

Democratic Socialist Chris Rabb wins Democratic primary in Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District

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On Tuesday, May 19, Pennsylvania State Representative Chris Rabb, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), won the Democratic primary for Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District. Rabb faced three other opponents in the primary and won handily, with 44.7 percent of the vote. Sharif Street, son of former Philadelphia mayor John Street, the preferred candidate of the Democratic Party establishment, placed second with 29.2 percent.

Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District, which encompasses significant working class areas in Philadelphia, is by some measures the most Democratic Party-leaning district in the country. Rabb faces no Republican opponent in November, so he is the certain successor to retiring Democrat Dwight Evans.

Rabb won his congressional seat posturing as a political outsider, declaring in an interview with the DSA-aligned *Jacobin* magazine, "Socialists need to expose the role of both parties in our crisis and point toward a future where the working class holds power." Such rhetoric will not stop Rabb from following the dictates of the pro-capitalist Democratic Party leadership.

The Rabb victory demonstrates the deep-going radicalization of the working population, witnessed in the election last year of New York City mayor and fellow DSA member Zohran Mamdani and other nominally "left" politicians in the US and internationally, as well as the groundswell of mass opposition to war, genocide and fascism—all of which are byproducts of capitalism.

Like Mamdani, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and several other DSA members now in Congress, Rabb operates with the bankrupt political perspective of reforming the Democratic Party and "pushing it to the left." This platform was made explicit in the days following the win. On Wednesday, May 27, Rabb hosted an online mass call titled "How to Take Over the Democratic Party," featuring other "progressive" Democratic Party congressional candidates.

The Democratic Party is not an empty vessel that can be filled with left-wing "content." The Democratic and Republican parties are political instruments of the American ruling class,

and the two-party system as a whole is the principal means for suppressing any independent political initiative from below. The task of socialists and the working class is not to reform the Democratic Party but to break with it and put an end to the capitalist system which it defends.

Rabb's career itself, posturing aside, has been marked by deep integration into the Democratic Party political establishment. Far from being an "outsider," his social position and career trajectory are those of a typical Democratic Party careerist, perhaps with a somewhat "left" twist.

Rabb currently represents the 200th district in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, a position he has held since 2017. In 2022, he voted in favor of the state budget that ramped up funding for the police—something he claimed to oppose during his most recent campaign. His work at the state level led the editorial board of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*—the voice of the city's business elite—to endorse his congressional candidacy, declaring that "the pugnacious Rabb is the kind of leader voters in the 3rd District need."

Rabb's family is deeply involved in Democratic Party politics. His mother, Madeline Murphy Rabb, served in the administration of Harold Washington, Chicago's first black Democratic mayor, who held office from 1983 until his death in office in 1987. Rabb began his political career in the 1990s as an aide to US Senator Carol Moseley Braun (Democrat-Illinois) and briefly worked in the Clinton administration.

In 2010, while a visiting researcher at Princeton University, Rabb published the book *Invisible Capital*. In it, he argued that entrepreneurship generates inequality, but that the solution is to make capitalism more equitable so that the working class can themselves become entrepreneurs.

His foray into trade union organizing led him to become a leading organizer at Temple University, helping to establish the Temple University Adjuncts Organization (TUAO). Today, a TUAO member teaching a typical load of four courses per year earns roughly \$27,000—a wage that falls below the federal poverty line for a single-person household in Philadelphia.

That union was one of two American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-affiliated unions which stood idly by as Temple

University graduate workers—themselves AFT members—went on strike in 2023. Both had signed “no strike” clauses forbidding their members from engaging in solidarity action as the underpaid student workers fought for a living wage.

Rabb’s invocation of socialism does not mean the overthrow of the capitalist system, but rather minor reforms that leave the fundamentals unchanged. In his interview with *Jacobin*, Rabb states he aims at “fixing a system that’s been rigged to benefit billionaires and instead making the real investments needed in workers.” In other words, Rabb believes gross inequality is not the inevitable outcome of capitalism, but the product of a few corrupt individual capitalists.

If *Invisible Capital* is any guide, his aim is not to fight for revolutionary change but to seek a more humane capitalism that can be bent in favor of workers—so that they, too, can become “entrepreneurs”—i.e., capitalists. A truly “classless” society!

Rabb is also backed by “Patriotic Millionaires,” an organization chaired by former BlackRock Managing Director Morris Pearl, which describes itself as “a collection of wealthy Americans fighting against the destabilizing concentration of wealth and power in the United States.” House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries is another Democrat to receive donations from the group’s Political Action Committee.

On foreign policy, Rabb bases his opposition to the war in Iran not on international law or anti-militarism, but on budgetary grounds. In the same *Jacobin* interview, Rabb correctly called the conflict “an illegal war,” but added that “war in Iran is costing US taxpayers over \$1 billion a day. ... [instead] we should be investing those funds in our communities.” This statement implies it would be acceptable waging war abroad so long as it did not impose too great a burden on the population at home.

Rabb’s position resembles a variant of the “guns and butter” policy of the Cold War era. Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, social programs and the economy expanded alongside a massive military buildup as the US consolidated its post-World War II dominance while simultaneously staging coups and waging wars to maintain it. The killing fields of Korea and Vietnam, alongside CIA-backed coups in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954 and Brazil in 1964—to name only a few—were defining features of this period.

Today, social programs and military spending have become completely incompatible. Under the economic and geopolitical decline of American capitalism over the past five decades, the ruling class has abandoned “guns and butter” as it seeks to offset that decline through war abroad and an assault on working people at home—slashing the entire social safety net.

Trump’s policies mark a culmination of this crisis. In April, articulating the outlook of the ruling class, Trump stated, “We can’t take care of daycare ... We are fighting wars.”

Rabb’s cynical “anti-war” posturing is further exposed by the political endorsements he has received from a host of nominally “left” Democratic Party figures who have themselves voted

continually to fund the US war machine and that of its criminal partner, the Israeli state. These include House members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Pramila Jayapal, and others.

Rabb’s endorsement from Ocasio-Cortez—who campaigned alongside him in the final days of the primary—is particularly revealing, given that she has consistently upheld Israel’s “right to defend itself.” Her most recent foreign policy venture was an appearance at the Munich Security Conference in February, where the self-described “democratic socialist” peddled Trump administration lies used to justify the criminal war against Iran, as well as the ongoing NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Fellow DSA member Zohran Mamdani won the New York City Democratic mayoral primary in June 2025 on a platform strikingly similar in tone and rhetoric to Rabb’s, then immediately set about reassuring the Democratic establishment he was a safe pair of hands. Within weeks of his November general election victory, he traveled to the White House to shake hands with Trump himself—whom he had denounced as a fascist on the campaign trail—declaring the two shared a common interest in making New York City affordable for working people. Since taking office, Mamdani has buried the promises that got him elected. Such an evolution should be expected from Rabb, once he takes office.

Workers and youth must break with the Democratic Party—an imperialist party of war and Wall Street that cannot be reformed. This includes its satellites, such as the DSA, the main force backing Rabb, which has aided criminal sell-outs of working class struggles in Philadelphia in recent times. A different model exists: the Philadelphia Workers Rank-and-File Strike Committee, formed during last July’s municipal workers strike, which united workers struggles against exploitation, war, deportations and dictatorship.

In its founding statement, the committee declared, “There is a division of labor between Trump and his enablers in the Democratic Party. The Democrats are doing nothing to oppose him because they too represent the corporate oligarchy. Both parties are in full agreement on bleeding the working class dry to fund Wall Street and war.”



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