

Biden seeks reelection amid war, COVID and inflation

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President Joe Biden's announcement Tuesday that he will seek reelection in 2024, while predictable and widely expected, is nonetheless a significant event. It demonstrates the deepening political crisis of the capitalist two-party system and of American capitalism as a whole.

The Democratic Party cannot provide an alternative to an 80-year-old man whose physical health and mental competence are clearly at issue, and who would be 86 years old before he leaves the White House at the end of a second term.

As for the Republicans, the fascist former president, Donald Trump, at 76 the second-oldest man ever to occupy the White House, is the clear favorite for the party's presidential nomination. Should Trump fail to secure the nomination, another fascist, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, is waiting in the wings.

These are the choices that the capitalist two-party system offers working people, although, according to recent polls, Biden and Trump are the two least popular politicians among the presidential hopefuls. Only 5 percent of those polled looked with favor on a rematch of the 2020 election, in which Biden defeated Trump by 7 million votes, and by a margin of 306–232 in the Electoral College.

When the Stalinist bureaucracy had reached the end of its rope in the Soviet Union, in the early 1980s, it advanced a series of aging leaders, a gerontocracy that demonstrated visibly its ossification. After the death of Leonid Brezhnev, 75, Yuri Andropov, 68, succeeded him, followed by Konstantin Chernenko, 72. They now seem positively youthful compared to the current crop of leaders in Washington, with Biden, age 80, in the White House; the troika of Nancy Pelosi, Steny Hoyer and Jim Clyburn, all in their 80s, in control of the House of Representatives until last November; and

Chuck Schumer, 72, and Mitch McConnell, 81, leading the Democrats and Republicans in the Senate.

As in the USSR, the aging and semi-senile leadership is a sign of unresolved contradictions which make it difficult for the ruling elite to make the transition from one generation to the next in its leading personnel. The nature of these contradictions is suggested by the three-minute video presentation in which Biden made the case for his own reelection. The video is remarkable, both for what it includes, but mainly for what it passes over in silence, particularly the war in Ukraine, the central focus of the Biden administration for the past two years.

Biden declares freedom and democracy to be the central issues in the 2024 elections, citing three major threats: the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, the Supreme Court ruling overturning the *Roe v. Wade* decision on abortion rights and efforts by the Republican Party to restrict voting rights.

These are, of course, highly significant issues. But the Democratic Party has done nothing to defend any of these rights. The House committee hearings into January 6 and the ensuing Justice Department investigation have not resulted in the criminal prosecution of any of those responsible for organizing and instigating the violent attack on Congress, which was aimed at blocking certification of Trump's election defeat and keeping him in the White House. Trump and his top collaborators in the White House, Pentagon and other federal agencies still walk free.

Similarly, the Democrats failed to take any action to safeguard abortion rights from the 6–3 ultra-right majority on the Supreme Court when they had a majority in both houses of Congress. They are using abortion now purely as a “get-out-the-vote” tactic to mobilize younger voters who otherwise have been

alienated by the right-wing policies of the Biden administration. The attack on voting rights has likewise been reduced to a means of mobilizing black and Hispanic voters to go to the polls in 2024 and vote for Democrats, who would not pass a voting rights bill when they controlled Congress.

Even more significant are the issues suppressed in Biden's announcement video.

There is no mention of the US-instigated proxy war in Ukraine, despite the incessant claims by the Biden administration that this is a war to defend democracy and human rights against Russian aggression. Even when declaring that his campaign theme is the defense of freedom, Biden does not dare to make the connection to the war in Ukraine, because he knows it is deeply unpopular. Nor could he refer to the danger of nuclear war arising from this conflict, because the policy of his administration is to recklessly escalate the war and support provocations against Russia that could trigger a nuclear response.

He was likewise silent on the COVID pandemic, which has claimed the lives of more than 1.1 million Americans, a large majority of them while Biden was in the White House. During the 2020 election campaign, Biden declared during one debate that 200,000 Americans had died of coronavirus during Trump's time in office. "Anyone who's responsible for that many deaths should not remain as president of the United States of America," he said. More than three times that number have died of the preventable disease during Biden's presidency, and the pandemic is ongoing.

Biden said nothing about inflation or the economic crisis of world capitalism more generally, although that is surely a central issue in the minds of working people. His administration and the Federal Reserve are pursuing a policy of using higher interest rates and higher unemployment to suppress the mounting struggles of the working class driven by inflation. This was signaled most directly by Biden's pushing legislation through Congress last December to ban a strike by 115,000 rail workers and impose a concessions contract on them.

The next two years will be ones of deepening crisis and social and political explosions, which will break up the seeming political paralysis in US ruling circles and shake the existing political order to its foundation. The

two-party system, already deeply discredited, can provide no way forward for tens of millions of working people.

Senator Bernie Sanders, Biden's major opponent for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, announced his endorsement within minutes of the release of the campaign video, saying, "I'm in to do what I can to make sure that the president is reelected." All other leading Democrats are following suit, confirming that there will be no challenge to Biden from within his own party.

As for the right-wing opposition, the Republican Party has moved decisively in the direction of fascism, with the majority of its congressional delegation having voted to overturn the decision made by voters in the 2020 elections in favor of keeping Trump in the White House as an unelected president and would-be dictator.

The struggle against war, the pandemic and economic crisis, and the defense of democratic rights, cannot be left to any section of the capitalist class and the politicians who serve and represent the financial oligarchy. The working class must advance its own independent political alternative.

This requires a resolute struggle against the trade union bureaucracy and their discredited political strategy of subordinating the working class to the Democratic Party. Workers must form their own organizations for waging the class struggle—rank-and-file committees in every workplace—and advance a new political strategy—the independent political mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program, uniting American workers with their class brothers and sisters in every country.

This program will be discussed at the international May Day celebration on April 30, sponsored by the International Committee of the Fourth International, its national sections, including the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. We urge workers and young people to attend the online rally. You can register here.



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