Democratic Socialists of America member Janeese Lewis George elected mayor of Washington, DC

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9 November 2026

Janeese Lewis George, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Democratic Ward 4 councilmember, was elected mayor of Washington, DC on Tuesday. She received 156,308 votes, or 84.33 percent, as of Thursday's count. She will be sworn in on January 2 as the successor to three-term Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser.

Her victory came as the Democratic Party swept the midterm elections nationally. Democrats won control of both chambers of Congress in what was widely described as a landslide and a rebuke of Trump. Six new DSA-backed candidates won House seats, increasing the number of DSA members in Congress to eight.

Among the major cities, Lewis George joins a growing list of mayors backed by or allied with the DSA, the trade unions and other 'left' organizations: Zohran Mamdani in New York; Nithya Raman, who defeated incumbent Karen Bass in Los Angeles; Katie Wilson in Seattle; and Brandon Johnson in Chicago. The results register, in a distorted and limited form, the deep hostility of broad sections of the population to Trump, to war and to social inequality.

The outcome was never in doubt after Lewis George won June's Democratic primary in a city that has not elected a Republican mayor since home rule was established. She defeated Kenyan McDuffie, a business-backed Democrat who had raised nine times more from the commercial real estate industry than she had, with roughly 54 percent of the vote.

Lewis George charged that McDuffie had sided with utility companies while bills soared, tying her campaign to the cost of living. She cited donations to McDuffie from utility lobbyists and from about two dozen donors who had also given to Trump, striking a chord within the deeply anti-Trump electorate. This was despite her claims being weakened by the fact that she had also voted to confirm the regulators who approved the rate increases.

She also spoke openly against ICE, pledging not to cooperate with it, and had a record of at least rhetorical advocacy for tenants in a city wracked by high living costs and scarce affordable housing.

That earned her the wrath of Trump. Before the primary, the president told reporters, "maybe we take back Washington, run it on the federal basis." On June 28 he denounced "the Communist who is almost certainly going to be elected Mayor of Washington, D.C.," and vowed not to let the capital be "destroyed" by her. The administration has already deployed the National Guard and federal agents in the city.

Lewis George herself called the Guard deployment "a direct attack" on residents. Trump's description of a loyal Democratic Party politician as a "communist" is, of course, absurd.

Despite the media buzz and the hysteria from the White House and Republicans, Lewis George's campaign and transition are already revealing themselves to be run-of-the-mill Democratic Party fare. Last week she announced her transition team, led by various stalwarts of previous Democratic administrations in the city.

Transition co-chair Beatriz Otero served as deputy mayor under Mayor Vincent Gray. Dan Tangherlini, city administrator under Mayor Adrian Fenty, sits on a subcommittee. Fenty, the political patron of the outgoing mayor Bowser, installed infamous right wing school "reformer" Michelle Rhee as schools chancellor

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and presided over dozens of school closures.

Asked at a press conference whether the selections reflected ideological alignment, Lewis George said they did not. She said she had made no final decisions on which current officials would stay. She has met with Bowser, former Mayor Anthony Williams and Democratic House leader Hakeem Jeffries, who is likely to become speaker. Her one concrete proposal for the city government is a "forensic analysis" and "desk audits" of agencies in search of savings, which for the roughly 37,000 city workers sounds like a familiar prelude to cuts.

Lewis George's approach to the housing crisis is of a piece. *Politico* notes that the new mayor's combination of pro-tenant and pro-development policies has made for "strange bedfellows," uniting "socialists" and corporate real estate developers under one banner. In practice this means leaving the housing market in the hands of private developers while offering tenants gestures.

The *Washington Post* reported before the election that landlords and affordable housing providers are complaining of chronic unpaid rent, and that investors regard DC as a "red flag." Asked how she would address the arrears, Lewis George said her first moves would send signals to everyone in the housing sector that their concerns had been heard. Pressed on what those signals would be, she answered, "I can't tell you." The message is aimed at real estate interests, not at the tenants who voted for her.

Most critical is the city's fiscal position. Bowser refused to sign the fiscal 2027 budget after the council undid her spending cuts, warning that funding recurring programs with one-time money sets up the next mayor and council with an "$837 million fiscal cliff." Lewis George defended the council's restorations, which tapped the city's reserve fund. The *Post*'s editorial board relayed Bowser's warning in June, and the pressure for austerity will be enormous from the first day of her administration.

Even more dangerous is what could happen under an attempted federal takeover of the District by the Trump administration. Of this, Lewis George has said the District has "legal tools we can use to fight back," pointing to the city attorney general's court victories. Her strategy, as she described it during the campaign, rests on "legal fights" and "building relationships with Members of Congress," with a passing reference to "mobilizing people power." She has also said she will work with anyone, including the president.

Nothing in this involves a political mobilization of the working class against Trump's drive toward dictatorship. It consists of lawsuits and lobbying, the traditional methods of the Democratic Party. Even before the election, a veteran DC political operative, Bill Lightfoot, predicted the winner would meet with Trump and "play nice."

The experience of Mamdani is instructive. He has forged a so-called "partnership" with the fascist Republican president, and the DSA has defended it as pragmatism. Lewis George, who has also pledged to work with Trump where possible, is on the same trajectory. The DSA is not a socialist organization but a faction of the Democratic Party, speaking for sections of the upper middle class and the trade union bureaucracy. Its function is to refurbish the credibility of the party of war and Wall Street at the moment when mass opposition to it is growing.

Lewis George will increasingly reveal herself to be another prop of the capitalist two-party system, in direct conflict with the aspirations of the workers and young people who voted for her. The fight against Trump, against war and against social inequality requires a break from the Democratic Party and the construction of an independent political movement of the working class on a socialist program.



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