

CIA Democrats and fascist Republicans notch primary wins

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Democratic candidates coming from the CIA and military, and Republican candidates espousing openly fascist and racist views won numerous primary contests Tuesday, the last major day of candidate selection for the two capitalist parties before the general election in November.

The further rightward shift by both of the officially recognized parties of the financial aristocracy has been the overriding feature of this year's election campaign, although it has been largely concealed by the media. Their coverage has instead focused on candidate personalities, the ups and downs in the influence of Republican ex-President Donald Trump and horse race projections of likely outcomes in November.

The August 23 primaries in New York and Florida were no different, with most attention given to the member-on-member contest in New York's 12th Congressional District between two longtime Democratic Party representatives, Gerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney, thrown together by redistricting, and on the outcome of a special election for an open seat in New York's 19th Congressional District, won narrowly by Democrat Pat Ryan over Republican Marc Maldonado, who had been favored.

The first contest had little significance, although Nadler adopted a slightly more liberal posture than Maloney. He was also far better known through his role as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which handled some of the preliminaries of the first effort to impeach then-President Trump in the fall of 2019.

The second contest was for the Hudson Valley seat left vacant when two-term Representative Antonio Delgado resigned in order to accept the position of New York's lieutenant governor, chosen by Governor Kathy Hochul to replace her initial choice, Brian Benjamin, who quit in a bribery scandal. Delgado only narrowly won the district in 2018, and given the presumed shift towards the Republicans in the 2022 midterms, the Republican candidate Maldonado was expected to win.

Democrat Pat Ryan, however, won by a 52-48 percent margin in a heavier turnout than usual for a mid-August special election. The result was an indication of the political impact of the Supreme Court's reactionary decision two months ago in *Dobbs v. Women's Health Organization* to repeal *Roe v. Wade*.

Ryan focused on the issue of abortion rights, declaring repeatedly that "choice is on the ballot," one of the main slogans floated by the Democrats for the general election. While abortion is a democratic right of fundamental importance to the working class, the Democratic Party's professions of devotion to it are duplicitous in the extreme.

Democrats did nothing to strengthen right to abortion

In the 50 years since *Roe v. Wade*, no Democratic president or

Democratic-controlled Congress, including the current ones, has made the slightest effort to strengthen the legal position of abortion rights or push back against state efforts to encroach on it. Rather, the Democrats have themselves collaborated in chipping away at abortion rights, particularly through acceptance of the Hyde Amendment, which bars most federal funding for the medical procedure.

Viewing the special election as a "referendum on *Dobbs*," as Ryan put it, allowed the media to ignore a more significant and sinister aspect of Ryan's own primary contest and of many others, particularly in New York state: the continuing transformation of the Democratic Party into a direct political instrument of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon.

As a party of capitalism and American imperialism, the Democratic Party has always supported and defended the CIA (created by Democratic President Harry Truman) and the US military. But in 2018, candidates coming directly from the military-intelligence apparatus suddenly flooded into Democratic Party congressional campaigns, a phenomenon analyzed by the WSWS in the series of articles titled "The CIA Democrats."

Ryan was an unsuccessful candidate that year in the Democratic primary for the same congressional seat, but the contest was won by Delgado, a wealthy lawyer. We profiled Ryan then as follows:

Patrick Ryan, a West Point graduate with two tours of duty in Iraq, "including a tour as the lead intelligence officer for an infantry battalion of 1,000 soldiers and officers responsible for ground operations in Mosul," according to his campaign website.

After falling short in his first foray into politics, Ryan ran for and won the position of Ulster County executive in 2019. When the congressional seat opened up with Delgado's acceptance of the No. 2 job in Albany, Ryan faced little opposition for the Democratic nomination to succeed him.

His success does not make him an outlier. Out of 26 congressional seats in New York state, incumbent Democrats hold 14. In the 12 remaining seats, four held by Republican incumbents, eight open due to retirements, resignations or redistricting, a majority of the Democratic candidates, seven out of 12, are from military-intelligence backgrounds. All seven have had significant command responsibilities, mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The predominance of such figures is particularly remarkable given that New York is the second lowest state in the country in the proportion of its population who are veterans of military service, only 3.5 percent, while they account for 58 percent of the Democratic candidates for open or Republican-held seats.

The list (in addition to Ryan) includes the following:

District 2 (Long Island): **Jackie Gordon**, career Army Reserve officer

who commanded military police units in Iraq, Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay, is challenging one-term incumbent Andrew Garbarino.

District 11 (Staten Island-Brooklyn): **Max Rose**, former Army officer who commanded units in Afghanistan, will face one-term incumbent Nicole Malliotakis in a rematch of their 2020 contest, when Rose was the one-term incumbent elected in 2018.

District 21 (Adirondack region): **Max Castelli** was a CIA officer in Iraq and Afghanistan, then director for counterterrorism at President Obama's National Security Council. He is challenging incumbent Elise Stefanik, chair of the House Republican Conference.

