

Former CIA Director Brennan endorses Democrat Beto O'Rourke

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In an action that exposes the real nature of the Beto O'Rourke campaign for US Senate in Texas, former CIA Director John Brennan endorsed O'Rourke, the Democratic challenger to incumbent Republican Senator Ted Cruz. Friday's announcement came in a tweet from the former head of the CIA, a war criminal and defender of torture and drone missile assassinations.

Brennan declared, "As a former resident of Texas and a proud UT-Austin alumnus, I believe Beto O'Rourke is the type of individual Texans need in the US Senate to represent their best interests."

The endorsement was all the more extraordinary because it was the first that the avowedly "nonpartisan" Brennan has made in an election. It follows an earlier statement in which he called on his Twitter followers to "vote your conscience," while saying that he would vote for candidates who "reject inflammatory rhetoric."

Brennan has been an extremely vocal critic of the Trump administration and of Trump personally, accusing the president of "treasonous" conduct after he appeared side-by-side with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a press conference in Helsinki three months ago. At the briefing, Trump dismissed claims of Russian interference in the 2016 US elections promoted by Brennan and other figures from the military-intelligence apparatus.

Up to now, however, Brennan has not assumed an overtly partisan role. He had not endorsed any candidates for office this year, not even the two former CIA agents who are running as Democratic candidates for Congress in Virginia and Michigan, until he came out for the Texas congressman who is challenging Cruz.

Brennan's endorsement of O'Rourke in the Senate campaign is all the more significant given Brennan's

own past conflicts with the US Senate as an institution. When the Senate Intelligence Committee conducted a protracted investigation into CIA torture at secret "black site" prisons overseas, Brennan authorized CIA operatives to hack into the Senate panel's computer system to see what the committee was preparing to say, an action that prompted an unprecedented denunciation of the CIA and Brennan personally by committee chair Dianne Feinstein, the California Democrat who is usually the most fervent ally of the military-intelligence apparatus.

This is the sinister figure who now gives his personal endorsement of O'Rourke, maintaining that the Democrat has the "integrity, intellect and character" that are now lacking in Congress.

O'Rourke is a three-term congressman from El Paso who has rocketed to political prominence this year with record-breaking fundraising totaling nearly \$40 million, the bulk of it coming over the internet from supporters throughout the United States opposed to ultra-right Senator Cruz, a leading ally of President Trump.

The Democratic candidate has drawn the biggest crowds of the 2018 campaign, including 50,000 at a rally in Austin featuring singer Willie Nelson, but Cruz has maintained a narrow lead in pre-election polls. The race is considered a toss-up because of uncertainty over voter turnout, particularly among young people and minorities.

Cruz and national Republican leaders have sounded the alarm over the danger of losing a Senate seat that has been in Republican hands for three decades. President Trump traveled to Texas last month to appear side-by-side with Cruz, whom he regularly vilified during the bitter campaign for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016. Most notoriously, Trump circulated the slander that Cruz's father, a

Cuban exile, had been implicated in the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas.

While professing himself a “progressive Democrat,” and more liberal than most recent Democratic nominees for statewide office in Texas, O’Rourke is well within the right-wing consensus of American capitalist politics, a fervent supporter of the military and the intelligence agencies, differing with the Trump crackdown on immigrants only in detail.

In a debate with Cruz, O’Rourke criticized the Trump administration not for reckless militarism, but for preparing for war unilaterally. In a key exchange, he asked, “When has this country ever gone to war without allies? That’s precisely what we’re doing by levying \$200 billion in tariffs against China and alienating the EU and Canada and our traditional trading partners.”

In other words, like Brennan and other veterans of the Obama administration, O’Rourke has tactical differences with Trump’s foreign policy, not principled ones. Moreover, he was an avid defender of the military as the congressman from El Paso, the home of the second largest military installation in the US, Fort Bliss.

During his most recent term in Congress, O’Rourke has served on two committees: Armed Services and Veterans’ Affairs. He recently supported the enormous increase in military funding, the “John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019,” which allocates over \$700 billion to the US military to provide for the vast expansion of US imperialism in the preparation for war between the world’s major powers.

Responding to criticism from Cruz on immigration, O’Rourke pointed to his partnership with the senior senator from Texas, Republican John Cornyn. Together, O’Rourke said, they have teamed up to introduce legislation that would provide for the beefing up of the points of entry along the border, claiming that it would accommodate the legal crossing of people in the trade businesses that employ one in every four workers in his home city of El Paso.

“Knowing who and what comes in here makes us safer,” O’Rourke stated, revealing an intent to provide for the intensification of searches and deeper scrutiny of would-be immigrants than that which currently

exists.

While professing himself a “progressive Democrat,” O’Rourke has won the editorial endorsements of three of the largest newspapers in Texas, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, all of which traditionally support Republican candidates, including George W. Bush, Mitt Romney and Cruz himself in 2012.

The *Star-Telegram* noted that although O’Rourke’s “new way” campaign against politics-as-usual has captured attention and money, much of what he says, particularly about immigration and health care, sounds “like what Texas business conservatives used to say before the emergence of New York Republican Donald Trump.”

“US Sen. John Cornyn says we shouldn’t deport Dreamer students over their parents’ mistakes. Former Gov. Rick Perry, now energy secretary, has said a border wall ‘doesn’t make sense,’” the editorial board wrote. “President George W. Bush endorsed a path to legal status for those who came illegally but worked peacefully, supported the economy and showed good character.”

“These are the same Texas values that O’Rourke now defends,” the newspaper concluded.



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