

US midterm elections: American democracy in shambles

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The US midterm elections are concluding tomorrow under conditions of unprecedented social, economic and political crisis. The supposed “choice” being offered to the American people is between two parties of capitalist reaction, both of which are dedicated to the escalation of war abroad and war on the working class at home.

Two years after the 2020 presidential election, which culminated in the attempted fascist coup of January 6, 2021, the Republican Party could emerge with control of one if not both houses of Congress, while increasing its dominant position in state governments across the country. While it is not possible to predict the final outcome, polls indicate that the Republicans have been able to capitalize on growing economic misery over the first two years of the Biden administration.

The Republican Party has put forward a slate of fascist reactionaries for the Senate, the House of Representatives and state governments, who not only embrace Trump’s big lie that the 2020 election was stolen, but refuse in advance to accept the results of the 2022 election, unless they win, and pledge to return Trump to the White House in 2024.

In state after state, the Republicans are running candidates committed to taking control of the election machinery and using it to guarantee their future dominance. One candidate for governor, Tim Michels in Wisconsin, went so far as to predict that if he wins, the Republican Party will never lose another election.

Trump himself, reported to be on the brink of announcing his presidential bid for 2024, has embraced fascism more and more openly. At his rallies, he and other speakers make thinly veiled appeals to anti-Semitism, promise retribution against their political opponents, vilify immigrants, inveigh against “socialism,” and gloat over the violent attack that

nearly killed Paul Pelosi, husband of the Democratic speaker of the House—an attack carried out by a fascist who embraced their “stolen election” lies.

Over the past several days, both Trump and Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel have called on Trump supporters to mobilize at polling stations. The Department of Homeland Security has issued a warning of the increased danger of far-right extremist violence during and after the elections.

How is the possible return to power of the Republican Party to be explained? It is not because there is a vast popular constituency for Trump and his fascist conspiracies. Nor is there mass support for the policies that a Republican-led Congress would advance: tax cuts for the wealthy, cuts in social spending, especially entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare, intensified attacks on immigrants and an escalation of police violence.

Any electoral success for the Republicans is due entirely to the reactionary and bankrupt policies of the Democratic Party and the impasse for the working class created by the two-party monopoly.

What have been the main “achievements” of the Democratic Party during the past two years, when it controlled the White House and both houses of Congress?

The central preoccupation of the Biden administration has been the prosecution of the war against Russia in Ukraine, which has the full support of the entire Democratic Party. This was reinforced two weeks ago when 30 liberal Democrats sent a letter to the White House pleading for a negotiated settlement with Russia rather than continuing to escalate the risk of nuclear war.

Within 24 hours, after a massive backlash within the

political establishment, the letter was withdrawn and the leader of the “Progressive Caucus” issued a humiliating apology, reaffirming the group’s support for prosecuting the war until “victory.”

Inflation is skyrocketing and working class living standards are being slashed. The Federal Reserve is pursuing a deliberate policy of increasing unemployment through the raising of interest rates in an effort to use social misery as a bludgeon against demands for wage increases.

In two years in office, the Democrats have done nothing to improve the conditions of the vast majority of the population. The White House dropped any push for voting rights legislation. It did nothing to protect the rights of immigrants, instead stepping up the deportation and exclusion of asylum seekers to record levels, beyond even the level of the Trump administration. It regards women’s right to abortion as a means of motivating people to vote, while refusing to defend it in practice.

And, confronted with a party that sought to overturn the 2020 election and block Biden’s own inauguration through the methods of coup and political assassination, the Democrats have shielded the Republican Party.

Nearly two years after the coup attempt, neither Trump nor any of his top co-conspirators has been prosecuted. There has been no serious investigation into the January 6 conspiracy or the social and political forces behind it.

Since Biden’s speech last Wednesday, warning that Trump and his allies represent a dire threat to democracy, he and other leading Democrats have turned the declaration that “democracy is on the ballot” into a hollow sound bite.

The differences between the Democrats and the Republicans, however bitter and intense, are entirely tactical.

In domestic policy, the Democrats seek to use the trade union apparatus to suppress the working class, while employing the demagogues of identity politics to split the working class along race and gender lines. The Republicans wish to dispense with the unions, which are rapidly losing their ability to hold back the class struggle, and proceed directly to the deployment of the police and military violence.

On the fundamental question of which class they

serve, the Democrats and Republicans are united. They are different components of a two-party system of capitalist-imperialist reaction.

The real potential for breaking out of this political blind alley lies in developments entirely outside the constricted framework of official American politics, in the growth of a working class rebellion against trade union bureaucracies that have worked for decades to suppress the class struggle.

The strike by 55,000 school workers in Ontario, Canada, the movement of 120,000 US rail workers against the unions’ capitulation to the rotten contract devised by Biden’s Presidential Emergency Board, the developing struggles of pilots, the explosive anger of US health care workers and educators—these are the early signs of an eruption of the working class in North America, part of a global movement of the international working class.

In the midst of the reactionary spectacle of the midterm elections, the campaign of socialist candidate Will Lehman for the presidency of the United Auto Workers (UAW) is charting the way forward for workers in the US and around the world. The Lehman campaign has won enormous support on the basis of a program of abolishing the UAW apparatus and transferring power to the rank and file. It is the most conscious expression of a growing class movement that will develop explosively in the aftermath of the midterm elections.

The critical issue is that workers recognize that the defense of their social and economic interests is bound up with a political struggle against the government and both parties of the capitalist ruling elite.



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