

# Colorado primary results show continuing radicalization of US workers and youth

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Tuesday's Democratic Party primary contests in Colorado were another demonstration of the shift to the left among workers and young people across the United States. In the congressional district based on the city of Denver, 15-term incumbent Diana DeGette was defeated for the Democratic nomination by a first-time candidate and member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Melat Kiros.

The 29-year-old former lawyer and doctoral student, who came to the US from Ethiopia as an infant, challenged the 68-year-old DeGette from the left, particularly on the question of opposition to the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. Before moving back to Colorado, Kiros was fired by a Manhattan law firm in late 2023 for posting material online criticizing Israel and defending those who call for the overthrow of the Zionist state.

She also publicly condemned the detention of Hayam El Gamal and her five children after El Gamal's husband carried out an attack on a gathering of demonstrators calling for the release of Israeli hostages in Boulder, Colorado, in which one woman was killed. El Gamal had no knowledge of the planned attack and has since divorced her husband, but she and her five children, some as young as five, were held at a detention center in Dilley, Texas for more than six months. DeGette made no such statements in support of the El Gamal family.

Kiros also sought to appeal to anger over the state of the economy and the refusal of the Democratic Party to conduct any serious struggle against the Trump administration, presenting herself as a barista struggling to pay the rent and criticizing DeGette for accepting contributions from corporate PACs, particularly from the healthcare industry. She also vowed not to support House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries for speaker if

the Democrats win control of the House in November.

DeGette, a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, sought to counter Kiros by running a TV ad that featured Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez praising her support for universal healthcare. Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the DSA like Kiros, did not endorse anyone in the primary, although Senator Bernie Sanders, Representative Ro Khanna and Justice Democrats all backed Kiros.

Kiros's primary victory in a safe Democratic seat follows last week's primaries in New York state, where three candidates backed by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, two of them DSA members, won their races. Brad Lander and Darializa Avila Chevalier defeated Democratic incumbents, while Claire Valdez won a seat vacated by retirement.

The political shift in Colorado impacted statewide races as well. State Attorney General Phil Weiser defeated longtime Senator Michael Bennet in the primary contest for governor, despite being heavily outspent, initially trailing in the polls by more than 30 points, and being depicted in the media as a longshot candidate.

Weiser portrayed Bennet, a three-term senator and son of a longtime State Department official, as a Washington insider, citing his votes to confirm at least eight Trump cabinet nominees. Weiser, himself a veteran of the Clinton and Obama administrations, presented himself as a more effective opponent of the Trump administration, citing dozens of lawsuits filed by the state government during Trump's two terms, most of them successful.

In the other major statewide contest, Senator John Hickenlooper barely staved off a challenge from state Senator Julie Gonzales, also a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, whose state Senate

district is in Denver. Hickenlooper won by 53.4 percent to 46.6 percent, a very narrow margin for a two-term incumbent with a massive nine-to-one financial advantage. Gonzales received 394,739 votes statewide and defeated Hickenlooper in Denver itself.

In the closely contested 8th Congressional District, which has swung back and forth between the Democratic and Republican parties since it was created after the 2020 census, state Representative Manny Rutinel, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, won the Democratic primary to face Republican incumbent Gabe Evans, defeating a more right-wing opponent. Like Kiros, Rutinel had the backing of Bernie Sanders and Justice Democrats.

The victory of Kiros in Denver was the clearest expression of the growing radicalization from below which the Democratic Party is seeking desperately to restrain. Doug Friednash, former chief of staff to Hickenlooper when he was Colorado's governor, told *Politico*, "Voters are angry. They are all anti-establishment and don't feel like our leaders have fought hard enough and don't have a coherent voice. Kiros is the clincher."

Twitch streamer Hasan Piker campaigned online for Kiros in the weeks leading up to the primary and traveled to Denver to campaign with her in person on primary day. He told *Politico*, "A thirty-year incumbent was defeated tonight. It's clear that there is a real hunger for change. Democrats all over the country are demanding it." He added, "That change is a working class centered movement. It's socialism. We are not done yet."

For all of Piker's demagoguery—which the WSWS has analyzed in detail—the surge to the left expressed in the victory of DSA candidates cannot transform the Democratic Party into a socialist or working class party. This is one of the twin parties of the capitalist ruling class in America, indissolubly linked to Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus.

This is shown even in the results of the Colorado primary, as it was in New York state last week. Side by side with DSA members who are the initial beneficiaries of the shift to the left among workers and youth, the Democratic Party is putting forward candidates drawn directly from the national security apparatus of American imperialism.

In New York's 17th Congressional District, in the

Hudson Valley, the Democrats are running Cait Conley, a 16-year active duty Army officer who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, against Republican incumbent Mike Lawler.

In four of the eight congressional districts in Colorado, the Democratic Party is running such candidates, including four-term incumbent Jason Crow, a former Army Ranger in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, in the 6th Congressional District, in the Denver suburbs.

Retired Rear Admiral Eileen Laubacher, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy with a 34-year career in naval intelligence, including tours in Afghanistan and India, is running against Republican incumbent Lauren Boebert in the 4th Congressional District, covering the rural eastern half of the state.

Jessica Killin, a former paratrooper and military police captain in the Balkans, who then held military-related jobs in Washington, ending as chief of staff to Doug Emhoff, husband of then-Vice President Kamala Harris, is challenging Republican incumbent Jeff Crank in the 5th Congressional District, centered on Colorado Springs.

In addition, a West Point graduate and Army engineer in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War, now a property developer, Dwayne Romero, is the Democratic candidate in the 3rd Congressional District, in west and southwest Colorado, against incumbent Republican Jeff Hurd.

Any of these candidates could win in November and join the growing ranks of what we have called the "CIA Democrats" in Washington.



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