

Michigan primary shows continued shift to the left in US

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The results of the Democratic primary election Tuesday in Michigan confirm that popular sentiment in the United States is moving sharply to the left, in opposition to the Trump administration and its policies of war, cuts in social services and the entrenchment of the domination of the billionaire oligarchy.

The most important result was the victory of Dr. Abdul El-Sayed in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate. El-Sayed defeated Representative Haley Stevens, who had the backing of the entire party establishment, including retiring Senator Gary Peters and Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and who enjoyed a 13-1 advantage in spending. Of the more than \$70 million deployed on Stevens' behalf—making this the most expensive Democratic Senate primary in US history—more than \$30 million came from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and its affiliated super PAC.

The outcome produced something approaching panic within the ruling class. Worried commentaries proliferated in the corporate media. Trump denounced El-Sayed as a “Communist.” And on Wednesday evening, the official White House account on X declared: “Communism is the greatest threat to our country.”

The hysteria is revealing. El-Sayed is not a socialist. He describes himself as a “capitalist” and is running as a candidate of the Democratic Party. What has seized the ruling class is fear not of the politics of El-Sayed but of what underlies them: the growth of anti-capitalist and socialist sentiment among masses of workers and young people.

El-Sayed, born in metro Detroit of Egyptian Muslim immigrant parents, was forthright in branding the Israeli military operations in Gaza as genocide. He repeatedly attacked Stevens for accepting money from AIPAC and other pro-Zionist groups, turning this financial windfall into a political millstone. He rolled up large margins in college towns like Ann Arbor and East Lansing, the scene of militant protests against the Israeli atrocities, as well as carrying areas with sizeable Arab American and Muslim populations, including Dearborn and Hamtramck in the Detroit area and Grand Rapids in western Michigan.

He made a direct appeal on economic issues, calling for “money out of politics” and “money in your pocket,” as well as “Medicare for all.” He was backed by the Democratic Socialists of America. Senator Bernie Sanders campaigned for him, as well as two DSA members of Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib.

The campaign mobilized significant popular support, with more than 12,000 volunteers, many of them young, knocking on an estimated 200,000 doors. More than 1,528,000 votes had been counted by Wednesday afternoon, an increase of more than 60 percent over the 934,000 votes cast in the 2024 Democratic Senate primary.

Three other candidates identifying themselves as socialist or left-wing won primary contests in Michigan for other offices. Donavan McKinney, a state representative and member of the DSA, defeated incumbent Democratic Congressman Shri Thanedar, a multi-millionaire pharmacy executive who has held the seat covering most of the city of Detroit for two terms. Thanedar outspent McKinney by five to one.

In the 7th Congressional District, centered on Lansing, the state capital, and East Lansing, home to Michigan State University, environmentalist Will Lawrence, co-founder of the Sunrise Movement and a former member of the DSA, won the Democratic nomination to face Republican incumbent Tom Barrett. Lawrence defeated two rivals drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus, retired Navy SEAL Matt Maasdam and former ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink. And in the city of Ann Arbor, democratic socialist Yousef Rabhi defeated longtime incumbent Mayor Christopher Taylor.

These results express not only hostility to the Gaza genocide and to Trump's war in Iran—which has the support of the Democratic Party leadership. It is above all a response to the deepening social crisis within the United States. Michigan is a particularly dire example, with continuing destruction of jobs in auto, still the state's most important industry. The state, which was once a leader in terms of working class living standards, is now 37th in overall

economic performance, 40th in long-term unemployment, 29th in education, 31st in life expectancy and 39th in overall life satisfaction. A recent survey by *U.S. News and World Report* placed Michigan 46th of the 50 states based on 71 metrics across eight categories, including healthcare, education, economy, infrastructure and natural environment.

Both capitalist parties are responsible for this long-term decline. But a critical role has been played by the United Auto Workers union, which has imposed wage-cutting contracts, plant shutdowns, two-tier wages, the proliferation of part-time labor and the creation of deadly sweatshop conditions. The UAW endorsement of El Sayed—aimed at giving the bureaucracy a left cover—had little electoral impact. El Sayed lost every one of the counties along the I-75 corridor that have long been the center of the auto industry: Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Genesee (Flint), Saginaw and Bay.

The Michigan primary results reinforce the impact of the Democratic congressional primaries in June in Colorado and New York City, in which four DSA-backed candidates won nominations, three of them defeating long-time Democratic incumbents.

The WSWS commented after those votes, “The official narrative of American politics for the past century has rested on the claim that the United States is the one country where support for socialism was permanently foreclosed. That narrative is collapsing.”

Last week, after the publication of a series of opinion polls confirming the growing support for socialism in America, we wrote:

This is a vindication of a basic principle of Marxism: that social being determines social consciousness. The Socialist Equality Party anticipated precisely this development. Its 2010 program stated that “the change in objective conditions”—the deepening crisis of American and world capitalism—“will lead American workers to change their minds” about socialism. What was then a scientific projection has become a broad phenomenon.

The representatives of the financial oligarchy, both Democrats and Republicans, are well aware of the danger that this growth of socialist sentiment poses to the profit system and their wealth and power.

The Democratic leadership has long since taken the measure of the DSA and knows that it is not Sanders and AOC who threaten capitalism but the working class and the

new generation of youth. The Democrats are feverishly recruiting former military-intelligence operatives as congressional candidates, to strengthen the control of the state. There are far more former CIA agents, retired military officers and former State Department and National Security Council officials running as Democrats in 2026 than there are members of the DSA or others professing (falsely) to be socialists.

As for Trump and the Republicans, they are responding to the shift to the left with McCarthyite red-baiting and threats. Trump reiterated the slander that Detroit “is one of the most corrupt voting areas in the United States, if not the World... It is strictly Third World!” The National Republican Senatorial Committee posted a digital ad attacking El-Sayed as “the most radical Senate candidate in America,” using his full name, Abdulrahman Mohammed El-Sayed, in a transparent appeal to Islamophobia.

On Tuesday, the Department of Justice announced that it was sending poll watchers to monitor voting sites in Detroit, Hamtramck, Lansing and East Lansing “to ensure transparency, ballot security, and compliance with federal law.” While the four cities are heavily Democratic, Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon claimed the DOJ was engaged in “uniform and nondiscriminatory monitoring.”

A government that responds to a primary election with anti-communist hysteria and federal “poll watchers” is a regime preparing far more sweeping attacks on democratic rights, up to and including moves to shut down the 2026 elections.

The aspirations that drove hundreds of thousands to the polls—an end to genocide and war, to social inequality, to the dictatorship of money over political life—cannot be realized through the Democratic Party. El-Sayed and the DSA function not to advance this movement but to contain it, channeling opposition back into the very party of war and Wall Street against which it is directed.

What is required is the independent political organization of the working class. The growth of socialist sentiment must become a conscious socialist movement, uniting workers of every race and nationality in struggle against the capitalist system itself—the source of war, dictatorship and social misery.



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