

# Wisconsin, Florida elections show rising opposition to Trump

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Trump-backed Republican candidates lost ground in the handful of local and statewide contests held Tuesday, April 1 in Wisconsin and Florida. Democratic-backed Judge Susan Crawford won the main statewide contest, for a vacant seat on the Wisconsin state Supreme Court, preserving the 4-3 Democratic majority.

In Florida, Democratic challengers trailed Republican candidates for two vacant seats in the US House of Representatives, but in each case they cut the victory margins in the heavily Republican districts by more than half, with swings of 15-20 points in each one.

The Republican defeat in Wisconsin was sizeable. Trump won the state narrowly in 2024, by only 29,000 votes. Crawford won by 238,000 votes. Republican Brad Schimel had set a target of winning a vote total equivalent to 60 percent of Trump's, and he did so, with 62 percent. But Crawford won votes equivalent to 78 percent of the total won by Kamala Harris five months ago, a staggering figure for an off-year election.

Every single county in the state showed a swing against the Republican Party. And while Crawford won by huge margins in Dane County (Madison) and Milwaukee County, she also carried smaller industrial towns that Trump won last year, including Kenosha, Racine, Appleton and Winnebago. She even carried Brown County (Green Bay), where Elon Musk held his final campaign rally and million-dollar giveaway on Sunday, the only Democrat to do so since Barack Obama in 2008.

The Wisconsin state Supreme Court race was the most expensive such contest in American history, with \$100 million expended on behalf of the two candidates, Crawford and Schimel. The court is nominally non-partisan, but candidates are chosen by the rival corporate-backed parties and shifts in party control can

have major social and political consequences.

Corporate and billionaire spending on US elections has risen to unprecedented levels. The \$100 million spent on a single state Supreme Court campaign in Wisconsin, the 20th out of the 50 states, with a population of 6 million people, is more, in inflation-adjusted dollars, than either the Democrats or the Republicans spent in 2000 for the entire presidential election.

While billionaire Elon Musk, the world's richest man, set the pace, pouring in more than \$25 million, Democratic Party billionaires like George Soros, Reid Hoffman and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker gave huge sums as well. There was \$80 million spent on advertising alone, flooding television and radio broadcasts as well as internet traffic linked to addresses in Wisconsin.

To speak of democracy under such conditions is a gross misuse of language. The obscure judicial race in a medium-sized state became an arena for two factions of the corporate oligarchy to fight out their differences over the policies of the Trump administration.

These differences concern both foreign policy, where the Democrats oppose Trump's seeming turn away from the war against Russia in Ukraine, and domestic policy, where the Democrats fear that Trump's relentless destruction of federal jobs and social programs could spark a movement from below that they will be unable to control.

Neither party represents in any way the interests of the working class, the vast majority of the population. But within the straitjacket of the corporate-controlled two-party system, working people saw a vote for the Democrats as the only means of expressing their outrage over the attacks on jobs, living standards and democratic rights unleashed by Trump.

The political strategy of the Democrats, expressed in the Wisconsin campaign, is to focus popular anger on Musk, rather than directly on Trump, exploiting the hostility generated by Musk's arrogance and his open attempt to buy the election using his vast wealth.

Crawford spelled this out in her victory speech, in which she made no reference to Trump or the attacks by his administration on democratic rights, declaring, "As a little girl growing up in Chippewa Falls, I never could have imagined that I'd be taking on the richest man in the world ... And we won!"

Despite Musk's apocalyptic claim that the Wisconsin election would decide the fate of Western civilization, the retention of a 4-3 liberal majority on the court will have a limited impact. It likely blocks efforts by the Republican-controlled legislature to impose restrictions on abortion rights, which Democratic Governor Tony Evers would also veto.

More importantly, from the standpoint of the Democrats, a Democratic-controlled court is likely to back challenges to the Republican gerrymandering of the state's congressional seats. The court has already struck down the Republican gerrymander of state legislative districts, which had converted a 50-50 electorate into a veto-proof 2-1 Republican majority.

Of the eight congressional districts in Wisconsin, Republicans hold six, with Democrats concentrated into two districts, in Milwaukee and Madison, where they routinely win with 80 percent of the vote. A court-ordered redistricting would likely lead to a delegation split four to four, cutting two seats off the narrow Republican majority in the House of Representatives.

In the other two contests Tuesday, Republicans retained congressional seats in Florida vacated by Matt Gaetz, Trump's failed nominee for attorney general, and Michael Waltz, whom he appointed as national security adviser, which does not require Senate confirmation.

Two fascist Republicans replaced them, Jimmy Patronis in the 1st Congressional District, the seat in the Florida panhandle previously held by Gaetz, and Randy Fine in the 6th Congressional District, based in Daytona Beach, previously held by Waltz. Their Democratic opponents had huge fundraising advantages and cut their margins substantially, by 16 points in the 6th District and 22 points in the 1st District.

Fine is a particularly provocative advocate of

Zionism, dubbing himself the "Hebrew Hammer," and warning two Muslim Democrats in Congress, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, that they should leave town before he arrives in Washington.

Media analysis of the vote pattern suggests that Trump may well have pulled the nomination of Representative Elise Stefanik for ambassador to the United Nations because of fears that the Republicans would lose her upstate New York district in a special election, if there was a swing of a similar size.

The result does not change the balance in the House of Representatives, which is expected to remain at 220-215, a five-vote Republican majority, once two vacancies in longtime Democratic seats are filled in special elections later in the year. The vacancies were created by the deaths of Representative Raul Grijalva in Arizona and Representative Sylvester Turner in Texas.

Democratic Party officials gloated over the Wisconsin victory and their improved margins in Florida. They cited the figures as suggesting likely victories in the two major off-year state elections in November, in Virginia and New Jersey, particularly because of the impact of the cuts in federal jobs in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington D.C.

The likely Democratic nominee for governor of Virginia is former Representative Abigail Spanberger, a career CIA operative in Europe who won a congressional seat in 2018 after leaving the agency. Spanberger is linked to the aggressive foreign policy of American imperialism and was an ardent supporter of the war against Russia in Ukraine.

She is also notorious for her denunciations of calls for "defunding of the police" after the police murder of George Floyd in 2020 touched off massive worldwide protests. After the Democrats lost seats in the House in 2020, Spanberger declared, "we need to not ever use the words 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again."



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