

Michigan primary vote provides glimpse of mass opposition to Biden's backing of Israeli genocide in Gaza

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28 February 2024

The Michigan presidential primary Tuesday gave a partial glimpse of the enormous opposition building up in the United States to the Biden administration's all-out support and aid for the Israeli campaign of extermination and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian population of Gaza.

More than 100,000 voters participating in the Democratic Party primary voted for "uncommitted" rather than Biden, in response to a campaign by Arab-American groups and others opposed to the genocide in Gaza. While opposition was the strongest in the two cities where Arab-Americans and Muslims constitute the majority, Dearborn and Hamtramck, there was a sizeable vote against Biden in Ann Arbor and East Lansing as well, two cities dominated by major universities.

Both Dearborn and Hamtramck have seen significant protests against the war in Gaza, including a large meeting at Fordson High School in Dearborn and outdoor rallies that attracted hundreds of participants despite cold weather.

The campaign for an "uncommitted" vote was backed by a handful of prominent Democrats such as Representative Rashida Tlaib and former presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke as a means of corralling the popular outrage over Gaza and containing it within the framework of the Democratic Party.

That does not lessen the significance of the opposition demonstrated in the vote.

The Socialist Equality Party candidate for president, Joseph Kishore, issued a statement on X (Twitter) Wednesday declaring:

The Biden administration is clearly guilty of war crimes for arming, politically backing and financially supporting Israel and its #GenocideinGaza. In the Michigan Democratic Party primaries yesterday, more than 100,000 people voted as "uncommitted," mainly to express opposition to Biden.

While pointing to the significance of the vote, Kishore went on to warn that the Democratic politicians who promoted the "uncommitted" vote were "setting a political trap."

They openly state that their aim is to "save" Biden and the Democratic Party, that somehow by voting "uncommitted," the administration will be pressured into shifting its position. This is a lie. #Genocide_Joe's support for Israel's crimes is not a "mistake." It is part of the expanding militaristic and imperialist agenda of the capitalist ruling class, which the Democratic Party represents. The task is to develop an independent political movement of the working class, in the US and internationally, against war and against capitalism. This is the perspective that Jerry White and I are fighting for in the Socialist Equality Party presidential election campaign.

The SEP announced Tuesday that Kishore, the party's national secretary, and Jerry White, labor editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, would be its candidates for president and vice president in the 2024 elections.

Biden received 80 percent of the vote in the primary, with 13 percent going to "uncommitted." The 100,000 votes withheld from Biden are a clear threat to his holding on to Michigan's electoral votes in the November election, since he won the state over Trump by a margin of roughly 175,000 votes. (Trump won the state in 2016 over Hillary Clinton by a bare 10,000 votes).

In many congressional districts, "uncommitted" received more than 15 percent of the vote, the threshold vote for obtaining delegates, assuring that some uncommitted delegates will be chosen for the Democratic convention to be held in Chicago in August. These will be Democratic Party

politicians tied to Representative Tlaib, who will certainly support Biden in the November election.

On Monday, the day before the primary, Biden declared that a ceasefire in Gaza was imminent, perhaps as soon as the coming weekend, a statement with no apparent basis in reality, but timed to influence the vote in Michigan. Hours after the primary results were known, Biden thanked “every Michigander who made their voice heard today,” without making any mention of the war in Gaza and the mass hostility to his support for the Israeli genocide.

The Democratic campaign mobilized high-profile surrogates from Vice President Kamala Harris to Representative Ro Khanna, former chair of the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign, to oppose the “uncommitted” campaign. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer played the central role in this effort, although she was careful not to denounce the Democrats engaged in that effort or suggest they were “antisemitic” for raising the issue of Israeli complicity in genocide.

There was no doubt back-channel communication with the “dissident” Democrats to reinforce the division of labor between the open advocates of a vote for Biden and those who are working to divert popular anger over Gaza into safe political channels and a vote for Biden in November.

On the Republican side, Trump received 68 percent of the vote, while 26.5 percent voted for Trump’s former UN ambassador Nikki Haley, his only remaining opponent. The remainder of the vote went to “uncommitted” or to Republican candidates who have already suspended their campaigns.

Haley has pledged to remain in the race until after the “Super Tuesday” primaries on March 5, less than a week away. Her financial resources are expected to be drained by then, usually the impetus for a withdrawal by also-ran candidates. Up until her defeat last Saturday in South Carolina, where she had been twice elected governor, Haley actually had greater financial resources than Trump, who was able to raise only \$13.8 million in January.

But after South Carolina, billionaire Charles Koch, one of several financial heavyweights backing Haley against Trump, withdrew his support, with a statement issued by his political action committee asserting that Haley no longer had a path to the nomination.

A Haley campaign spokeswoman, Olivia Perez-Cubas, indicated that Haley would continue to make an argument, not against Trump’s fascistic policies, but over his prospects as a general election candidate. “So long as Donald Trump is at the top of the ticket, Republicans will keep losing to the socialist left,” she said.

The characterization of Biden, a right-wing warmonger and advocate of bipartisan austerity policies, as a “socialist”

is a hallmark of the shift of the Republican Party as a whole to the extreme right. It also expresses the real fear of both capitalist parties.

The Trump campaign in Michigan is also threatened by a split in the Republican Party, which may hold two rival state conventions.

The conflict was triggered by efforts by the party establishment, including top financial backers like the billionaire DeVos family, to remove the state party chair, Kristina Karamo, who was widely viewed as erratic and incompetent. The state party is virtually bankrupt financially. Rival meetings of the Republican state central committee were held, one electing former Representative Pete Hoekstra as the new state chair, the other backing Karamo.

Karamo postured as the most fervent advocate of Trump, publicly defending his denial of the 2020 election result. She added to it a refusal to recognize the results of the 2022 election in Michigan, in which Whitmer was reelected and Karamo was heavily defeated as the Republican candidate for secretary of state, the top state election official.

Both Trump and the Republican National Committee have publicly supported Hoekstra, and on Tuesday, the day of the primary election, a Kent County Circuit Court judge ruled that Karamo had been removed as chair and barred her from continuing to claim that position or act as the representative of the state party, cutting off her access to the party’s bank accounts.



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