

Democrat Karen Bass will quickly dash voter expectations after election as Los Angeles mayor

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21 November 2022

After her victory in the Los Angeles mayoral election last week, Karen Bass, a fixture in Democratic Party politics at the state and national level, has received a media blitz promoting the “transformational” character of her victory. With Bass’ victory, the four largest cities in the country, New York, Los Angeles itself, Chicago and Houston are all led by African American mayors, two of them women. Bass will be sworn into office on December 12.

In reality, Bass is nothing more than a product of the Democratic Party establishment whose interests are aligned with those of Wall Street and the Pentagon, not with the working class.

Bass defeated 63-year-old Rick Caruso, a billionaire real estate developer and former Republican who switched parties to run as a Democrat and spent \$100 million of his fortune on his campaign. While Caruso took a slight lead in the polls on election night, mail ballots were cast overwhelmingly in her favor.

Bass defeated Caruso by a final margin of 506,372 to 417,375 or 54.82 percent to 45.18 percent. While both ran as Democrats, Bass, a US House member who was on Biden’s public “short list” as a potential vice president, before the nod went to Kamala Harris, received the endorsement of President Joe Biden along with Harris, Bernie Sanders, and former president Barack Obama.

After several terms in the California state assembly, during which she rose to become speaker and played a key role in a bipartisan budget-cutting deal with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger after the financial crash of 2008-2009, Bass ran for Congress in 2010 when Democratic incumbent Diane Watson retired. She had close ties to both the leadership under Nancy Pelosi, and the Progressive Caucus, and was chair of the Congressional Black Caucus in 2019-2021.

The Bass campaign benefited from widespread hostility towards her opponent, who was a registered Republican only three years ago, in 2019. A devout Catholic, Caruso extensively funded anti-abortion candidates in the past and in a 2007 profile for *Los Angeles Magazine*, said that he opposes abortion in most cases.

Bass ran on a pro law-and-order campaign which was virtually indistinguishable from that of her opponent. Despite the fact that Los Angeles police, like their counterparts in cities across the country, regularly engage in the extrajudicial killings of impoverished workers, crimes for which they are never held accountable, Bass during her campaign called for more hiring at the Los Angeles Police Department.

Cynically justifying her decision by claiming that Los Angeles residents “don’t feel safe,” Bass called for the hiring of civilians in clerical roles to free up hundreds of Los Angeles police officers to patrol the streets instead. On the CBS *Face the Nation* interview program, Bass fraudulently claimed that in many Los Angeles communities that are regularly terrorized by the police, community members “want to see an increased police presence.”

Significantly all the Democratic candidates for mayor in the June primary, including Bass, Caruso and Mike Feuer, rejected any and all calls by activist groups to defund the police, calling for a sharply beefed-up police presence instead. Bass herself referred to “Defund the Police” as “one of the worst slogans ever.”

In 2021, Bass had sponsored the “George Floyd Justice in Police Act” in the House of Representatives, a token reform measure that introduced minimal restrictions on police use for force while Bass herself claimed that it would nonetheless provide additional funding for “community policing.” The measure was nothing more

than a cynical, face-saving initiative in the wake of the protests in 2020 over the wanton police murders of Floyd and numerous other innocents throughout the US.

On the issue of homelessness, Bass has pledged to take drastic measures to put an end to it on a largely right-wing basis. Upon taking office, Bass plans to end street encampments while providing an utterly inadequate amount of housing to the homeless. Like the plan proposed by Caruso, this will inevitably result in a massive police crackdown on the homeless rather than the provision of meaningful support and services to the unhoused.

Making this position clear on the CBS appearance, Bass stated, “we have to have a comprehensive approach and address the reasons why people are unhoused but first and foremost we have to get people off the streets.”

Other significant local races included the victory of Robert Luna—former Long Beach city police chief—for Los Angeles County Sheriff, defeating the incumbent Alex Villanueva by a decisive 61.26 to 38.74 percent. According to a number of investigative reports, the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department is rife with unofficial gangs with ties to white supremacist groups, which regularly beat prisoners and rewarded members who committed murder. Villanueva not only covered up instances of police brutality but threatened journalists and even elected officials investigating the issue.

In September, at Villanueva’s direction, armed sheriff’s deputies raided the home of county supervisor Sheila Kuehl, who served on the sheriff’s oversight committee. Seized in the raid were Kuehl’s phone and personal computer. The LA district attorney’s office claimed it was in no way involved in the search.

The heavy-handed and Gestapo-like tactics of Villanueva’s department also were a huge contributing factor to the passage, by overwhelming margins, of Los Angeles county measure A. The measure, which passed by 71.82 to 28.18 percent, allows the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to remove the sheriff from office for cause.

The causes include violations of law by the sheriff, although removal must pass by an 80 percent vote by the board to take effect. A similar measure in the city of Long Beach, part of the county, to establish a Police Oversight Commission, was passed by a vote of 59.75 percent in favor to 40.25 percent against.

In the race for Los Angeles City Council 13th District, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) candidate Hugo Soto-Martinez defeated two term incumbent Mitch

O’Farrell by a margin of 57.74 to 42.26 percent. Soto-Martinez ran explicitly on the platform that the city government can be pushed to the left.

The intervention of the DSA (which unconditionally supported Karen Bass’ law-and-order campaign) is extremely significant after the massive discrediting of the city government after audio was released revealing city council members engaging in vile racist rhetoric toward other government officials, and constituencies as a whole. The *World Socialist Web Site* will be writing on the significance of the DSA intervention in the Los Angeles elections within the coming days.

The election results expressed a significant shift in the population of the country’s second largest city to the left.

In addition to the already referenced county measure A, voters in the city of Los Angeles also overwhelmingly passed measure LH, by 70.4 percent to 29.56 percent, to authorize funding for thousands of units of low-income rental housing. Measure ULA, providing funding for affordable housing and tenant assistance programs, also passed by 57.75 percent to 42.25 percent. In the neighboring city of Pasadena, a measure widely opposed by landlord organizations to limit rent increases to 75 percent of the consumer price index annually, passed by 52.30 percent to 47.70 percent.

On a statewide level, measure 28, to provide additional funding for arts and music education in public schools, passed by 69.92 to 30.08 percent. Perhaps most significantly, state measure 1, to amend the state’s constitution to expressly include an individual’s fundamental right to abortion and contraception services, was passed by an overwhelming margin of 72.90 percent in favor to 27.10 percent against.

The vote on the pro-choice measure reflects widespread hostility to the US Supreme Court’s June decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* in which the six ultra-right members of the nine-member court ruled that the US Constitution does not protect a woman’s right to an abortion. In the wake of the ruling, a number of state governments began to roll back abortion rights.



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