

Democrats move to end shutdown, bail out Trump

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Eight Senate Democrats voted Sunday night to support a motion to begin debate on a Trump-backed budget resolution, dropping a phony display of opposition to the would-be dictator-president and moving to end the partial shutdown of the federal government. This allowed for a 60-40 vote on a procedural resolution to allow a revised budget resolution to be brought to a vote in the Senate within days, on terms dictated by Trump and the Republicans.

This action is not merely a capitulation to Trump but deliberate collaboration with the Republican administration under conditions of deepening political, social and economic crises for American capitalism. It is a calculated decision to save the fascist administration as its position becomes more and more precarious.

The eight Democrats cited the widespread disruption of public services, from air traffic control to food stamps, as the reason for their cave-in to Trump. This, however, is only a cover for the decision to join forces with the president.

And it is not just the eight senators, but the Democratic Party as a whole. Those voting with Trump included Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, the Minority Whip and second-ranking Democrat in the Senate. In a similar vote last March, both Durbin and Minority Leader Charles Schumer “crossed over” to throw a lifeline to Trump in a previous budget deadlock. Schumer now poses as intransigent, but there is no doubt that if his vote had been needed, it would have been available.

The Democratic reversal is not due to fear of the strength or popularity of Trump. On the contrary, it follows a series of events which demonstrate the vast popular hostility to this government and particularly to Trump’s increasingly dictatorial methods.

On October 18, the mass “No Kings” protests brought millions into the streets in more than 2,500 locations throughout the country. While the Democrats controlled

the speakers’ platforms and sought to block any calls to mass action, both corporate-controlled parties were clearly staggered by the scale of the protest and the outrage over Trump’s attacks on democratic rights and immigrant workers.

On November 4, Democrats swept the off-year election, winning the two open governorships in Virginia and New Jersey and most other contested races. The victory of self-styled “democratic socialist” Zohran Mamdani for mayor of New York City—defeating Democrat Andrew Cuomo, the former state governor, who had the support of both Trump and the Democratic Party leadership—touched off an anti-communist hysteria in the White House and on Wall Street.

The extent of the mass hostility to Trump has been shown as well in the increasingly militant resistance to his jackbooted immigration thugs as they raid immigrant neighborhoods, particularly in Chicago. Polls showed that the public blamed Trump and the Republicans for the shutdown-caused air traffic delays and the cutoff of food stamps in many states.

On Sunday, Trump was heavily booed while conducting a ceremony to swear in new members of the military during a professional football game just outside Washington D.C.

Just at the point of Trump’s maximum vulnerability, the Democrats intervened to prop him up. Within three days of the electoral rout of the Republicans in the off-year voting, Senate Democrats had begun to signal they would shift their position on the budget resolution.

The Democrats dropped what they had presented as their main purpose in blocking the budget resolution, the expiration of premium subsidies for millions of working class families enrolled under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). After claiming for weeks that the subsidies had to be included in the resolution because they did not trust the Republican administration to fix the problem

later, the Democrats agreed to a Senate vote on the issue in December, with no guarantees it will pass.

The bill does not resolve the budget deadlock, merely authorizing the Trump administration to spend money through January 30, 2026, avoiding scenes of snarled airports and long food lines during the holiday season. It reverses the permanent firing of 4,000 federal workers during the shutdown, bars further firings until January 30 and provides for full pay for all federal workers, including those furloughed. This was presented as a Democratic “victory,” but it has been the practice after all previous federal shutdowns.

The bill also funds several federal programs through September 30, 2026, including the Department of Agriculture, which oversees the food stamp program. This will have no effect on the cuts in food stamp benefits enacted as part of Trump’s “One Big Beautiful Bill” last summer. And it will not pause the administration’s legal onslaught against benefit recipients, which is now being heard by the Supreme Court.

The Trump administration’s appeal brief of the lower court order requiring full payment of SNAP benefits in November claims, in its opening sentence, “the district court’s order threatens significant and irreparable harm to the government which outweighs any claimed injury to plaintiffs.” In other words, forcing the government to move money from one account to another is worse than starving millions of people, many of them children.

There were undoubtedly backroom discussions between the Democrats and Trump, despite the claims that he was not directly engaged. But such talks would have concerned the real differences between the two corporate parties, particularly over foreign policy, where the Democrats are seeking a more militaristic line in the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. There are also significant divisions within the ruling elite over Trump’s tariff policy, which was challenged last week before the US Supreme Court and has been widely condemned in the financial press.

The end of the shutdown clears the path for an intensified frontal assault on core social programs, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. It also allows for the continued development of the conspiracy for dictatorship. The Democrats have enabled Trump because they support the fundamental pillars of his domestic agenda, and they are terrified of anything that could trigger a mass movement from below.

The entire month-long budget crisis exposes the bankruptcy of those, like the Democratic Socialists of

America, who promote the illusion that the Democratic Party can be shifted to the left and become the instrument of progressive social reforms, by backing politicians like Mamdani, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders.

Events have shown the opposite: The Democratic Party serves the capitalist state and is deeply integrated into the military-intelligence apparatus. Both of its new governors, for example, are drawn from that cesspool of reaction. Virginia Governor-elect Abigail Spanberger was a career CIA agent before entering Congress in 2018. New Jersey Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill was a Navy helicopter pilot, an expert on the Russian military and federal prosecutor, before winning a seat in the House the same year.

Whatever the mutual vituperation between them, the two parties are united in their defense of capitalism and their opposition to any independent movement of the working class. That is why the Socialist Equality Party insists that the essential basis of any genuine struggle by the working class is a break from the two-party system and the mobilization of workers as an independent political force.

This means the formation of rank-and-file committees in factories, warehouses, offices and other workplaces, as well as in working class neighborhoods, to organize the defense of democratic rights and the struggle against the capitalist system. Workers can only defend their jobs, wages and living standards, and vital public services like education and healthcare, through a direct assault on the wealth of the ruling class.

The fortunes of the billionaires—rooted in their control of the banks, corporations and real estate monopolies—must be expropriated and their monopolies transformed into publicly owned utilities under democratic workers’ control. The critical question is leadership and perspective. We call on all those who want to fight back against the capitalist crisis to join the Socialist Equality Party.



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