The Kavanaugh confirmation and the US midterm elections

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The confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh as US Supreme Court justice has shifted the highest US court even further to the right, threatening the democratic rights of the American people on an array of issues that will now be decided by a hard-right five-member majority.

At the same time, the political campaign against Kavanaugh waged by the Democratic Party, based exclusively on unproven allegations of sexual assault, has emboldened the Republican Party, which had seemed until recently almost resigned to a political debacle in the midterm elections.

The Democrats made no serious effort to expose Kavanaugh's long record of political thuggery on behalf of the Republican Party, including key roles in both the Clinton impeachment and the theft of the 2000 presidential election. Nor have they highlighted his role as an apologist for illegal wars and torture in the Bush administration, or his 12-year record on the US Court of Appeals, issuing hundreds of right-wing decisions.

Instead, the Democrats chose to focus entirely on a 36-year-old unproven and likely unprovable allegation of sexual misconduct, dating back to the nominee's teenage years. They embraced this issue eagerly in the hopes of currying favor in the November elections with a narrow stratum of upper-middle-class women for whom the #MeToo campaign has become the vehicle for gaining status, influence and access to wealth and power.

This has allowed the Republicans—a party that fervently supports police violence, the persecution of immigrants and massive domestic spying—to posture as the defenders of such core democratic rights as the presumption of innocence.

With only four weeks remaining until the November 6 vote, in which all 435 seats in the House of Representatives are at stake, together with 35 Senate seats, 36 state governorships and thousands of seats in state legislatures, millions of working people—looking for a way to fight back against the Trump administration and express their opposition to its right-wing policies—are disgusted with both parties.

Rather than offering a genuine alternative, the Democratic Party is seeking to outflank Trump and the Republicans from the right. This is the character of the three main issues that the Democratic leadership has chosen to highlight.

First, at least for the time being, is the appeal on the basis of the Kavanaugh nomination, with the claim that the Democrats, unlike the Republicans, "believe women" when they come forward with allegations of sexual violence. The completely reactionary basis of this appeal is the suggestion that gender, not economic class, is the fundamental division in American society. But the notion that a woman working for slave wages at Amazon or UPS has more in common with a multimillionaire like Hillary Clinton or Nancy Pelosi than with her male coworkers is patently absurd.

Then there is the anti-Russia campaign, the bogus allegation that Russian interference in the 2016 elections gave Trump the presidency. This has served both to whitewash the obvious failures of the Clinton campaign and to push for a more militaristic foreign policy, both in Syria and more generally against Russia, and a ferociously antidemocratic policy at home, directed at stepped-up censorship of the Internet.

The anti-Russia agitation has gained little traction with the American public, but it has been deeply embedded in the Democratic midterm campaign in the form of 30 candidates in competitive congressional districts drawn from the CIA, the military and the civilian national-security apparatus. If the Democrats win control of the House of Representatives, these

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"CIA Democrats" will have a decisive influence.

The final component of the 2018 Democratic campaign is the appeal to Wall Street. Over the past several decades, the two corporate-controlled parties have changed places in one important respect. As the Republicans have shifted ever further to the right, incorporating ultra-right Christian fundamentalists and outright racists and fascists, and embracing the nostrums of "America First" right-wing populism, the Democratic Party, also moving to the right, has sought to supplant the Republicans as the party with the closest ties to finance capital.

A remarkable report in the *New York Times* Monday detailed the growing financial ties between the banks and stock exchange and Democratic Party candidates. The newspaper cited figures from the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks campaign donations, showing that Democrats had reversed the longtime Republican fundraising advantage in the finance, insurance and real estate industries.

The *Times* reported: "In interviews with two dozen Wall Street executives, fund-raisers, donors and those who raise money from them, Democrats described an extraordinary level of investment and excitement from the finance sector…

"From donors in just the securities and investment sector, Democratic congressional incumbents and candidates have so far received $39.3 million in 2018, compared with $28 million for Republicans. That is a reversal from 2014, when Democrats raised $28 million and Republicans $41.5 million. In 2018, 15 of the top 20 congressional recipients of securities and investment industry cash are Democrats; in 2014, 15 of the top 20 were Republicans."

Billionaires are stepping up for the Democrats too, with former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledging $100 million to elect a Democratic Congress, making him the biggest single donor to either party. Former big Republican donors have joined traditional Democratic Party financiers like Tom Steyer and George Soros.

This combination—an appeal to gender and identity politics, an orientation to the military-intelligence apparatus, and the support of Wall Street—expresses the political essence of the Democratic Party. It is the formula on which Hillary Clinton ran in the 2016 presidential election. This right-wing campaign gave Trump the opportunity to posture as the candidate of the downtrodden and those hostile to the political establishment, a factor that was critical to his victory in the industrial states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and thus in the Electoral College.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers to reject both corporate-controlled parties and build a movement for the political independence of the working class from all forms of capitalist politics, from Trump to Bernie Sanders. The SEP is running Niles Niemuth as its candidate for Congress in the 12th District of Michigan, which is directed at the mobilization of the working class, the vast majority of the population, excluded from official political life, on the basis of a socialist and revolutionary program.

To find out more and to join the campaign, please contact www.niles2018.com.

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