

Trump victory in Iowa caucuses intensifies 2024 crisis elections

Patrick Martin
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Monday night's Iowa caucuses mark the official opening of the American presidential elections, insofar as it is confined to the selection of the candidates for the two major capitalist parties. The result in Iowa, with Donald Trump winning decisively, is a first step in the consolidation of the ex-president's position as the likely Republican nominee.

Trump's victory, with 51 percent of the vote, was hardly a popular mandate. His raw total of 56,250 votes was only marginally more than the 45,429 he received in 2016, when he finished second to Ted Cruz. The overall turnout for the caucuses fell from 186,932 in 2016 to 110,298, a decline of 41 percent. Only 15 percent of registered Republicans turned out, down from more than 30 percent in 2016. Trump's "landslide" came to 2.7 percent of all registered voters.

Analysis of the voting patterns based on precinct-by-precinct counts and entrance polling showed Trump making no gains compared to 2016 among younger Republican caucus-goers and registering well below 50 percent in the Des Moines suburbs and the urban cores of Iowa's small cities. His biggest gains came in the heavily evangelical northwest section of the state, won by Cruz in 2016. Iowa is predominantly rural and evangelical voters generally account for more than half the Republican vote, circumstances that make the first state to vote on the nominations highly unrepresentative of the American population.

Nonetheless, the results demonstrate that Trump has a significant lead over his two remaining rivals, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and former UN Ambassador and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley.

The progression towards an outcome detested by the American people, a second Trump-Biden contest, demonstrates the completely sclerotic character of the American political system. It is degrading in the extreme to watch the corporate media painting up this spectacle of

political reaction in bright colors, with the usual panoply of exit polls, debates, panel discussions and breathless horse-race punditry, as well as the inevitable and inescapable deluge of television advertising for those who live in the critical early primary states or in the so-called "battleground" states in the general election.

In the media there is no serious examination of the policies of either party or of the rival candidates for the Republican nomination: Haley, DeSantis or even Trump. Any such analysis would require acknowledging that the entire spectrum of capitalist politics is moving to the right in seven-league boots.

In the Republican contest, both of Trump's remaining rivals are attacking the fascistic frontrunner from the right. DeSantis howls that Trump was ineffective in his first term in the White House, failing to accomplish such goals as a border wall or the expulsion of 12 million undocumented immigrants. Haley attacks Trump primarily on foreign policy, charging that he would undercut major initiatives of US imperialism like the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

Trump himself is campaigning largely on endless lies about the "stolen" 2020 election, threats of retribution against Biden and the Democrats and incitement of violence against all left-wing opposition, particularly socialists. This is combined with threats to unleash the most terrible persecution of immigrants and Muslims. He more and more associates with open fascists and neo-Nazis for whom he would serve as the Führer.

At the same time, Trump's victory in Iowa and his lead in the polls nationally does not signify that millions of people in the United States support the establishment of a dictatorship. On the contrary, the working class is moving to the left, as strikes and protests mount, and the corporate oligarchy and its agents in the military-intelligence apparatus are promoting fascist and ultra-right forces to use as weapons against a popular revolt.

The fact that Trump, who just three years ago organized a coup to overturn the results of the presidential election, remains a dominant force in the Republican Party is above all an indictment of the Democratic Party.

The anti-Trump “strategy” of Biden and the Democrats has collapsed. No sooner had the dust settled after Trump’s failed attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021 than Biden was proclaiming as a central political goal the revival of a “strong Republican Party,” by which he meant building up the anti-Trump wing of the Republican Party to serve as an ally in the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

This policy required curbing any investigation into January 6, because that would have involved exposing the role of powerful sections of the Republican Party, including a majority of House Republicans, in encouraging the “stop the steal” campaign, even to the point of voting not to certify Biden’s victory in the 2020 election.

The effort to remove Trump from the scene through court maneuvers is also collapsing. It has become increasingly problematic, with Trump using these attacks to remain the dominant candidate in the Republican Party primaries.

Trump exploits these attacks to posture as some kind of rebel, despite his background as a corrupt real estate swindler and casino boss turned celebrity television personality, while appealing to various ill-formed grievances.

Incapable of making any genuine appeal to the interests of working people, the representatives of the Democratic Party like the *New York Times* continue to place their main hope of stabilizing the crisis-ridden American political system—to prosecute war abroad and stave off social unrest at home—in building up the Republican Party. In its editorial on the weekend, the *Times* wrote:

Mr. Trump is now distinguished from the rest of the Republican candidates primarily by his contempt for the rule of law. The sooner he is rejected, the sooner the Republican Party can return to the difficult but necessary task of working within the system to achieve its goals.

In reality, virtually every Republican official has rejected the criminal charges against Trump as the “weaponization” of the Department of Justice and the

FBI, and many have joined Trump in hailing the fascists who have been prosecuted and jailed for the attack on the Capitol, calling them “hostages” and backing Trump’s pledge to pardon them if elected.

As for Biden, he now seeks ludicrously to present his campaign as a crusade for “democracy” against the threat of a Trump restoration, even as he allies the US with fascist forces in Ukraine and Israel. The Democrats are demonstrating their “commitment to the rule of law” by persecuting those, particularly youth and students, who have flooded the streets in opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

And while Republican governors openly defy federal authority as part of their fascistic attack on immigrants, the White House continues its efforts to reach an agreement with these same forces—to ensure the continued flood of money to the war against Russia.

In cataloguing the degradation of politics in the United States, one can not leave out the representatives of the privileged middle class, the hangers-on and promoters of the Democratic Party. *Jacobin* magazine, the principal publication associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) responded to the Iowa caucuses by counseling that it should be a “wake-up call for Biden.”

The Democrats, *Jacobin* urged, “might want to finally ask themselves if they need a strategy for the former president’s political defeat, instead of formulating more ways to find a cheat code to avoid one.”

For the masses of workers and youth, it is not a question of hoping that the Democrats will “wake up,” or looking to any faction of the political establishment, entirely controlled by the financial and corporate elite. Rather, the fight against fascism and dictatorship, war and genocide, inequality and exploitation must be waged as a political struggle in opposition to capitalism, as part of a worldwide and revolutionary movement for socialism.



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