NYC-DSA convention backs Ocasio-Cortez for president, votes down opposition to Mamdani's public housing demolition

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The New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is officially urging Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to run for president. The push for her candidacy took the form of a resolution passed 291 to 123 on Saturday at the chapter's biennial citywide convention, attended by more than 400 delegates in Midtown Manhattan.

The resolution on Ocasio-Cortez was the most prominent of nine resolutions debated at the gathering, all of which passed except for one that would have opposed Mayor Zohran Mamdani's plans to demolish a public housing complex in Manhattan.

The convention took place just 11 days after the midterm elections, which marked a sharp repudiation of Trump, as millions registered their opposition to the war on Iran, ICE's campaign of terror, soaring prices and the rule of the oligarchy. The convention's outcome—going all in on Ocasio-Cortez and providing cover for anti-working-class policies carried out under Mamdani—highlights the DSA's central function of trapping this political radicalization within the Democratic Party.

The resolution, titled "Run AOC 2028 To Win A Democratic Socialist President," was co-sponsored by both of the chapter's co-chairs, Gustavo Gordillo and Grace Mausser. It describes Ocasio-Cortez as "one of the most widely loved members of the Democratic Party" and "one of the most prolific fundraisers" in it, and argues that a campaign would offer "a unique opportunity for new membership drives."

Gordillo told CNN that the resolution was not a formal endorsement but "a commitment to encouraging and building the foundation for a presidential campaign." He added that "DSA will create the conditions for a presidential campaign capable of advancing a working-class political agenda."

The claim that Ocasio-Cortez will advance a working-class agenda is a fraud. Since the midterms, Ocasio-Cortez has lined up behind the pro-war, AIPAC-backed establishment Democrat Hakeem Jeffries as House Speaker. "There is one candidate in this race, Hakeem Jeffries," she told reporters on November 11.

Asked whether this was problematic, Mausser declared, "DSA is not in the business of issuing red lines to our elected officials, and saying, 'you do this, this is our demand.'" Instead, she explained, the DSA meets with its politicians to "analyze what the conditions are in their chambers ... and make a decision together."

In a July interview on CBS's *The Point*, Marcia Kramer asked Mausser whether the DSA was interested in destroying the Democratic Party. "No, no! … No, we are not," she replied. The DSA, she said, is "very serious about governing, and we know that means working in a coalition and we know it means compromise. I think you see this in how Zohran Mamdani is governing and you have also seen this in how AOC …"

The DSA, in other words, places no demands on its candidate. Her record shows what a "working-class political agenda" means in practice. Since her election to the House in 2018, Ocasio-Cortez has specialized in combining left-sounding rhetoric with subservience to the ruling class. As early as September 2019, the *New York Times* recognized these efforts with a feature headlined "How Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Learned to Play by Washington's Rules."

This past September, the mouthpiece of American liberalism published another sympathetic feature about her weighing a run in 2028.

The NYC-DSA, for its part, closed its convention to the press but arranged to give the *Times* an exclusive on the results. When a *City & State* reporter posted the vote counts on X, disrupting the plan, he was barred from the post-convention press conference.

The *Times*' promotion of Ocasio-Cortez rests on her record of defending core interests of US capitalism. In 2022, she notoriously voted to block a national freight railroad strike and force a pro-corporate contract onto workers. She faced intense backlash, including within the DSA itself, for voting in 2025 for $500 million in funding for Israel's Iron Dome system in the midst of the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

This past February at the Munich Security Conference, a gathering of the NATO military establishment sponsored by arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, she accused Trump of "looking to withdraw the United States from the entire world" and declared, "I don't think that we should

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allow Russia to continue." Asked about war with China over Taiwan, she did not rule it out.

More recently, Ocasio-Cortez has spent her time stumping and raising money for Democrats drawn directly from the military-intelligence apparatus. This includes Representative Eugene Vindman, a 25-year Army officer and former National Security Council official who co-founded a venture to maintain weapons in Ukraine. She has also praised former CIA operations officer Abigail Spanberger, now Virginia's governor. The resolution's praise for her fundraising ignores the character of the beneficiaries.