District 22 (Syracuse): **Francis Conole**, career Navy officer, including intelligence work at the Pentagon and in Iraq, is seeking the open seat vacated by Republican John Katko, one of the 10 Republicans who voted to impeach Trump in 2021.

District 23 (Southern tier, Buffalo suburbs): **Max Della Pia**, a career Air Force and Air National Guard officer, is a heavy underdog against Nick Langworthy, the replacement for Republican Congressman Chris Jacobs, who retired after expressing support for restrictions on gun ownership after the massacre of school children in Uvalde, Texas.

District 24 (Finger Lakes, Lake Ontario): **Steven Holden**, a 22-year Army veteran with four deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, including a self-proclaimed role in the capture of Saddam Hussein, is a heavy underdog against incumbent Republican Claudia Tenney.

One other Democrat with a military-intelligence background won a congressional nomination Tuesday, this time in Florida: **Eric Lynn**, a civilian adviser to the Pentagon for six years in the Obama administration, will be the Democratic candidate to retain the 13th Congressional District seat held by Charlie Crist, who won the nomination for governor to face Republican Ron DeSantis.

Besides the new influx of CIA Democrats, the usual array of multi-millionaires and establishment favorites prevailed in several Democratic contests. Crist, the former Republican governor of Florida-turned Democratic congressman, won the Democratic nomination for governor to face DeSantis. Representative Sean Patrick Maloney, head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, won renomination over state senator Alexandria Biaggi, who had the backing of Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Dan Goldman, lead counsel for the Democrats in the first impeachment effort against Trump, won the primary in the newly created 10th District encompassing lower Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn. More important than his legal record is the fact that as an heir to the Levi Strauss fortune, he could pour millions into a multi-candidate race in an overwhelmingly Democratic district. Naturally, he had the endorsement of the *New York Times*.

Candidates backed by the Sanders wing of the party were defeated in virtually every contest. The one exception was the race in Florida's 10th District (Orlando), where 25-year-old Maxwell Frost won a multi-candidate race. He would succeed incumbent Democrat Val Demings, who will be the party's nominee for US Senate, challenging incumbent Republican Marco Rubio.

Fascists and racists were as numerous among Republican candidates as military-intelligence operatives among the Democrats.

They included Cory Mills, an Army Special Forces veteran, in the 7th District, who boasted during the primary campaign that his company "sold tear gas used on Black Lives Matter protesters." He is an election denialist who questions the legitimacy of the Biden administration.

In the 13th District, Air Force veteran Anna Paulina Luna won the Republican nomination with Trump's endorsement. She in turn called the FBI search of Mar-a-Lago a "Soviet-style" attack. Luna was the Hispanic outreach director for the fascist Turning Point organization and a supporter of various conspiracy theories. She once claimed that her Republican opponents were trying to murder her.

They would join fascist Representative Matt Gaetz, who won renomination for his First District seat despite an ongoing and highly publicized investigation involving paid sex with a minor. Gaetz is one of the most fervent supporters of Trump in the House Republican Caucus and played a significant role in the "stop the steal" campaign that culminated in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

His Democratic opponent in November will be Rebekah Jones, the COVID-19 whistleblower who exposed the falsifying of pandemic reports by the DeSantis administration and was fired and witch-hunted for her efforts, including an armed police raid on her home. The Democratic Party tried to block her nomination, and she was initially thrown off the ballot over a technicality before her place was restored after she went to court.

Gaetz is a heavy favorite in the Pensacola-based district, filled with military retirees who gave Trump his largest margin in 2020 of any US congressional district.

Another Republican fascist, Laura Loomer, narrowly lost her challenge to incumbent Republican Representative Dan Webster. Loomer ran as a self-proclaimed "Islamophobe," declaring that Muslims should not be allowed to drive Ubers or cabs. She claimed that some mass shootings were staged for the purpose of promoting gun control.

Gerrymandering, a mockery of democracy

The New York and Florida primaries also highlighted the issue of gerrymandering, which makes a mockery of genuine democracy, as the party in control of the state government redraws district lines after each decennial census to ensure the maximum number of "safe" districts.

In Florida, which gained one seat due to population growth, the Republican-controlled state legislature drew lines highly favorable to the Republican Party, only to have Governor DeSantis throw out the map and substitute his own map, even more favorable to the Republicans and eliminating the Jacksonville-based district held by longtime Democratic Representative Al Lawson. As a result, the state, nearly evenly divided in statewide races, will likely see its congressional delegation divided 20-8 in favor of the Republicans in November.

In New York state, where the Democrats are in control, the legislature carried out a similar gerrymander, with the goal of reducing the Republican minority in the congressional delegation from eight out of 27 to as few as three out of 26 (the state lost a seat as a result of the census). This map was thrown out by the courts, however, which substituted a less favorable one that combined some districts and created some new ones, making the outcome in November less predictable.



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