US midterm elections: Growing opposition to Trump, as both parties support war and austerity

Patrick Martin
28 September 2026

The US midterm elections of November 3, just five weeks away, are taking place under conditions of extreme economic, social and political crisis.

The Trump administration is in the seventh month of its criminal war against Iran, which it is financing, along with the tax cuts for the rich it enacted last year, with a national debt that currently exceeds $40 trillion. Interest payments on that debt now exceed the military budget, and will soon surpass net payments on Medicare.

The looming fiscal crisis is already fueling demands from the financial aristocracy for massive cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and what little remains of other programs in the grossly inadequate US social "safety net." Last week, the Trump administration cut 760,000 people off the Affordable Care Act subsidies.

The only solution offered by the would-be dictator in the White House is a combination of military violence abroad and police repression at home. He told the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday that he is close to deciding whether to "annihilate" Iran, and the US election—that is, the votes of the American people—will have no bearing on that decision.

Indeed, the administration is preparing to police the election itself. Having failed to seize control of mail-in voting through the Postal Service, it has sued 24 states for their voter rolls, and its top law enforcement officials have endorsed sending ICE and FBI agents to polling places, in defiance of a federal law that makes it a crime to station "armed men" at election sites. Trump is laying the groundwork to reject the results if, as seems likely, the Republican Party suffers a debacle.

The administration is increasingly hated. Millions have marched in the "No Kings" protests, among the largest in American history. Trump's approval stands at 37 percent in the Marquette poll and 32 percent in Quinnipiac and Reuters/Ipsos, the lowest of either term. Forty-nine percent say they are worse off financially than a year ago, and only 19 percent approve of Trump's handling of inflation, as gas prices now average more than $4.50 a gallon.

On Iran, only 28 percent approved of Trump's policies, while 60 percent oppose the war outright, the largest-ever figure for a US war in its first year. Some 74 percent oppose sending ground troops, and 66 percent say the war has not been worth fighting.

An indication of the general sentiment came when Trump was loudly booed at a college football game in Tennessee, a state he carried by wide margins in all three of his presidential campaigns. By one press account, when video of Trump's arrival appeared on the stadium screen "a roar of boos audible over scattered applause" was quickly circulated on social media. Trump carried the Knoxville area, where the game was played, by 59-39 percent in 2024.

Trump's deep unpopularity is shown not just in crowd response, but also in where he chooses to appear. His next two campaign stops for the fall election are in Oklahoma and Alabama, states where he won by wide margins. Vice President JD Vance campaigned in Kansas, where no Republican has lost a Senate race in nearly a century. If Republicans need help in those states, they are truly facing a disaster on November 3.

The same polls show that the Democratic Party has a lead in the generic ballot of between 8 and 13 percent, suggesting a 20 to 40 seat majority in the House of Representatives, despite the efforts of the Republican Party, backed by the Supreme Court, to gerrymander congressional districts. The number of US Senate seats considered to be closely contested has swelled from a handful to more than a dozen, with Republican seats in Alaska, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas at risk, compared to only Michigan, Minnesota and New Hampshire for the Democrats.

A Democratic victory in the midterm election, while demonstrating the mass hostility to the Trump administration, would not change the crisis of the capitalist system which is the driving force behind Trump's policies. The Democratic Party, as a capitalist party and instrument of the financial oligarchs and the military-intelligence apparatus, defends the same social interests as Trump.

It is these social interests—the vast wealth of the billionaires, Wall Street and the corporate elite—which dictate the policies of the US government, regardless of whether it is the Democrats or the Republicans who are taking the orders.

© World Socialist Web Site

Trump is not some random maniac elevated to the White House by chance. He is a genuine representative of the American ruling elite, a corrupt amalgam of swindling, speculation and outright theft. He and his family have raked in billions since his return to the White House just over 20 months ago. He has done well by his class, returning trillions in tax cuts in 2017 and 2025 which rewarded their investment in his campaigns.

A new study found that CEO pay at the biggest US companies rose 14 percent in 2025 to an average of $27.9 million. CEOs made 325 times as much as the typical worker last year. This is not a process that began with Trump. It is the product of the longtime crisis and decay of American capitalism. From 1978 to 2025, CEO compensation rose by 1,316 percent, while typical workers' wages and benefits rose only 28 percent.

The Democratic Party offers no alternative because it defends the capitalist system just as firmly as Trump, even if its methods differ in certain details. Its election campaign is built around "affordability," a word chosen to acknowledge the anger over prices without naming their cause, capitalism. The party's advertising attacks Trump's tariffs and the Republican cuts to Medicaid. Trump's war against Iran, if it appears at all, is criticized for raising gas prices, not because it is a crime against international law and the US Constitution.

What the Democrats actually stand for was on display during the state visit of Xi Jinping. Senator Chuck Schumer complained that Trump had greeted the Chinese president "as a supplicant" and must "finally show some backbone." Twenty-one Democratic senators demanded expanded arms sales to Taiwan.

Senator Richard Blumenthal said Sunday on Fox News:

> For the president to be … celebrating Xi while he is aiding Iran, which is trying to kill our sons and daughters, is absolutely [abhorrent]. And I am shocked and deeply alarmed that the president, in effect, is kowtowing to him and failing to release the money that Taiwan needs to defend itself.

In any case, it is not what the Democrats might like to do, even if one takes them at their word. It is what they can do within the framework of capitalism. Whoever controls Congress in January will face the same $1 trillion in interest, the same bond market, the same demands from the military and the same collapse of American global economic dominance. No party that defends this system can end the war, reduce the debt or restore what has been cut, because the war and the debt are the means by which the American ruling class is fighting to hold its position in the world.

The Democrats know this, which is why they are already preparing for bipartisanship. Jared Kushner met privately with Hakeem Jeffries in August to discuss "ways the White House and Democrats can collaborate." The resolution that funds the war through December passed 370 to 48 in the House and 90 to 6 in the Senate. A Democratic majority's first act would be a call for unity on "national security."

A critical expression of these plans to collaborate with Trump is the selection of Democratic candidates for the November 3 election. A forthcoming analysis by the WSWS has found that more than 60 Democratic candidates for the House of Representatives come directly from the military-intelligence apparatus.

In the event of sizable Democratic gains in the election, there will be far more military intelligence agents and graduates of West Point and Annapolis in the Democratic caucus than self-styled "democratic socialists." Two generals and two admirals are among the Democratic favorites in closely contested seats, as well as career officials of the State Department, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency and FBI.

It is not that the "CIA Democrats" are needed as a counterweight to the DSA Democrats. In many cases, particularly on foreign policy, there is considerable overlap. This flows not only from the history of the DSA as an anticommunist and pro-imperialist political tendency, but more fundamentally from class forces that determine the orientation of the Democratic Party as a whole, and all its factions.

The midterms will register the anger of the population, and the Democratic Party will attempt to absorb it and divert it. But the crisis that produced the anger will intensify whatever the result, and it will drive the working class into struggle against both parties. The task is to give that struggle an independent political form: a movement of the working class, organized in rank-and-file committees and linked across borders, directed against the war and the social order that produces it.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site