Florida Republicans narrowly retain power as nearly 4 million vote for “democratic socialist” Nixon

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Last Tuesday’s elections saw Democrats win seats across the US. In Florida, Republicans retained the major statewide offices contested on November 3, but their sharply reduced margins revealed mass opposition to the Trump administration. Angie Nixon, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), won nearly 4 million votes and came within 2.9 percentage points of defeating Republican Senator Ashley Moody.

With approximately 99 percent of the vote counted, Nixon received 3,974,149 votes, or 48.0 percent, against Moody’s 4,211,455, or 50.9 percent, a difference of 237,306 votes. In the governor’s race, Republican Byron Donalds received 4,135,701 votes, or 50.01 percent, against Democrat David Jolly’s 4,029,461, or 48.72 percent. Donalds’ margin was just 106,240 votes.

Nixon’s near-victory underscores the growing support for socialism and opposition to capitalism among workers and young people. Despite decades of Republican rule and anti-communism fostered by both capitalist parties, a candidate identified as a “democratic socialist” won millions of votes and nearly defeated an incumbent backed by the Republican apparatus and wealthy donors. Both parties have long invoked hostility to Cuba’s bourgeois nationalist government to denounce socialism and portray limited social reforms as intolerable.

The response to Nixon’s campaign pledges of Medicare for All, a higher minimum wage and increased taxes on billionaires exposes the claim that Florida’s population is uniformly right-wing. Her vote expresses social opposition that the Democratic Party has worked for decades to suppress and raises sharply the conflict between growing support for socialism among the broader population and the DSA’s efforts to channel these sentiments back into the capitalist Democratic Party.

The scale of this opposition found expression in the August 18 Democratic primary. Nixon defeated establishment favorite Alexander Vindman with 705,835 votes, or 56.1 percent, against his 553,138, or 43.9 percent. Vindman, a Ukrainian-born career US military officer who served as director for European affairs on the National Security Council, testified during Trump’s first impeachment proceedings in 2019. Nixon said she won despite being outspent 15-to-1.

Nixon’s primary victory exposed the bankruptcy of the Florida Democrats’ longstanding strategy of running candidates barely distinguishable from Republicans. Their last two gubernatorial nominees, Charlie Crist in 2022 and Jolly in 2026, were former Republican officeholders. Jolly represented Florida’s 13th Congressional District as a Republican from 2014 to 2017 before joining the Democrats in 2025.

The standard explanation for Republican dominance in Florida cites the concentration of retirees and Cuban exiles, along with the absence of a state income tax, which supposedly attracts conservative migrants from northern states. Democrats have promoted this narrative to justify their own right-wing politics and repeated electoral defeats.

In 2018, Ron DeSantis narrowly defeated Andrew Gillum, who campaigned on limited social reforms. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, DeSantis became a hero of the bourgeoisie for dismantling public health restrictions and placing profits above the lives of workers and their families. In

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2022, he routed Crist, and Republicans secured a legislative supermajority. They used their control to attack public education, workers' rights and abortion access.

Mass anger over the Trump administration's attacks on immigrants, warmongering, self-dealing and growing inequality found expression in the 2026 results. Moody's 2.9-point margin was nearly 10 points below Republican Rick Scott's 12.8-point Senate victory in 2024. Nixon's 48.0 percent represented a 5.2-percentage-point increase over the 42.8 percent won by Scott's Democratic opponent, Debbie Mucarsel-Powell.

As with Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign, Nixon's campaign benefited from a radicalization among workers and young people. Her pseudo-left platform sought to capture this anger while keeping it within the Democratic Party. Although her proposals posed no threat to capitalist ownership and control, they appealed to demands for improved living conditions that the Democrats have no intention of meeting.

After her primary victory, Nixon sought to distance herself from the DSA and resisted identifying herself as a socialist. In the final week of the campaign, she responded to Republican red-baiting by adapting further to the right.

In a CBS interview aired on October 26, Nixon demurred when asked whether Cuba was a dictatorship, saying she had never visited the country and would take others' "word for it." Democrats joined Republicans in attacking her response. Democratic congressional candidate Phil Ehr declared, "I will not stand behind Angie Nixon or defend her remarks."

The following evening, at a rally in Kissimmee with fellow DSA Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Nixon described Cuba as a "failed system" and a "dictatorship," while also criticizing the longstanding US embargo.

Rather than challenge the bipartisan anti-communist campaign against her, Nixon accommodated its premises and declared her support for imperialism. Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez campaigned alongside her, promoting the claim that a Democratic electoral victory would deliver social reforms by taxing billionaires.

Republican efforts to expand their congressional delegation through redistricting also failed. The new map was designed to help the party capture four additional seats. Instead, Florida's delegation remained at 20 Republicans and eight Democrats. The Democrats who retained their seats included Jared Moskowitz and Debbie Wasserman Schultz, both staunch supporters of Israel and its genocide in Gaza.

Republicans' financial advantage was substantial, although it differed considerably between the two statewide contests. Donalds' campaign and affiliated political committee raised approximately $173.6 million through October 29, compared with $26.9 million for Jolly, a ratio exceeding six-to-one.

Citadel founder Ken Griffin contributed $15 million to Donalds' political operation. Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross gave $1 million, while Pennsylvania billionaire Jeff Yass, co-founder of Susquehanna International Group and an investor in TikTok's parent company, contributed $7.5 million.

In the Senate race, Moody raised approximately $14.5 million against Nixon's $11.3 million as of November 2. Outside groups reported spending $10.4 million opposing Nixon and $3.94 million supporting Moody, compared with $5.35 million supporting Nixon and $3.56 million opposing Moody. Griffin also gave $2.5 million to a committee supporting Moody.

Despite this financial advantage and the bipartisan campaign against socialism, millions voted for Nixon. This support reveals the potential for a movement against inequality, war and fascism. The DSA's political function, however, is to channel this opposition back into the Democratic Party, where demands for social change are subordinated to the interests of the financial oligarchy.

Nixon's retreat before the bipartisan anti-communist campaign underscores that the development of a socialist movement in the United States requires the political independence of the working class from both capitalist parties and their political appendages.



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