, had the power to decide when the Senate election would be held. He clearly decided that he would benefit by separating Booker's expected run for the Senate from his own appearance on the ballot on Election Day in November, when he will run for reelection. The winner of the October vote will have to run for reelection only one year later.

Cory Booker is a representative of an affluent and corrupt layer of the privileged upper middle class. He has been selected and groomed for high office, built up by his wealthy friends and the corporate media as a

man who is well suited to intensify the attacks on the working class.

Booker attended Oxford University and obtained a degree from the Yale Law School. A smooth-talking opportunist, he quickly decided on a political career in big business politics and was elected Newark mayor in 2006 at the age of 37. Local office in Newark was only a stepping stone, and Booker declared his candidacy for the Senate seat before Lautenberg died this past June. He raised more than \$6 million for his campaign, easily outspending all his opponents combined, even though Pallone, after 13 terms in the House of Representatives, had a campaign fund of more than \$3 million.

The biggest donations to Booker came from hedge fund multimillionaires as well as wealthy Hollywood celebrities and executives. Billionaire media mogul and talk show host Oprah Winfrey is one of Booker's biggest backers. Others include film executives Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg, along with actress Eva Longoria and Ivanka Trump, the daughter of right-wing real estate billionaire Donald Trump.

Booker has used the media and public relations stunts to make a name for himself during his two terms as Newark mayor. He claims 1.4 million followers on Twitter. The candidate's flair for self-promotion included such incidents as running into a burning building to rescue an elderly resident, living on a food stamp budget for a week and shoveling a driveway after a snowstorm. Every one of these activities has been followed by a press conference or press coverage.

Meanwhile, the residents of New Jersey's largest city, most of whom are poor and black, have seen no improvement in their conditions of life. One-third of the population lives below the official poverty level. Unemployment is more than 13 percent, not including the many who are forced to work part-time or who have

given up looking for jobs.

Booker's actual policies place him on the right, even given that the official political spectrum that has moved steadily to the right in recent decades. The mayor boasts of his ties to Wall Street and went so far as to criticize the Obama campaign in 2012 for daring to make an issue—even if only for political purposes—of Republican candidate Mitt Romney's role as the founder of a private equity firm that had destroyed thousands of jobs.

The Newark mayor has also championed charter schools and is known as a supporter of vouchers, the most extreme tactic used in the attack on public education. He has called Michelle Rhee, the former head of the Washington DC school system notorious for her demonization of teachers, "a friend of mine."

Booker typifies a selfish and privileged layer of the middle class that has been encouraged by the decades-long utilization of affirmative action and identity politics. In the closing days of the primary campaign, some reports hinted at evidence of corruption in Booker's career, something that would come as little surprise. The mayor has increased his net worth by about \$1 million through his connection with an Internet startup, Waywire, a video aggregator that appears to have almost no current business. Booker has also been receiving equity payments from a law firm with which he was associated before he became mayor, although he has not disclosed the amounts of those payments.



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