

Official endorsements reveal Kshama Sawant's close ties with Democratic Party

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After over a year in office, Seattle City Councilperson Kshama Sawant's first term is defined by her determined efforts to draw ever closer to the Democratic Party. Though Sawant claims to represent a "socialist alternative" to the American political establishment, she has in fact worked tirelessly to integrate herself into it.

Sawant made her support for the Democratic Party clear when she attended an official Democratic Party fundraiser on February 21. At the event, Sawant paid homage to her friend Larry Gossett, a local Democratic Party operative who currently sits on the County Council for the jurisdiction that includes Seattle.

Gossett, who has endorsed Sawant's reelection campaign, recently voted in support of a \$200 million plan to construct a new 150-cell prison for children.

In recent weeks, Sawant has intensified her campaign to cozy up to the Democratic Party.

On March 16, Sawant's re-election campaign announced that it had received the endorsement of Democratic State Senator Pramila Jayapal, a self-described close political ally of Seattle's Democratic Mayor Ed Murray.

The Democratic state senator is a former Wall Street investment banker who described her time managing leveraged buyouts as "terrific experience" on her campaign website.

In announcing the endorsement from another Democrat, Sawant lauded Jayapal: "What this shows more than anything else is the fact that a lot of the people who identify themselves as Democratic Party members or politicians or activists are actually looking for the kind of fight that I have waged in Seattle."

In the company of a supporter of children's prisons and a prideful financial parasite, the old saying "tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are"

can be aptly applied to Sawant.

An internal Socialist Alternative document reveals the group's explicit orientation toward the Democratic Party. Socialist Alternative published the document on an internal online message board in response to questions from its membership about Sawant's attendance at the February 21 Democratic Party fundraiser.

"We should fight to win the support of Democratic politicians for demands that advance the interests of working people," the letter admits before meekly reserving "the right to politically criticize them."

Socialist Alternative doesn't only defend Sawant's attendance at the fundraiser, it also acknowledges that the purpose of Sawant's attendance was to appeal to the Democratic Party:

"It's these people [the fundraiser attendees]—along with those looking toward these activists and representatives—we need to work closely with" and "convince" and "encourage" to pressure the "establishment."

Socialist Alternative justifies this position with the assertion that working with the Democrats will somehow help "bring them into conflict with the Democratic Party corporate establishment."

Acknowledging that its relationship with the Democratic Party is well established, the letter states that the success of its orientation "has been demonstrated in our work in Seattle on a number of occasions."

Another part of the letter offers the example of "the formation of Democrats for Sawant [!] at the height of the 2013 election campaign..."

The internal letter seeks to justify Sawant's relationship with Gossett by heaping praise on the Democratic County Councilperson and long-time

supporter of Barack Obama, calling Gossett “one of the most left-wing members of the council” and a “long-standing and respected leader of the civil rights movement in Seattle.”

Socialist Alternative also seeks to defend Gossett’s vote on the youth prison, saying, “Larry Gossett voted for the youth jail on the King County Council. There were different groups of civil rights activists and social workers who saw the conditions in the old youth jail as so appalling that they argued for rebuilding it in the interests of more humane conditions.”

After perfunctorily noting its own surface opposition to the prison, Socialist Alternative states: “that does not mean we should cease working with Gosset [sic] where we agree.”

The internal letter continues to explain that “socialists should welcome Gosset’s [sic] endorsement of Kshama as it strengthens Kshama’s credibility and support among progressive Democrats in Seattle,” and that “working together—where possible—to win concrete improvements for workers and the oppressed also helps to answer the attacks on Kshama that she is unwilling to collaborate and puts her ideology ahead of making progress on important issues, etc.”

To put things more concisely: Socialist Alternative sees itself—and is—essentially a faction of the Democratic Party.

This whole operation plays a crucial role in pulling the wool over the eyes of workers and young people who are growing increasingly dissatisfied with the American political establishment and the vast levels of social inequality over which it presides. Despite their incantations to the need to build an “independent” movement of the working class, Sawant and the pseudo-left groups as a whole see their central task being to derail and block precisely such a movement.

Sawant’s own comments in a recent interview with *Truthdig*’s Chris Hedges speak to this fact.

“The goal of this campaign should be to launch a massive grass-roots effort nationwide,” Sawant said in reference to her efforts to build Socialist Alternative, noting that “[w]e have to provide a place for people looking for something different, especially the younger generation.”

In the March 15 interview, titled “The most dangerous woman in America,” Hedges quotes Sawant, writing: “Many people, especially young people, are

hungry for political alternatives to ‘the two big business parties.’ Poll after poll, [Sawant] pointed out, shows the American majority to be disgusted with the Congress.”

The “place” that Socialist Alternative seeks to construct is revealed when Hedges notes that Sawant “cited the problems of Chicago Democratic Mayor Rahm Emanuel in seeking re-election as evidence that even the very beginnings of movement by working people and communities of color can shake and weaken the Democratic Party establishment.” This is a reference to the campaign of Jesús “Chuy” García, a thoroughly conventional Democratic Party politician that Socialist Alternative has backed in the election campaign.

Sawant adds that the aim must be to build “a mass movement, a viable radical alternative. This is what is happening in Greece and Spain.” This is a reference in particular to Syriza, which has taken state power in Greece and has proceeded to enforce the austerity dictates of the European banks.



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