

Markey wins Massachusetts Democratic primary with “progressive” masquerade

Kate Randall
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US Senator Ed Markey beat out challenger Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III in Tuesday’s Democratic primary contest in Massachusetts. Markey, 74, in Congress for 44 years, scored a decisive 55–45 margin victory over Kennedy, 39, the grandson of Robert F. Kennedy, the late US senator and attorney general. The Kennedy dynasty had never before lost an election in Massachusetts.

To read media reports of the outcome, one would believe that Markey’s victory heralded a win for the “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party. This was due in large part to the support given by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the longtime middle-of-the-road Democrat.

Celebrating his victory, Markey described his campaign as “a movement fueled by young people who are not afraid to raise their voices or make enemies.” He added, “Tonight’s victory is a tribute to those young people and to their vision.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

An examination of the senator’s record, which has included 37 years in the US House and 7 years in the Senate, shows that he was a reliable vote for the party establishment on key domestic and foreign-policy issues, and sometimes stood on the right wing of the party, voting in 2002 to authorize the war in Iraq. Why, then, did Ocasio-Cortez lend her support to his campaign?

Ads flooding the Massachusetts television market featured Ocasio-Cortez championing Markey as coauthor of her “Green New Deal.” Markey cited his support for Medicare for All and other progressive initiatives. Taking a swipe at the much younger Kennedy, Ocasio-Cortez argued in ads, “It’s not a question of your age; it’s the age of your ideas.”

Markey appeared in ads, wearing his trademark Nike sneakers, relating how his father worked as a milkman, and how as a young man he drove an ice cream truck to finance his undergraduate and law degrees at Boston College, in an effort to contrast his background to

Kennedy’s as the scion of the most prominent and wealthiest political family in Massachusetts.

Kennedy had hoped to capture the vote of young adults as well as African Americans, banking on his family’s association—however limited and contradictory—with the civil rights era of the 1960s. However, this vote did not materialize in significant numbers. He carried the older industrial cities such as Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Fall River and New Bedford. Markey dominated in the upscale suburbs west of Boston, including Brookline and Kennedy’s hometown of Newton, former strongholds of the Kennedy clan, as well as in the university towns.

Before turning to Markey’s voting record on key policy issues, it is worth examining the so-called progressive content of the Green New Deal and Medicare for All. Sen. Markey and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez introduced the Green New Deal in both houses of Congress in February of last year. The nonbinding resolution called for American energy production to transition to non-carbon-based sources within 10 years.

The resolution’s nonbinding character meant its supporters would be committed to nothing. Furthermore, even if it were adopted, the deal is placed entirely within the framework of the US capitalist profit system. Insisting that the US become “the international leader on climate action,” it would advance US corporate interests and proposes no international collaboration to advance climate concerns.

Given the attitude of the Trump administration toward the World Health Organization in the course of the coronavirus pandemic, it is laughable to expect that the US ruling elite could be counted upon to advance the environmental interests of the planet and its population.

Similarly, Medicare for All, championed by Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont in his Democratic presidential bids in 2016 and 2020, has no chance of being adopted. A genuine socialist reorganization of the US health care

system would require the expropriation of the giant hospital chains, private insurers and pharmaceuticals. Even a very limited reform like that proposed by Sanders would never take place under either a Republican or Democratic administration. So, it was easy for Markey to toss around the Green New Deal and Medicare for All as cheap campaign slogans in a cynical effort to boost the senator's progressive credentials.

On policy issues of real substance, in the House in 1994 Markey voted for the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which opened the door to mass incarceration, created 50 new death penalty offenses, and eliminated Pell Grants for inmates to receive higher education while incarcerated.

Rep. Markey was only one of three members of the Massachusetts Democratic congressional delegation to vote for Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq in 2002. Eighty-one Democrats in the House voted in favor of the resolution, while 126 voted against, placing Markey on the right wing of the Democratic caucus. Markey now claims he was duped by the lies of George W. Bush about Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Those in the Democratic Party who now hail Markey as a beacon of the progressives are well aware of these pro-imperialist and law-and-order votes, but chose to back him against Kennedy, whose policies were equally right-wing, although with a shorter record.

When Kennedy first announced his bid for the Senate, he was ahead of Markey in the polls by double digits, and there was some speculation that Markey might resign his seat. But Markey ramped up his campaign and enlisted the support not only of Ocasio-Cortez but from many corners of the Democratic "left," including MoveOn, Our Revolution, Progressive Democrats of America and the Sunrise Movement. Elizabeth Warren, the senior senator from Massachusetts, endorsed him.

Markey's campaign site lists the support of 17 unions, union locals and officials, demonstrating his long-term relationship with the corrupt union bureaucracy in the state.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi backed Kennedy, saying she always supported members of her caucus, whatever seat they sought. Longstanding ties between the wealthy Pelosi and Kennedy families may have played a role in her decision.

Markey's primary victory is revealing for what it says about the corrupt politics of forces like Ocasio-Cortez, who aim to ingratiate themselves with the Democratic

establishment. Her campaign to remake the persona of a hack politician like Markey is part of an effort to do the same for the Democratic Party as a whole, in order to channel the discontent and anger of workers and young people over the pandemic, unemployment, hunger, evictions and other social catastrophes back into this political dead end.

In other primary results in the state, 17-term Rep. Richard Neal, 71, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, the powerful body that handles all tax legislation, beat out a challenge from Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse, 31. His win followed a #MeToo-type smear against the openly gay Morse from the student paper at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, which received widespread media attention thanks to Neal's campaign, but ultimately proved bogus.

Both Markey and Neal will win the general election easily. Markey faces only token opposition, while Neal is one of four members of the all-Democratic delegation from Massachusetts who face no Republican opponent on the ballot.

In another significant result, Jake Auchincloss won the Democratic primary to succeed Joseph Kennedy in Congress. Auchincloss will add another member to the military-intelligence caucus in Congress, which the WSWS has identified as the CIA Democrats. The most right-wing candidate in a nine-person contest, he won with just 23 percent of the vote.

According to his campaign website, Auchincloss, as a captain in the Marine Corps, "commanded infantry in Helmand Province, Afghanistan in 2012 and a reconnaissance unit in Panama in 2014.

"In Helmand, he led combat patrols through villages contested by the Taliban. In Panama, his team of elite reconnaissance Marines partnered with Colombian special operations to train the Panamanian Public Forces in drug interdiction tactics."

Auchincloss will join a dozen other CIA and military operatives who now play an outsized role in the Democratic caucus in the House of Representatives.



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