Democrats reject any appeal to popular opposition to subversion of midterm elections

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Given the scale and nakedness of the plans to subvert the November midterm elections, outlined by Trump in his July 16 prime time speech, what is most significant is the absence of any serious response. The lurch to dictatorship is not the work of one individual, but rather the response of a crisis-ridden ruling oligarchy, which installed the criminal product of the New York real estate and gambling mafia in the White House, to unprecedented levels of social polarization and growing opposition in the working class.

The contradictions of American capitalism, both internationally and at home, have reached the point where the old constitutional order can no longer be maintained.

One expression of this fact is the public response of the Democratic Party to Trump's fascistic speech. It has sought to play down the threat and sow complacency. The last thing it wants is a working class alerted to the preparations for outright dictatorship and organized to stop it. Such mass action from below would threaten the rule of the corporate-financial oligarchy that controls both parties.

In his speech on July 16, Trump spouted one obvious lie after another to lay down the justification for manipulating the elections, suppressing them, or overturning the results if, as widely predicted, the Republicans lose. He demanded that states turn over their voter registration rolls so that the federal government could "scrub" them. He ordered state officials to allow his minions to "secure" voting machines. He demanded congressional passage of his SAVE America Act, imposing proof of citizenship and photo ID requirements that would prevent millions of workers from voting and would all but ban mail-in voting.

He announced that he was ordering the Department of Justice (DOJ) to fire and prosecute officials accused of concealing the alleged voting fraud. The following day, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said the government would prosecute state officials who refused to go along with Trump's demands for federal control of the elections.

Administration officials have repeatedly refused to rule out deploying the National Guard and/or ICE to polling stations on Election Day. Trump has purged the DOJ and other federal agencies and stacked them with loyalists who echo his claim that the 2020 election was stolen.

In response to the July 16 speech, House Minority Leader Hakim Jeffries said, "We will not let Donald Trump and Republican extremists steal this election," but went on to minimize the threat, calling Trump "feeble" and "pathetic." Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer dismissed Trump as "weak and failing."

Since then, the Democrats and the media have said next to nothing about the erection of the machinery to subvert the elections. Appearing Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" program, Jeffries did not mention Trump's attacks on the elections. Bernie Sanders, appearing on CBS' "Face the Nation," was likewise silent. *Jacobin* magazine, the unofficial organ of the Democratic Socialists of America, has not published a single article on Trump's July 16 address.

An exception to the rule is Michigan Senator Elizabeth Slotkin, a former CIA analyst, who appeared July 22 on the Bulwark podcast. She said: "If he loses, he's built a case that the elections were rigged. He's telling us he's doing it… The big problem is the potential use of uniformed military or federal law enforcement in and around our polls." She acknowledged that her "Protect Our Polls Act," requiring congressional approval for the deployment of troops to the polls, had no chance of being enacted.

Even as they downplay the threat to the elections in public, the Democrats are holding closed-door strategy meetings to review different scenarios and map out their response. There have been only scattered reports of these

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so-called “table top” meetings, but they reveal the stark difference between what is discussed in official political and media circles, and what is being transmitted to the population.

MS NOW reported on July 23 that following Trump’s July 16 speech, Schumer met with nearly a dozen Democratic senators to plan out a response to administration attempts to cancel, disrupt or overthrow the midterm elections, including the possible deployment of National Guard troops or ICE agents at polling stations. It was the second such meeting Schumer convened this year.

The cable news channel reported that following the latest meeting, Schumer told it that Democratic officials would “work with the local Houston Police Department, Dallas Police Department, Bexar County, San Antonio Police Department and figure out ways to stop this ahead of time.”

MS NOW reported on July 16 that over two dozen House Democrats had gathered the previous week for a closed-door session to “game out” how they would respond to an attempt by the administration to interfere with the elections. MS NOW wrote: “House Democrats have told MS NOW they fear the president’s SAVE Act push is merely a pretense, and that, if the legislation stalls, Trump will instead declare a state of emergency and implement some electoral rule changes administratively.”

It quoted Representative Joseph Morelle of New York, the ranking Democrat on the House Administration Committee, as saying, “That will be going to court.” Morelle added that the Democrats had lined up attorneys around the country to file lawsuits in response to multiple scenarios.

On July 24, the *New York Times* reported on a meeting in Milwaukee last May at which staff of every Democratic attorney general and about a dozen Democratic secretaries of state “held tabletop exercises to prepare for hypothetical scenarios in the November midterm elections.” Citing Nick Brown, the Democratic attorney general of Washington state, the *Times* listed various scenarios being discussed: “FBI shows up and demands election materials or equipment; federal troops or agents are deployed in ways that would intimidate voters or disrupt the election; Trump tries to declare an election-related national emergency.”

The article quoted a statement by Cisco Aguilar, the Nevada secretary of state and chair of the Democratic Association of Secretaries of State, declaring, “We will use all the tools at our disposal to fight Donald Trump and protect our voting rights.” However, the only concrete action cited by the *Times* was litigation to block two Trump executive orders aimed at changing election laws.

The central concern of the Democratic Party is not to defend democratic rights, but to politically disarm the working class in the face of the movement to dictatorship. It responded to the record numbers who marched in the multi-million-strong “No Kings” demonstrations with fear and hostility, and even more so to the mass anti-ICE protests in Minnesota.

In all of their planning, the Democrats rule out anything that would alert the masses of working people and mobilize them to stop the attack on democratic rights. All opposition is to be limited to appeals to the courts and local police, under conditions where the US Supreme Court, stacked with far-right justices, has granted Trump immunity from criminal prosecution and vastly expanded his executive powers.

This is a continuation and deepening of the Democrats’ attacks on democratic rights when they were in power, including Obama’s expansion of state surveillance and indefinite detention and extra-judicial assassination of so-called “enemy combatants,” including US citizens. The Democrats refused to hold to account Trump and his fellow conspirators in the Republican Party, the military and the intelligence agencies following the attempted coup of January 6, 2021, and instead carried out a cover-up, paving the way for Trump’s return to the White House.

Were Trump to drop dead tomorrow, the assault on democratic rights and movement to dictatorship would continue, whether under a Democratic or Republican administration. It is rooted in the insoluble crisis of the capitalist system, and can be stopped only by the independent mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program.

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