Fascistic Trump supporters win most Republican primary contests—with Democratic Party support

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3 August 2022

Primary elections were held for both the Democratic and Republican parties across five states Tuesday, with Trump supporters winning most of the contested Republican races, in some cases with the open support of the Democratic Party, whose officials claimed that the far-right nominees would be easier to defeat in November.

The tactic might be compared to hostage-taking directed against voters hostile to Trump and the dominant fascist wing of the Republican Party. The Democrats help the most repugnant candidates win Republican nominations, then use the provocative character of the Republicans to provide an argument to vote for Democrats.

The reliance on such methods is a declaration of political bankruptcy. In effect, it admits that the Democrats can provide no positive reason for working people to support the Biden administration and its congressional supporters, given their right-wing record of militarism, surrender to the COVID-19 pandemic and failure to enact campaign pledges on issues like voting rights, curbing police violence and improving the social conditions for working people.

The most obvious result of this cynical intervention was the defeat of incumbent Rep. Peter Meijer in the primary for the Republican nomination in Michigan's Third Congressional District. Meijer is one of 10 Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump in the final days of his presidency for his role in instigating the January 6, 2021, attack on Congress.

Trump targeted Meijer for defeat, promoting the challenger, former Trump administration official John Gibbs, a fervent supporter of the bogus "Stop the Steal" campaign, who has long been associated with the promotion of conspiracy theories, including QAnon. Gibbs only recently moved into the district in order to challenge Meijer, but won by a narrow margin, 52 percent

to 48 percent.

Given the closeness of the contest, Gibbs owes his victory to support from the Michigan Democratic Party, which pumped at least $425,000 into campaign ads labeling him the most pro-Trump of the candidates for the Republican nomination. This sum was as much as the Gibbs campaign was able to raise on its own, in a contest where the wealthy Meijer, scion of the family that owns one of the largest supermarket chains in the state, far outspent his opponent.

The Democratic attack on Gibbs was calculated to increase the name recognition of the largely unknown challenger and win support for him from pro-Trump voters in the Republican primary. The Democratic candidate in the Third District, attorney Hillary Scholten, came close to defeating Meijer in the 2020 election when Meijer first won his seat. Scholten is running again in a district whose boundaries were redistricted and are now much more favorable to the Democrats, and she will now be favored in November against Gibbs.

As a result of Meijer's defeat, six of the 10 Republicans who voted for Trump's impeachment following the January 6 coup have been purged, two in primaries and four by retirements triggered by redistricting or the threat of primary challenges. Three have survived, all on the West Coast in states with a "jungle primary" format in which both Democrats and Republicans compete. The tenth Republican, Liz Cheney of Wyoming, is widely expected to lose her primary contest next Tuesday.

It is likely that no more than one or two of the pro-impeachment Republicans will return to Congress next January.

Alongside the purge of Trump's opponents goes the promotion of Trump loyalists and conspiracy theory fanatics as Republican nominees for many offices that

will have a decisive role in the 2024 election, in particular, governors and secretaries of state.

In Arizona, the main focus of Trump's campaigning before the primary, boosted by an influx of millions of dollars from pro-Trump billionaire Peter Thiel, election deniers won the Republican nominations for US Senate (Blake Masters), secretary of state (Mark Finchem) and state attorney general (Abe Hamadeh).

Finchem was at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and has long been identified with the "Stop the Steal" campaign. He has identified himself publicly with the Oath Keepers, one of the fascist groups that led the attack against police lines on January 6.

He brings to three the number of Republican candidates for secretary of state in key battleground states in the presidential election who claim that the last election was rigged against Trump: Michigan, Nevada and Arizona. In Pennsylvania, another hotly contested state, the governor appoints the secretary of state, and the Republican gubernatorial candidate, Doug Mastriano, is an election denier who was also at the Capitol on January 6.

The contest for governor in the Arizona Republican primary remained undecided after a seesaw of results first showing attorney Karrin Taylor Robson, wife of a wealthy real estate mogul and the favorite of the party establishment, in the lead, then Kari Lake, a pro-Trump former TV anchorwoman. Lake followed Trump's example, claiming victory as soon as the vote counting tilted her way, but tens of thousands of ballots, mainly mail-in votes, still remain to be tallied, particularly in Maricopa County, which includes the city of Phoenix and more than half the state's population.

There were press reports that the Arizona Democratic Party carried out a largely unpublicized effort to promote Lake on the same basis as the Michigan operation, calculating that she would be an easier opponent for Democratic candidate Katie Hobbs, the outgoing secretary of state.

Another target of Trump, Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers, was defeated in the Republican primary for a state Senate seat. Bowers, who left the House because of term limits, had blocked efforts in 2020 to overturn the election result and testified before the House Select Committee on the January 6 attack about the efforts of Trump agents like Rudy Giuliani to strongarm him into supporting the bogus claims of a stolen election.

In Missouri, disgraced former Governor Eric Greitens was defeated by state Attorney General Eric Schmitt in the contest for the Republican nomination to succeed retiring US Senator Roy Blunt. Trump had initially sided with Greitens, but never would do so publicly, before issuing an endorsement of "Eric" on the eve of the vote. He thereby essentially conceded the contest, which Schmitt won easily.

The results in Michigan, outside of the defeat of Meijer, were also mixed, with Trump sometimes winning and sometimes losing against the candidates backed by the billionaire DeVos family, whose fortune is based on the Amway franchise. Betsy DeVos resigned as Trump's secretary of education after the January 6 attack on Capitol Hill, but she and her family are deeply reactionary promoters of charter schools and public funding of private and religious schools.

The candidate backed by both DeVos and Trump, a former anchor for the right-wing streaming network Real America's Voice and millionaire businesswoman, Tudor Dixon, won the Republican nomination for governor to oppose incumbent Democrat Gretchen Whitmer. Dixon won a five-way contest, in which none of the candidates had ever run for political office and all five denied the validity of the 2020 election and professed loyalty to Trump.

In Washington state, with results being reported well after the day of the primary, the two Republican representatives who voted for impeachment, Dan Newhouse and Jaime Herrera Beutler, appeared to have placed in the top two in their primaries, with a Democratic challenger occupying the other spot, and a pro-Trump challenger third. That would mean November contests in each district between a Democrat and the anti-Trump Republican, with the outcome highly uncertain.

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