

House Democrats pick former CIA agent Spanberger for leadership post

Patrick Martin
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Former CIA agent Abigail Spanberger was elected to a leadership position in the House Democratic caucus Wednesday, chosen by a 30-22 vote to represent Democratic members of Congress in closely contested “battleground” districts.

Spanberger is the first of the group of military-intelligence veterans who entered the House of Representatives in 2018 to win a position in the leadership. Eleven “CIA Democrats” were elected that year, and with some subtractions and additions, the number has grown to 13 as of the November 8 election.

The election in a caucus that comprises one quarter of the Democratic members of the House of Representatives confirms the assessment by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the midterm elections have set the stage for a further shift to the right by the Democratic Party and the Biden administration.

This has already been demonstrated in practice, as Congress has swiftly passed legislation to impose a contract on rail workers and bar them from striking. At the same time, the House of Representatives has ratified a further vast increase in the US military budget, which includes massive US financing of the war in Ukraine against Russia.

Spanberger defeated Matt Cartwright, a four-term representative from northeastern Pennsylvania, in what amounted to a straight right-left contest as these terms are defined within the Democratic Party. Cartwright is a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, while Spanberger has enlisted in all three of the groups for the most right-wing Democrats: the New Democrat caucus, the Blue Dog caucus, and the bipartisan Problem Solvers caucus.

The former CIA agent became one of the more notorious right-wing figures among House Democrats when she denounced the political impact of the mass

protests against the police murder of George Floyd, claiming that the slogan “defund the police” had been a major factor in the Democrats losing a dozen close House contests in 2020.

This argument effectively accepted the attacks of the congressional Republicans and their corporate and far-right backers, since no Democrat actually ran on the slogan—in reality, the party backpedaled away from the protests against police killings as fast as it could.

Spanberger combined her defense of police killings with a broadside against socialism, in the tepid and entirely rhetorical version espoused by Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and other members of the House affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America.

On a conference call of House Democrats after the 2020 election, Spanberger declared, “We need to not ever use the word ‘socialist’ or ‘socialism’ ever again,” adding that the party would get “fucking torn apart in 2022” if it did not suppress policies such as Medicare for All.

In 2021, after Republican candidates won the statewide contests in Virginia and took control of the state assembly, Spanberger publicly complained about the “leftist” policies of the Biden administration which she claimed had sparked a right-wing backlash. “Nobody elected him to be FDR,” she said. “They elected him to be normal and stop the chaos.”

In the caucus of 53 “battleground” Democrats, those identified by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee who survived close contests in 2022, Spanberger had several advantages against Cartwright. Ten of the 53 are CIA Democrats like her, including Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, another ex-CIA agent, and a mix of former military officers and State Department and National Security Council officials.

Slotkin was one of eight right-wing Democrats who co-signed a letter to the entire caucus appealing for support to Spanberger. The eight included three CIA Democrats—Slotkin, Jared Golden of Maine, and Mikey Sherrill of New Jersey. Another co-signer was Josh Gottheimer, a long-time leader of the right wing of the House Democrats and co-leader of the Problem Solvers.

The New Democrats also endorsed Spanberger’s candidacy, issuing a statement hailing her right-wing character and willingness to abandon any shred of reformist pretense, which they described as “not ... following a cut-and-paste Democratic blueprint.”

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The principal focus of the most right-wing faction of the Democrats, which is shared by the party leadership as a whole and the Biden administration, is the long-running US intervention in Ukraine against Russia.

The CIA Democrats, including Spanberger, intervened at a critical moment in the crisis of the Trump administration in September 2019, after it was revealed that Trump, on a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, had pushed hard for an investigation into the activities of Biden’s son Hunter as a board member of a large energy company in Ukraine.

Trump was seeking assistance in digging up dirt against the Democrat he regarded as his most dangerous potential opponent in 2020. For the military-intelligence apparatus, and their direct political representatives within the Democratic caucus, this was an entirely unacceptable disruption of the US preparations, which came to fruition in February 2022, to provoke a Russian military intervention.

Nancy Pelosi and other top House Democrats were still not committed to a formal impeachment inquiry, when seven freshmen Democrats, six of them CIA Democrats, issued a joint demand for impeachment in an op-ed column published by the *Washington Post*.

Among the six were Spanberger and Slotkin, the two former CIA agents. The column declared: “To uphold and defend our Constitution, Congress must determine whether the president was indeed willing to use his power and withhold security assistance funds to persuade a foreign country to assist him in an upcoming election. If these allegations are true, we believe these

actions represent an impeachable offense.”

Three years later, the full meaning of this column is clear. The Democrats with the closest ties to the military-intelligence apparatus were aghast that Trump had put his personal political interests above a concerted campaign to smash up the Russian state, promoted by Washington at the cost of billions of dollars over many years.

In elevating Spanberger, the House Democrats have made what amounts to a pledge of allegiance to this program of imperialist aggression.



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