

Ocasio-Cortez and fellow “progressives” supply votes to reelect Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House

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On Sunday, as the new 117th Congress assembled in Washington D.C., Nancy Pelosi was reelected speaker of the House. Her narrow margin of victory was supplied by the so-called “progressive” Democrats headed up by New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

All four members of the “Squad”—Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib of Detroit, Ilhan Omar of Minneapolis, Ayanna Pressley of Boston—plus newly elected “progressives” Cori Bush of St. Louis and Jamaal Bowman of New York, voted for the leader of the right-wing Democratic Party establishment. Of this group, three—Ocasio-Cortez, Tlaib and Bush—claim membership in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Pelosi needed 214 votes to secure her fourth term as house speaker. She ended up receiving the votes of 216 of the 221 Democrats who were present. All 209 Republicans in attendance voted for House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy. Members of the new Congress had to be sworn in and physically present in the Capitol to participate in the vote for the speaker.

Three CIA Democrats, Elissa Slotkin (Michigan), Abigail Spanberger (Virginia) and Mikie Sherrill (New Jersey), voted “present,” while military veterans Jared Golden (Maine) and Connor Lamb (Pennsylvania) voted for other Democrats. Golden voted for Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, while Lamb voted for House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries.

US Socialist Equality Party National Secretary Joseph Kishore remarked after the vote, “No one should be in the least surprised by Ocasio-Cortez voting for Pelosi for speaker. The ‘Squad,’ the DSA are a faction of the Democratic Party. She is, after all, the same person who called [the late US senator and notorious war hawk] John McCain an ‘unparalleled example of human decency and American service.’”

In justifying her vote for Pelosi, Ocasio-Cortez stated that “in a time when the Republican Party is attempting an

electoral coup and trying to overturn the results of our election, this is not just about being united as a party. It’s about being united as people who have basic respect for the rule of law.”

This claim that the Democratic Party can or will defend democratic rights against the fascistic factions of the ruling elite represented by Trump is entirely bogus. Ocasio-Cortez and company ensured the reelection of Pelosi even as she and the rest of the Democratic congressional leadership, as well as President-elect Joe Biden, were downplaying Trump’s efforts to overturn the election and establish a presidential dictatorship, as well as his efforts to build a fascist movement.

They are seeking to politically chloroform the working class while they conciliate and capitulate to the far right. They fear the emergence of a mass movement from below against Trump, which could threaten the entire capitalist system, far more than they fear the growth of a fascist movement.

In fact, neither Ocasio-Cortez nor any of the other so-called “progressives” mounted any challenge to Pelosi or the rest of the leadership of the party in the House and Senate. In addition to Pelosi, the Democrats reelected in its entirety the previous Democratic leadership from the 116th Congress. This includes House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Majority Whip Jim Clyburn and the Democratic leader in the Senate, Charles Schumer.

The right-wing, militarist politics of Pelosi and the rest of the Democratic congressional leadership are a matter of record.

From the day of Trump’s inauguration, which triggered a series of nationwide protests, Pelosi and company have worked to contain and dissipate mass social opposition to Trump and channel it behind their militaristic foreign policy, directed in the first instance against Russia. This took the form of the Mueller investigation and the impeachment debacle, both of which focused on Trump’s supposed

“softness” toward Russia and insufficient aggressiveness in confronting Vladimir Putin in the Middle East and Europe.

At the same time, they did nothing to oppose Trump’s authoritarian moves, including the sending of US troops to the southern border, the establishment of a network of concentration camps for immigrants, the evisceration of asylum rights, and Trump’s declaration of a “national emergency” to illegally appropriate congressional funds for the construction of his border wall. In the end, Pelosi and the Democrats provided funding for the border wall and Trump’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement Gestapo.

Pelosi, Clyburn and Schumer headed up the operation to torpedo the Democratic primary challenge of Bernie Sanders and ensure the nomination for president of the most right-wing of the Democratic candidates, Biden. This was the signal for Sanders to reprise his role in backing Hillary Clinton in 2016 and demand that his supporters vote for Biden, which was seconded by Ocasio-Cortez, her fellow “progressives” and their promoters in the DSA and other pseudo-left organizations.

In relation to the pandemic, at the state and local level, Democrats have carried out the same “herd immunity” policy Trump has propagated at the national level, leading to over 360,000 COVID-19 fatalities in the US. Taking their lead from President-elect Joe Biden, none of the Democrats are calling for a national lockdown with pay in order to stop the spread of the virus, which is killing over 3,000 a day. Instead, they are joining with their allies in the trade union leadership to blackmail workers back onto job sites and teachers back into classrooms in order to keep up the flow of corporate profits.

Pelosi and the Democrats joined with the Republicans to deliver a near-unanimous vote for the CARES Act this past March. The passage of the multitrillion-dollar bailout of the financial oligarchy is the largest upward transfer of wealth in the history of the US. The bill provided billions in “quantitative easing” to large Wall Street banks and billions more in handouts and tax breaks to the rich and politically connected, while stiffing workers and small businesses, leading to unprecedented unemployment, hunger and suffering along with the shuttering of small businesses across the country.

Throughout the spring and summer, as millions of workers and youth participated in protests against police violence following the May 25 police murder of George Floyd, Pelosi and the rest of the Democratic leadership sought to dissipate and divide the movement by means of a racist campaign blaming “white racism” for state violence. This culminated in the desecration of monuments throughout the country of leading Revolutionary and Civil War figures, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln

and Ulysses S. Grant. Even monuments to abolitionists were attacked.

Throughout the entirety of the Trump administration, Pelosi and the Democrats have worked hand in glove with the Trump administration to pass record military budgets, going so far as to override his recent veto of the \$740 billion National Defense Authorization Act.

The so-called progressives rallied behind Pelosi despite the fact that the right-wing policies of the Democratic Party were responsible for major losses for the Democrats in the November 3 election, including the loss of 11 seats in the House and the loss of governorships and state legislatures across the country.

Pelosi’s reactionary policies are a continuation of the agenda she has pursued for decades. As House speaker (2007-2009) under George W. Bush, Pelosi oversaw the passage of funding bills to prosecute the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She covered up NSA spying and Bush’s torture program and backed the persecution of whistleblowers and journalists such as Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange.

Taking her cue from Pelosi, Ocasio-Cortez in a recent interview on Jeremy Scahill’s “Intercepted” podcast refused to call for the release of Assange, saying, “There are considerations and concerns around Assange, to just be completely frank.”

This latest vote demonstrates once again the bankruptcy of all political perspectives based on the claim that the Democratic Party can be pressured from below to serve as an instrument of progressive social change. It also refutes the claims, propagated by Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA, that a Biden administration would provide “space” for social reforms.

There is nothing progressive about Ocasio-Cortez and company. They are conventional bourgeois politicians and have no independence from the factions of the military-intelligence establishment and Wall Street for which the Democratic Party speaks.



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