

# New York state cancels Democratic presidential primary

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On Monday, the New York Board of Elections (NYBOE) cancelled the Democratic Party's presidential primary election, originally scheduled for April 28, then moved to June 23 by Governor Andrew Cuomo because of the coronavirus emergency.

The justification for the cancellation was given by Douglas Keller, the state Board of Election Democratic co-chair, who said, "At a time when the goal is to avoid unnecessary social contact, our conclusion was that there was no purpose in holding a beauty contest primary that would marginally increase the risk to both voters and poll workers."

This rationale is completely bogus, as shown by the board's decision to hold a mail-only vote for all other races, including local elections and primary contests for Congress, meaning that voters will be sent ballots and can return them by June 23. There would be the same amount of "social contact" if the names of the Democratic presidential candidates also appeared on those ballots.

As a result, no Democratic convention delegates will be chosen by voters. Instead, the New York Democratic Party Chairman Jay Jacobs told the Associated Press he would work out "a fair allocation of delegates so that the Sanders supporters are represented in that delegation," adding, "To what degree and what number, I don't know." There is little doubt that the purpose of the maneuver is to greatly reduce Sanders' share of the 284 delegates from New York state.

The Sanders campaign responded to the news by a statement written by Jeff Weaver, a senior advisor: "While we understood we did not have the votes to win the Democratic nomination our campaign was suspended, not ended, because people in every state should have the right to express their preference. What the Board of Elections is ignoring is that the primary

process not only leads to a nominee but also the selection of delegates which helps determine the platform and rules of the Democratic Party. New York has clearly violated its approved delegate selection plan."

Weaver warned that the Trump administration might well follow the example of New York state: "Just last week, Vice President Biden warned the American people that President Trump could use the current crisis as an excuse to postpone the November election. Well, he now has a precedent thanks to New York state."

Nina Turner, a Sanders campaign co-chair, described the decision as "a straight-up power grab." Larry Cohen, chairman of the board of Our Revolution, a non-profit that backs Sanders, said, "This is Cuomo trying to be the party boss who goes to the party convention with 284 delegates in his pocket."

The NYBOE did not previously have the power to cancel elections. This was written into a clause inserted into the New York state budget, which was passed by state lawmakers and signed by Governor Cuomo last month, obviously drafted with this action in mind.

While New York is the first state to cancel a 2020 Democratic primary election outright, 15 other states have delayed their scheduled votes. Democratic National Committee rules mandate that states which hold their primaries later than June 9 have their delegates reduced by 50 percent. Kentucky, Virginia, New Jersey, Louisiana, Alabama and Connecticut have all pushed their elections beyond that date.

The reduction of primary delegate allotments and the cancellations of state primaries will have the effect of increasing the power of unelected superdelegates to the convention. These are generally current and former Democratic party politicians who cannot vote on the Democratic Party nominee unless there is a second

ballot but will play a major role in determining the party platform adopted at the convention. This means that an already tightly controlled electoral process becomes even more so.

The social explosions sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 33 million unemployed, nearly 60,000 dead, and the development of a strike wave against the back-to-work campaign, are providing the objective impulses for a rapid radicalization of workers. This in turn is pushing the ruling class further to the right, with the outright cancellation of an election as one consequence.

New York is cancelling its election on alleged “public health” grounds, while Governor Cuomo outlined a 12-step plan on Tuesday to reopen the state for business. Workers will be ordered to work or starve, while at the same time being denied the right to vote.

The undemocratic act of the state government, controlled from top to bottom by the Democratic Party, highlights the farcical character of the claims of the Sanders campaign that this party could be reformed. Although Sanders himself is no threat to the capitalist class, this party of militarism and Wall Street is highly sensitive to the possibility that the demands for social equality by Sanders supporters would find expression in the primary vote.

As we noted in our assessment of the suspension of the Sanders campaign: “The growth of anti-capitalist sentiment revealed in the support for Sanders frightened the ruling class. After Sanders’ initial victories in early caucuses and primaries, the Democratic Party turned sharply against him. The same party that Sanders claimed could be reformed mobilized to resuscitate the campaign of Biden.”

These developments are sharp expressions of the fact that there is no road to reform within the capitalist system. As Lenin wrote over 100 years ago in *State and Revolution*, “Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society.”

There is no way for workers to carry on a political struggle within the capitalist political parties designed to suppress them. In order to preserve their own lives, workers must break from these bankrupt organizations which are fighting to push them back to work in the middle of a pandemic.

This necessarily means a fight for socialism and the

building of an international workers party. We urge our readers to take the first step in joining the Socialist Equality Party, the genuine leadership of the working class, by attending the International May Day Online Rally on May 2, sponsored by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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