A section of the DSA is concerned that Ocasio-Cortez's thoroughly right-wing record will discredit the organization, reflected in 30 percent of the delegates voting against the resolution calling on Ocasio-Cortez to run.

Differences are also emerging over Mamdani's policies in New York City, as the DSA finds itself in the position of trying to balance its left rhetoric with direct administration of the capitalist state and the implementation of austerity.

Two resolutions taken up at the convention covered up Mamdani's role in different ways. The first, which would have committed the chapter to opposing Mamdani's plans to demolish and privatize the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses, was defeated 178 to 230. Three tenants from the complex had joined the DSA and been elected delegates to fight for it.

Mamdani is handing the prime Chelsea site to Related Companies, the developer of Hudson Yards, to demolish the complex and replace it with privately managed towers, including some 2,500 market-rate apartments, over widespread opposition from tenants. In doing so, he is continuing the bipartisan push to privatize public housing, claiming that converting it to the Section 8 voucher system is the only way to shore up the Housing Authority's finances.

The vote shielded an administration that, less than a year in, is coming into open conflict with the working class. In February, Mamdani endorsed Governor Kathy Hochul as she brought in out-of-state nurses to break the strike of 15,000 nurses. He sued to block $10,000 bonuses for school paraprofessionals under the anti-worker Taylor Law and fired Haitian city workers stripped of Temporary Protected Status by Trump. He balanced this year's budget by deferring $2.3 billion in pension payments and delaying the class-size mandate in the schools. The contract for 90,000 city workers in DC 37 expired on November 6.

The second resolution, on policing, passed unanimously, 399 to 0. The resolution admitted "broken windows policing" was continuing under Mamdani but argued the DSA was "well positioned" to campaign to disband the Strategic Response Group (SRG) and establish a Department of Community Safety, among other measures.

The resolution promotes the fiction that a collection of minor reforms can change the NYPD's fundamental repressive character. It is entirely silent on Mamdani's retention of billionaire heiress Jessica Tisch as Police Commissioner, the personification of the class role the NYPD plays. Asked about Tisch at a press conference, an NYC-DSA spokesperson responded, "We're not calling for her firing. We are calling for her to help Zohran, her boss, fulfill the things that he committed to doing on the campaign trail."

Five weeks earlier, after an ICE agent shot Oscar Belgal, the chapter had declared that if Tisch could not end NYPD complicity with ICE, "she must be fired." Mamdani answered, "I have no plans to change that." The demand has now been dropped.

This acts as political cover for an administration that has actively courted the NYPD. Under Mamdani and Tisch, police pushed back protesters to protect ICE thugs after they shot Oscar Belgal in Marble Hill. The NYPD has also continued to arrest anti-genocide protesters while protecting the war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mamdani's announcement on Monday that he is moving forward with disbanding the SRG does nothing to alter its practices; it simply transfers its crowd-control role to a new Patrol Support Division and its counterterrorism functions to the Intelligence and Counterterrorism Bureau. Tisch, who told the City Council in March that her talks with the mayor were "not to disband" the unit, told ABC7 that New Yorkers "can expect in crowd control type situations to see the very same response that they are accustomed to."

The plan had been reported on November 13, the day before the convention resolved to campaign for it.

Ultimately, the maneuvers at the NYC-DSA convention, along with the political trajectories of Mamdani and Ocasio-Cortez, express a perspective: that socialism can be advanced through the Democratic Party and the management of the capitalist state. This perspective has a definite social basis rooted in privileged layers of the upper-middle class that seek not to abolish the wealth of the oligarchy but simply to negotiate a more favorable share of it. A political organization is defined by its program, not by what its officeholders call themselves. The capitalist state does not change its essential class character simply because a member of the DSA sits in City Hall—or, for that matter, the White House.

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