

Democratic primary elections show volatility amid shift to the left

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US primary elections were held Tuesday in six states: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Alabama, South Carolina, Vermont and Connecticut. The two most watched and hotly contested contests were in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In Wisconsin, the Democratic Party establishment mounted a ferocious campaign in the run-up to the vote to prevent a victory in the gubernatorial primary by Francesca Hong, a self-described “socialist” and member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Hong, a state lawmaker, campaigned on a program of Medicare for all, abolishing ICE and raising taxes on the rich. She was far ahead in the polls and widely predicted to prevail easily against David Crowley, the Milwaukee County executive. Crowley, a so-called “moderate,” was backed by outgoing Democratic Governor Tony Evers, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and the entire party establishment.

Crowley managed to eke out a narrow victory by a margin of 0.4 percent, or some 3,200 votes. He will now face Trump-endorsed Republican Congressman Tom Tiffany, a member of the far-right House Freedom Caucus, in the general election in November.

Hong and Crowley traded narrow leads throughout the night, making the race too close to call when the candidates ended their election watch parties after midnight. A reported error in uploading absentee ballot data in Milwaukee, Crowley’s base, caused a delay in reporting that pushed off the final results until Milwaukee’s absentee numbers were added to the totals.

Hong called Crowley to concede shortly after 2:00 a.m. Wednesday and later in the day declared her full support for his campaign. She did not exercise her right to ask for a recount.

The events leading up to the vote reflect the systematic intervention of the party establishment to shift the election to the detriment of Hong. Crowley dropped out of the primary in July after trailing in polling and weak fundraising. He endorsed Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez, who shortly after withdrew, citing campaign fundraising irregularities. At that point, Crowley reentered the race, and Evers, who had said he would not make an endorsement, declared his support and proceeded to campaign with Crowley across the state. Former Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes quit the race less than two weeks before the primary, effectively ceding his votes to Crowley. In the final weeks of the election, with Evers’ help, Crowley’s fundraising surpassed Hong’s.

Significantly, neither Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez nor the DSA endorsed Hong, effectively abetting the party establishment’s efforts to block her.

The day before the primary, Crowley told the *Wall Street Journal* that to win statewide, a coalition of “not just Democrats, but Republicans and independents” was needed. He continued: “There are a lot of people who are scared. She is a self-proclaimed socialist. There are a lot of people worried about not just this party, but this country moving in that direction.”

The corporate press celebrated Hong’s defeat. The *Wall Street Journal*, alluding to Democratic primary victories by DSA and DSA-backed candidates in New York, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Denver and Detroit, wrote that Crowley had “stopped progressive momentum.”

The *New York Times* wrote of the Wisconsin primary “showing the limits of the progressive movement and allowing mainstream Democrats to breathe a sigh of relief...” It added, “But in Wisconsin, the polling was wrong. The socialists met their match.”

What concerns the Democratic Party and its corporate sponsors is not Hong herself or other “socialists” and “progressives” within the party, who they know are entirely subservient to the capitalist system and US imperialism. What terrifies them is the growing radicalization and sympathy for socialism on the part of masses of workers and youth that finds an initial and distorted expression in the electoral victories of these forces.

The virulently hostile response of the Democratic establishment to DSA-backed “socialists” and “progressives,” who claim that the Democratic Party can become a workers’ party and who seek to bind mass opposition from below to the Democrats, exposes the bankruptcy of the political perspective of the DSA and the rest of the pseudo-left.

In Minnesota, mass anger against the anti-immigrant rampage and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Gestapo propelled the “progressive” candidate in the Democratic senatorial primary, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, to victory over incumbent Congresswoman Angie Craig. In the state where ICE’s police state occupation and murder of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti sparked mass demonstrations and demands for a general strike, Flanagan attacked Craig for voting in favor of the Laken Riley Act, which requires immigration detention for undocumented immigrants accused of local crimes.

In November, Flanagan will face Republican Michele Tafoya, a former National Football League sideline reporter, in the contest to fill the seat of retiring Democratic Senator Tina Smith.

In the Democratic fight to fill Angie Craig’s House seat, Matt Little, a former state senator, defeated state Representative Kaela Berg and state Senator Matt Klein. Little campaigned for Medicare for all and against the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the construction of data centers. He was endorsed by Texas Representative Greg Casar, chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Little will face Republican state Senator Eric Pratt in the November general election.



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