As US vote-counting continues into second night

Biden nears narrow Electoral College victory while Republicans lead in Senate

Patrick Martin
4 November 2020

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden moved to within a single state of claiming victory in the US presidential election Wednesday, as television networks called Wisconsin and Michigan for the former vice president, and Fox News and the Associated Press called Arizona for him as well. A narrow Biden victory, now the most likely outcome if vote-counting is allowed to proceed, would be well below the double-digit win forecast by many polls.

Biden now has 264 electoral votes, only six fewer than the 270 required to win the White House, while Trump has 217 electoral votes. Vote counting is continuing in four states that have not been called—Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia and Nevada. Trump leads in the first three, but the votes still to be counted are primarily Democratic, either mail-in votes or votes cast in urban centers.

In Pennsylvania, the counting of mail ballots throughout Wednesday, most of them in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas, cut Trump's statewide lead from 700,000 to 212,000, with more than 900,000 votes still uncounted. The process is expected to take until Friday if it is not interrupted by one of several lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign seeking to halt the count.

In Georgia, Trump's lead has shrunk from more than 100,000 to 38,000 as counting has continued of the huge number of votes cast in the Atlanta area, which went heavily for Biden. In North Carolina, Trump's lead stood at 77,000, but about 250,000 ballots remained to be counted, mainly in urban centers like Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Asheville and the Raleigh-Durham area. In addition, mail ballots that will be counted if postmarked by Nov. 3 continue to be received in North Carolina.

Given the electoral arithmetic, Trump must win the three states where he is ahead and overcome the Biden edge in one of the states where the former vice president has a narrow lead. This seems unlikely since the Wisconsin vote count has been completed, Biden's Michigan lead is growing rather than shrinking as uncounted votes in Detroit, Grand Rapids and Flint are tabulated, and the outstanding votes in Arizona and Nevada are mail-in ballots, which have tended to favor the Democrats.

After the Wisconsin secretary of state announced that vote-counting had been effectively completed, with Biden holding a lead of 20,533 votes, about 0.6 percent of the total vote, the Trump campaign announced that it would seek a recount. The recount would not take place until after Dec. 1, when the state government officially certifies the final results based on submissions from township clerks.

The Trump campaign has also filed a lawsuit seeking to halt vote-counting in Michigan, claiming that Republican observers have been denied sufficient access to facilities in Detroit where mail ballots are being checked and tabulated. A bevy of lawsuits were filed in Pennsylvania, including one submitted directly to the US Supreme Court, where Trump appointee Amy Coney Barrett has just taken her seat. That lawsuit asks the court to reverse its previous decision to allow Pennsylvania to accept mail ballots until Friday, as long as they were put into the mail by Election Day.

Also on Wednesday, the Trump campaign filed a lawsuit in Chatham County, Georgia, in a bid to delay or block the counting of absentee ballots. Campaign officials said they were considering filing similar suits in a dozen other counties in the state.

Trump's refusal to accept his apparent defeat at the polls, including a loss in the popular vote that already exceeds his three million vote deficit in 2016, could lead to a protracted period of political uncertainty, court intervention and provocations aimed at mobilizing fascist supporters against his political opponents.

In the congressional elections, the Democratic Party performed even more poorly than Biden in the presidential contest. In the Senate, the Democrats needed a three-seat gain to take control, but so far have made a net gain of only one, winning Republican seats in Colorado and Arizona but

© World Socialist Web Site

losing the seat of Senator Doug Jones in Alabama.

The other seriously endangered Democratic incumbent, Senator Gary Peters of Michigan, edged ahead of his Republican challenger John James Wednesday afternoon. Republican incumbents defeated well-financed Democratic challengers in Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell won reelection easily in Kentucky.

The result is likely to be a 50–48 Senate, with the edge to the Republicans, while two seats are still to be determined in Georgia. In the contest for a full six-year term in Georgia, Senator David Perdue was leading his Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff, but a Libertarian candidate was taking 2.3 percent of the vote. If Perdue fails to win 50 percent of the vote (he is at 50.4 percent at this writing), the two candidates would advance to a runoff in January.

A runoff has already been set in the second contest, which is for the remaining two years of the term of Senator Johnny Isakson, who resigned because of ill health. Democrat Raphael Warnock and appointed Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler advanced to the runoff, with 32 percent and 26 percent of the vote, respectively.

If Biden wins the presidency, giving a Vice President Kamala Harris the tie-breaking vote in the Senate, control of the upper house would be determined by the outcome of the two Georgia runoff contests on Jan. 5, 2021, just as the new Congress is assembling and only 15 days before the inauguration of the new president.

The Democrats retained control of the House of Representatives, but they actually suffered a net loss of seats, perhaps as many as half a dozen, rather than the gain of 10–20 seats predicted by pre-election polling.

At least seven Democratic incumbents have been defeated, including Colin Peterson in Minnesota, Abby Finkenauer in Iowa, Joe Cunningham in South Carolina, Kendra Horn in Oklahoma and Xochitl Torres Small in New Mexico. Two first-term incumbent Democrats lost their seats in south Florida, Debbie Mucarsel-Powell and Donna Shalala, defeated by Cuban-American Republicans who ran strident anti-communist campaigns.

Other Democrats who were trailing Wednesday as vote-counting continued included Max Rose and Anthony Brindisi in New York, Susan Wild and Conor Lamb in Pennsylvania (where huge numbers of mail-in votes remain to be counted), and Harley Rouda in California.

Democrats appear likely to win only five seats now held by Republicans, including two seats in North Carolina that were remapped as heavily Democratic districts, forcing the Republican incumbents to retire, a seat in the Atlanta, Georgia, suburbs won by Democrat Carolyn Bourdeaux, and seats in Arizona and California where Democratic challengers held narrow leads with many votes still to be counted.

More significantly, Democratic challenges to nearly two dozen Republican-held seats seemed to be failing, including incumbents in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska, Arkansas and Washington, and Republican-held open seats in Virginia, Indiana, Texas, Colorado, Montana and California.

Despite the retirement of a seven Republican incumbent House members in Texas, dubbed the “Texodus” in the media, not a single seat in the huge state changed hands. Every incumbent, Democratic and Republican, was reelected, and Republicans won every one of the seven vacant seats.

Most of the 11 CIA Democrats first elected in 2018 have won reelection, including Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, Jared Golden in Maine, Andy Kim, Tom Malinowski and Mikie Sherill in New Jersey, Chrissy Houlahan in Pennsylvania, Elaine Luria in Virginia, and Jason Crow in Colorado. Abigail Spanberger in Virginia was narrowly ahead of her Republican opponent by 5,000 votes out of 450,000 cast. Max Rose in New York was trailing badly, while Conor Lamb in Pennsylvania was awaiting the count of mail ballots that might offset a deficit in the same-day voting.

The results of the voting for both president and Congress has exploded the credibility of polling organizations that predicted a near-landslide for Biden as well as a Democratic takeover of the Senate and significant gains in the House of Representatives. Four years after the 2016 debacle, pollsters working for the corporate media clearly have no way of measuring, let alone understanding, the deep-seated anger among working people generated by the deepening crisis of capitalism.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site