Andrew Cuomo defeats Cynthia Nixon in New York Democratic gubernatorial primary election

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In Thursday's Democratic Party primary election, the incumbent two-term governor Andrew Cuomo defeated actress Cynthia Nixon by 66 percent to 34 percent. The primaries are "closed," meaning only registered Democrats could vote. There was a significant increase in voter turnout, from 500,940 in 2014 to 1,490,753 this year.

Cuomo, the son of the late former Governor Mario Cuomo, is a conventional right-wing Democrat who has overseen massive budget cuts in social services and the pay and benefits of state workers. He bears political responsibility for the decaying Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the world's largest public transit system, a constant source of frustration and physical danger for millions of passengers each day.

Cuomo has sought to manufacture more left-sounding "progressive" credentials in the last few years by offering a variety of cosmetic policies such as a bogus program of "free tuition" to students at the State University of New York and the City University of New York. This has been combined with empty gestures, such as calls for fiscal support during photo ops in front of severely underfunded New York City public housing developments. Cuomo cast most of his campaign in the primary as an opposition to Donald Trump.

Nixon was endorsed by the pseudo-left Democratic Socialists of America, which operates as a faction of the Democratic Party, after she praised the campaign of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who defeated incumbent long-time congressman Joseph Crowley in the Democratic primary in July for the 14th Congressional District in New York City.

Nixon's appeal was largely limited to a relatively narrow layer of the upper middle class in New York County (Manhattan) and Kings County (Brooklyn) and to some extent areas with populations of college students statewide. She campaigned on abolishing the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency and proposed a single-payer medical insurance system.

In the sole debate of the election, Nixon charged Cuomo's administration with incompetence and corruption but said nothing about Cuomo's subordination of the state government to the needs of the corporations and Wall Street.

At no point in Nixon's campaign did she address the vast and growing social inequality in the state, home to 93 billionaires, the largest number in the US after California, speak against the US war drive or call for the redistribution of the wealth of the corporate and financial elite.

Cuomo had the backing of the dominant sections of the ruling class, raising over $25 million for his campaign, compared to Nixon's approximately $2 million.

Cuomo supporters also won the Democratic primary in two other statewide elections. Incumbent Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul narrowly defeated New York City Councilor Jumaane Williams (a featured speaker at this year's pseudo-left Left Forum). Fordham Law School professor Zephyr Teachout, Cuomo's opponent in the 2014 primaries, was defeated by Brooklyn politician Letitia James in the race for the Democratic Party primary for attorney general.

Both Williams and Teachout (as well as her opponent James) were endorsed by the Working Families Party, a largely ballot-line party that functions as a faction of

the Democratic Party. The WFP, created by the trade union bureaucracy, this year split with Cuomo supporters. Williams was endorsed by the DSA and Bernie Sanders, and DSA member Ocasio-Cortez endorsed Teachout.

Several of the supposed "left" Democrats also received backing and favorable coverage by the establishment media, with sections of the Democratic Party seeing their campaigns as useful in giving the right-wing party a "progressive" gloss. Both Williams and Teachout were endorsed by the *New York Times* and the *Daily News*.

Six of the eight Democrats who had formed a faction in the State Senate (formerly known as the Independent Democratic Conference) that collaborated with Republicans were defeated by challengers, some of whom had support of the DSA, had a connection with Cuomo, or both. Cuomo himself had depended on this faction to blame for his own failure to implement supposedly progressive laws by the state legislature.

Also winning the Democratic Party primary for State Senate on Thursday was Julia Salazar, a DSA member. Salazar is a dubious figure who until a few years ago held far right-wing, Christian fundamentalist and pro-Israel positions, which she has worked to cover up. She ran her campaign, backed heavily by the DSA-affiliated *Jacobin* magazine, almost entirely along the lines of her racial and religious identity, which was disputed in exposures by the media.

The elections have been hailed by Democratic Party-aligned publications like *Jacobin* and *In These Times*, as well as the WFP, as marking a significant shift of the Democratic Party to the left. "The center of gravity has shifted, and Andrew Cuomo will face a radically different Albany," WFP state director Bill Lipton declared.

It is nothing of the sort. The role of Ocasio-Cortez, Nixon, Salazar, et al. is to try to bolster the credentials of the Democrats under conditions of mounting popular anger and hostility to the entire two-party system. The Democratic Party itself is moving sharply to the right, basing its criticism of the Trump administration in the midterm elections on its insufficiently aggressive actions against Russia and in the Middle East. In congressional races, it is running an unprecedented number of candidates drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus.

The function of the pseudo-left-backed Democrats is not in conflict with the Democratic Party as a whole, but in conformity with it.

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